Hornsea, St. Nicholas

Hornsea Parish Church is of very ancient foundation. Domesday (1086) says "*In Hornsea, Morcar had 27 carucates of land and there may be as many ploughs there. Drogo now has one plough and a half. There is a Church and a Priest*..." Christianity came to the North in 675 A.D. and a Church built of wood was no doubt constructed on the highest available piece of land standing above the level of the many meres in the area. The coast here was a favourite landing place for the Viking invaders and probably at least six previous churches were destroyed by them. In 1066, Harald Hardrada and Tostig invaded England and on their way to defeat at Stamford Bridge by King Harold Godwineson, as was the custom, they burnt down or damaged the church at Hornsea. Of this last Saxon church, the crypt, probably built to accommodate a hermit, still remains. It is possible that part of the tower is also of this age. The present church, as its Domesday predecessor was, is built of erratic boulders from the beach. "Erratic" is here used in its geological sense, meaning rocks which bear no relationship to their local underlying geology. In fact many of these boulders were probably transported from Scandinavia by glaciers during the great Ice Ages.

The present church is a reconstruction of the Domesday church which was. probably a simple one consisting of a nave, chancel and tower with a crypt and possibly a lady chapel. In the extended building, completed about 1420, the North and South aisles and the clerestory were added and was more or less the building as we see it today. A lady chapel, between the altar and the East end of the Church is common in Cathedrals and greater Churches of Eng-land, but is most rare in village churches and Hornsea has one of the only three or four. In the wall of the South aisle, East of the porch, there is a blocked up arch which originally led to a Chantry Chapel, founded and endowed by the family of some wealthy local person of importance, where prayers would be said daily for the soul of the departed. This Chapel was probably demolished at the time of the reformation.

The great East window depicts incidents from the Gospels but above this main theme are shown ten Nbrthern saints; Paulins, Aiden, Oswald, Nicholas, Margaret, John of Beverley, Edwin, Hilda, Wil-fred and the Venerable Bede. The most important memorial in the church is the tomb of Anthony St. Quintin, Rector from 1397 to 1423. This suffered a peculiar form of desecration by puritan soldiers during the Civil War, who carved the soles of their shoes on the side of the tomb. They include the styles of the pointed toe, the turned over toe, and the square toe which were common during the reigns of Charles I and II and during the commonwealth.

On the floor of the North aisle, near the organ case there lies the carved effigy of a 13th-14th century monk, probably from St. Mary's Abbey, York. From the church at Nunkeeling are the effigies of Sir William Fauconberg, Lord of the manor at Catfoss (died 1294), who may have been on a crusade, and his wife.

The tower contains a chime of eight bells and a dedication tablet is fixed to the interior wall at the base of the tower.

"The Peal of eight bells in the tower was sub-scribed for by the parishioners of Hornsea as a thankoffering for peace and in grateful remembrance of those who fell in the Great War. 1914-1919.

December 1919"

Numbers 5 and 6 were cast in 1767 and number 7 in 1634. These three were recast with five new bells cast and installed by John Taylor in 1919. The tenor weighs 15-1-27 cwt and has a diameter of 44 inches, the peal is in the key of F. The bells are of excellent tone; what a pity they are not hung for full circle ringing!

Derek H Watson