

THE CHURCH PORCHES AND DOORWAYS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

By Mr. Harry Gill.

THE south porch of a village church with its sunny aspect, its seclusion and shelter from the noise and turmoil of the world, is a fitting place wherein to sit and ponder over the long history of the past.

Every stage in the journey of life, from the cradle to the grave, was associated in one way or another with the church porch. As soon as might be, after an English child had been safely born into the world, it was brought to the church for its Christening, and in due time the mother came ante ostium ecclesiae for her Purification.

In the very earliest days of the Church in England, burial within a church was prohibited ; but under special circumstances, burial in the porch was allowed

Joh. de Gateford, in his will dated June 26, 1347, desired " to be buried in the porch" at Worksop.

John Younge of Burgh in the parish of Elton, "to be buried in the porch commonly called S. Maries Porch." Elton, 17 March 1429.

Henry Mylott, vicar of Attenboro', "to be buried in the porch." 7th October 1473.

Sir John Hardy, vicar, "to be buried in the church porch." Car Colston. 21 September 1520.

Failing the porch, it was a sign of humility to desire burial near to the church door.

Christopher Saureby, vicar, "to be buried before the chancel door," East Markham, 20 April 1439.

Hugh Smyth, rector, "to be buried in the churchyard, against the entrance of the porch." Saundby, 30 June 1467.

Beautiful and interesting specimens of ancient grave-covers, incised with Calvary crosses, border inscriptions, and in some cases with symbols to indicate the occupation of the deceased, may be found on the floor or the walls; but while some of these are in situ, in many cases they are but fragments which have been gathered together by loving hands, and fixed in the porch for their better protection—a practice to be highly commended.

In the floor of the north porch at Southwell, an incised stone, having an illegible inscription, a Tau cross, and date (1536), is supposed to be the memorial of the last sacristan who kept vigil in the church, and slept in the chamber above the porch.

In the south west porch at Attenborough, there are three incised stones. Two of these still lie in the floor, but one has recently been fixed upright against the wall for its better preservation. It is more than probable, that one of these commemorates the vicar before mentioned, who willed his body to be buried in the porch. The other two may also

have covered the graves of former vicars, several of whom were canons of Felley, and are known to have died while serving at Attenborough.

<http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/articles/tts/tts1917/churchporches1.htm>