

St Peter's Church, HORNINGHOLD

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The interesting little church of Horninghold, out in the hills towards the Rutland border and not far from Hallaton, deserves particular mention, however, and it may be well to deal with it as a whole. It illustrates so well the typical development of the simple nucleus, each century seeing some addition, large or small, to the fabric. Moreover, Horninghold is exceptionally interesting in that it has escaped entirely the heavy hand of the 'restorer' [the 'destroyer' would often be a better word for those Victorian vandals]: it has been left almost untouched since it was built, and there is a complete absence of those reworked mouldings which irritate or depress the enthusiast who can imagine what has been spoilt. It is a small church of simple plan, with work of every century from the twelfth to the sixteenth, as Mr Albert Herbert has shown in his admirable account [in the 'Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society' for 1934-35] from which these details are taken. We may summarise the development of the church to its present form in six stages:

1] Originally the usual small Norman church with nave, chancel, and west tower, erected about 1130-50 Mr Herbert believes, though for reasons given above I think it likely that the earlier date is nearer the mark.

2] A south aisle of the three bays was added early in the 13th Century. The original 12th Century door was preserved and rebuilt in the new outer wall. The south arcade has semi-circular arches but the 'water-holding' base of one of the piers shows that it may be dated c. 1220. Horninghold is thus an example of the survival of the semi-circular arch into the Early English period, a feature often found in Leicestershire and Rutland.

3] A north aisle of three bays was added later in the 13th Century. This reveals, says Mr Herbert, 'a certain amount of hesitancy,' for the work was carried out in two stages. The eastern bay was completed first and made into a separate chapel. The two western bays were completed later: the arches are pointed and there is 'a vigorous intervening pier-cap'.

4] The stone broach spire was added in the later years of the 13th Century or the early 14th, and the tower strengthened by the addition of angle buttresses.

5] The usual clerestory was added to the nave in the 15th Century and a new roof inserted, the original beams of which may still be seen. Probably new seating was provided at the same time, as among the later seating [mostly box-pews] eight crudely carved poppy head bench-ends survive with design motifs similar to those in the carved bosses of the tie-beams in the nave roof. At the same time also, 15th Century windows were inserted in the 13th Century wall of the north aisle, and a north porch was added to the church.

6] Early in the 16th Century a new window was inserted in the east wall of the chancel, and in the east wall of the north aisle. There is no trace of any sedilia or piscine in the chancel, which was probably rebuilt on the old foundations, but an early 13th Century piscine remains in the south aisle. The font is also Early English.