

POCKET HISTORIES OF SUFFOLK PARISHES.

No. 433.—GREAT BRADLEY.

Perhaps one of the most imposing landmarks in Great Bradley is the hostelry which still bravely flaunts the sign of the Fox, and thus symbolises the ancient inns of England, for to-day so many of the local houses of refreshment bear a kind of mass-produced



BEAUTIFUL TUDOR SOUTH PORCH.

sign, in which there is nothing either beautiful or enlightening. And the Fox at Great Bradley is one of those places which well deserves a touch of originality, for the build-



CHURCH OF ST. MARY.

ing itself is not only old with all the attractions of age, but congenial of aspect, and thus certainly inviting, so that it seems like some pleasant survival of a friendly past, existing nobly amid the less appealing atmosphere of an age far more hurried and much less colourful.

Farther along the road is another old relic, but in this case rather a sad one, for here is but the stump of what once was a busy mill, whose sails for many years turned sweetly in the wind which so often blows

across this delightful prospect of hill and valley. For certainly the prospect here is delightful, providing as it does a vista of fields tinted by Nature into various shades from yellow to green, the whole intersected by hedges and dotted by stacks and a few red-roofed or thatched habitations, so that the panorama seems like a homely picture transferred to canvas by the skilled craftsmanship of some pastoral artist.

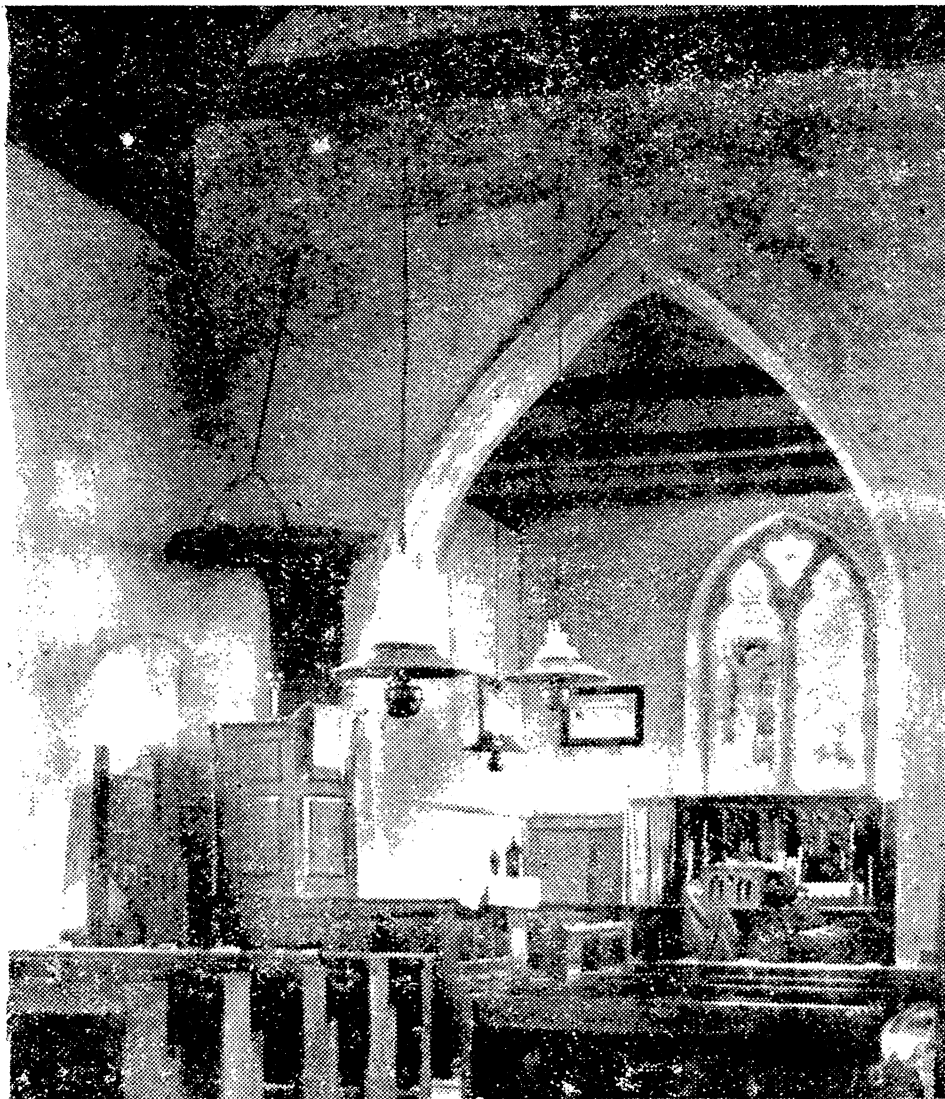
It is opposite the Fox that a road leads to the Church of St. Mary at Great Bradley,

and, here again, is an attractive situation, indeed, for mighty trees surround the churchyard, through whose branches, now once again bursting into life at the insistent call of Spring, one obtains the glimpse of a narrow stream in the dip below. And in some ways the church, with its magnificent tower, in which are three bells, one dating from so long ago as the beginning of the fourteenth century, its chancel and nave, and its exceptionally fine South porch, seems entirely in harmony with its rural surroundings, so that in the sight of the house of worship and silvery brook, of pleasant meadows and friendly fields, there is that indefinable something which only the more unspoiled districts of the countryside can convey adequately.

In the North doorway of the church we find a relic belonging to the Norman period, although it is not so impressive as one often discovers. But the South entrance is certainly a most remarkable specimen of its kind, for here are two beautiful examples of workmanship, widely separated by time, but both of outstanding appeal in their own particular way.

The porch itself dates from the time that the eighth Henry wore England's crown, and is, of course, constructed of brick, mellowed by time, and rendered the more pleasing in consequence. But it is the design of the porch which immediately attracts the attention, for it possesses no fewer than seven niches, one at the top, five beneath this, three of which exhibit the mutilated heads of animals, and one on either side of the doorway, the whole effect being exceptionally remarkable and artistically pleasing.

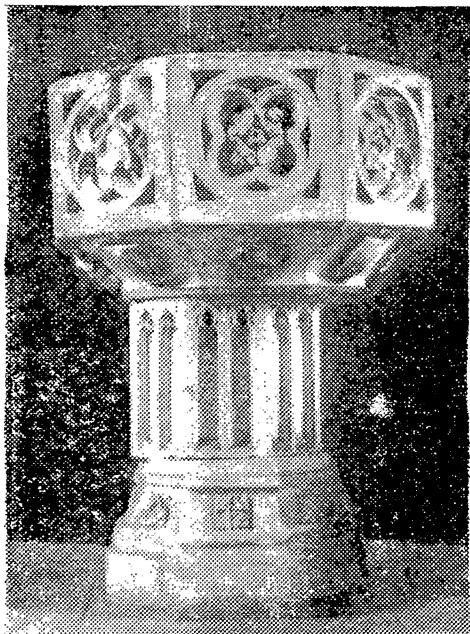
This splendid affair has been constructed in front of the original South doorway, which came into being when the Normans were to the fore in architectural matters, and in the inner doorway we find an example of their workmanship constructed on a scale rarely to be discovered in our Suffolk houses of worship. To describe it as Norman is to do it bare justice. Rather it suggests an influence belonging to the



AN INTERIOR SHOWING THE UNUSUAL CHANCEL ARCH; NOTE, ALSO, THE PULPIT, WITH ITS SOUNDING BOARD.

in Great Bradley Church was quite likely ancient Romans Oriental school, so that it seems feasible modelled by the Normans on a design per- enough to imagine that this ornate survival haps introduced into our country by the

The porch is now used as a vestry, and it possesses a cinquefoil niche, apparently once used for holy water. Of the general appearance of the church interior itself, however, it is somewhat difficult to write, for, quite obviously, a considerable amount of renovation has occurred at various times.



MUCH MUTILATED FONT WHICH HAS BEEN BADLY REPLACED ON ITS BASE.

This is especially noticeable at the East end, where the sedilia have been cut short, thus proving that originally the church extended farther to the East. Yet, despite this occurrence, the sedilia are quite interesting survivals, even although there seems something pathetic through the manner in which they have lost part of their early attraction.

The arch of the chancel is of the Perpendicular type, but in some ways it suggests a Saxon origin, a remark which applies to



THERE IS A PROMISE OF REAL SPRING IN THE SUNLIGHT ON THESE OLD HOUSES.

several parts of St. Mary's Church, a fact not surprising, for, as we have noticed Norman work, it is quite possible that part of the building dates from even an earlier period. Against the chancel arch, in both North and South walls, are recesses, and there seems reason for believing that originally these marked the sites of altars, more especially as on the North side is a piscina, whilst in the floor near the South recess a stone quite probably marks the resting-place of the founder of Great Bradley Church.

A rather good specimen of woodwork can be seen in the nave roof, which has an excellent kingpost, and, amongst other things, a rich cornice. Other splendid examples of the woodcarver's art are the pulpit and reading-desk, the former rather curious through the fact that on the underneath part of its sounding-board a star has been cleverly inserted.

This pulpit, of course, is of the type known as a three-decker, and therefore dates from the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Yet restoration has played such a conspicuous part here that in some ways its appearance is almost modern.

A survival which has suffered considerably through the misguided deeds of the iconoclasts in days gone by—or, at least, one imagines that religious perversion was responsible, and not pure mischief—is the font, for this octagonal affair, dating from the Perpendicular period has been terribly and wantonly damaged, as even a casual glance reveals. Apparently it was the beautiful carving which inspired the "breakers of idols" to wreak their will here, for even to-day this carving reveals something of its former glory, even despite the fact that literally whole pieces have been hacked away.



A PLEASANT RANGE OF THATCHED COTTAGES IN THE CENTRE OF THE VILLAGE.

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A list of rectors hangs in the church dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and there is also a Roll of Honour, giving the names of the Great Bradley men who fought in the Great War. One important item remains to be mentioned, and that is the tower, for although I referred to this earlier as a magnificent affair, this statement needs elaborating.

For on the tower are angle buttresses, the lower parts of which exhibit the carved depictions of lions and shields—very well preserved despite their years of exposure to the vagaries of the English climate. Over the battlements rises a stair turret, thus adding to the tower's dignity; whilst the basement retains a flue and a slab constructed for the baking of wafers used in Holy Communion.

Now however, it is necessary to discover something about the past of Great Bradley, and, like many another village of Suffolk, it has been associated with several names of consequence. When the third Henry was on the throne the manor of Great Bradley seems to have been held by the well-known family of Bigod, but shortly afterwards it was owned by Sir Hugh de Lopham, who in 1305 granted the manor, with the advowson of the church, to Sir John de Cotecourt, and Matilda, his wife.

Sir John was a person of some importance in the land, amongst the high offices he held being the Governorship of St. Briavel's Castle in Gloucestershire, whilst he was Admiral of the King's Fleet, and summoned to Parliament as a baron.

He was succeeded by his grandson of the same Christian name, and this John also played a prominent part in affairs of consequence, both as a soldier and as a politician, fighting in the French wars and sitting in Parliament for some 43 years. Through the marriage of his grand-daughter, Joyce, to Sir Hugh Burnell, the manor went to the latter, but there was no issue, and for some years it is doubtful who actually held the estate. Eventually, however, we find it in the hands of Bartholomew Brokesby, whose death occurred in 1524; and, following various



THE VILLAGE INN.

changes, it came to Thomas Brand in the middle of the 18th century.

In 1771, Thomas Brand married the Hon. Gertrude Roper, sister of the eighteenth Lord Dacre, and the manor passed to their son, the twentieth lord. He chose for wife a daughter of Admiral Sir Chalmers Ogle, but, dying without issue, his brother succeeded. This brother, who, of course, was the twenty-first Lord Dacre, had fought well and bravely in the Peninsular War, and in 1824 assumed the surname of Trevor. His death occurred in 1853, upon which his eldest son inherited, and, he dying in 1890, was followed by his brother, Henry Bouerie William Trevor.

The latter had carved for himself a political career of considerable merit, as for some twelve years he filled the high office of Speaker, whilst he became a Privy Councillor, and in 1884 was created Viscount Hampden. It was only for a very short time that he

enjoyed his new inheritance, as he died in 1892, when the estate passed to his eldest son, a Captain in the Coldstream Guards, who, however, followed in his father's footsteps to a certain degree, entering Parliament, first of all for Hertfordshire, and later for the Stroud Division of Gloucester.

To-day, the manor is held by Mr. C. F. Ryder, and thus we come to the end of the story, which, if not exceptionally thrilling, has the merit of variety. But in Great Bradley itself, there is little to attract the eye except the rolling vista of a countryside existing nobly amid the less appealing atmosphere of an age far more hurried and possessing the indefinable charm, the infinite attraction which graceful slope and sheltered vale so happily convey.

YEOMAN.