



The 13th-century tower of St Nicholas, Salthouse



Above: A part of the first remaining page of the earliest transcribed records (page three of the 132 photographs shown in this CD) showing the scribe's confusion when he muddled the copying out of some of the entries from twenty years before, and had to resort to numbering them in their disorder, so that the correct sequence could be made clear!

The Parish Register

The keeping of records of baptisms, marriages and burials started in 1538 during the reign of Henry VIII, by order of Thomas Cromwell, but for the first twenty-five years records were only written on paper. W.E. Tate mentions in his book, *The Parish Chest*, that there were abortive registration bills introduced in parliament in 1563 and 1590. However, it was not until a church constitution of 1597 (approved by Queen Elizabeth in 1598) that the order went out that 'great decent books of parchment' had to be purchased and that records from the old paper registers had to be copied up into these books.

The priests of Salthouse who saw to it, over the years, that the register records were written up in the parchment book were (according to Frank Stagg who has estimated their probable dates of office):

Stephen Prowet -1520	Stephen Gervys - 1589	Edward Dawney -1643
Gregory Madys -1559	Robert Hetherington -1592	Charles Worsley -1680
Christopher Nuttal -1560	Thomas Dawney -1613	Thomas Bainbrigg -1682

However, as Jenny Watts Senior Archivist at the Norfolk Record Office points out, we cannot tell who wrote these records. Some of the early parsons may well have written up the register themselves but it is quite likely that they employed a clerk to do it, since the handwriting of the pages up until around 1598-1600 seem to be that of the same person although it is difficult to be absolutely certain.

The parchment pages suffered severe damage, and although Antoinette Curtis, Conservator at the Norfolk Record Office, has now done a remarkable job on the conservation of the document, many of the pages are fragile and fragmented with handwriting in varying states of preservation. Consequently much of the writing has been difficult to transcribe.

During the Reformation the use of Latin was banned in the Church of England, but we find the law flouted in the secrecy of the parish register, the scribe's Latin often misspelled or abbreviated, and this has also added to transcribing difficulties.