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## BURWELL, ITS CASTLE, &c.

Amongst the companions of William the Conqueror, when he invaded England in 1066, was a famous soldier named Geoffrey de Magnavil, taking his name from Magnavil, a town in the duchy he then possessed. He obtained as a reward for his assistance in the Conquest, Estates in Berks, Cambs, Essex, Herts, Middlesex, Northants, Oxford, Suffolk, and Warwickshire. Waldene, now Walden in Essex, became the family seat. So thoroughly was he trusted by William that he was made Constable of the Tower of London, which office he held till his death.

He had a son William, who married Margaret, only daughter and heiress of Eudo de Ric, steward to William for his duchy of Normandy.

The son of this William, was named after his Grandfather Geoffrey, and inherited from his mother the stewardship of Normandy.

By King Stephen, this Geoffrey de Magnavile or Mandeville was raised to the rank of Earl, but during the civil wars of Stephen's reign the Empress Maud by conferring upon him all that his grandfather previously held, including the custody of the Tower of London with additional grants besides, won him over to her side.

The influence wielded by Geoffrey, owing to his vast possessions made him a very formidable opponent to King Stephen. He invaded the King's lands, nor did he spare religious houses, amongst other places he attacked the Abbey of Ramsey, Hunts, which he captured; made a fort of the Church, and sold the ornaments taken therefrom, dividing the proceeds amongst his soldiers.

His wife was Rohesia, daughter of Alberic de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

Ramsey Abbey was for a time his headquarters, and when the King brought against it a force too formidable to be resisted, Earl Geoffrey retreated into the Fens.

The King advanced into the territory held by the Earl and fortified Burwell. One of the Manors in Burwell belonged to Ramsey Abbey, and the Castle was constructed within this Manor.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether the King strengthened an existing fortification or constructed an entirely new one.

The remains of the Castle consist of a piece of ruined wall, and extensive earthworks with a moat of considerable size and depth, these stand a short distance west of the church; and the plan of construction suggests that whatever might have been there before, the Castle is certainly the work of the period of Stephens' reign.

The position of Burwell castle was such that it threatened the communications of the Earl, and he attacked it in August, 1144. While riding round to reconnoitre the position, an archer within the Castle wounded him in the head; he was taken to Mildenhall and there died about the middle of September.

On account of the hostility he had shown to the Church, he died excommunicated and was refused Christian burial, but some Templars conveyed his body to London, where it was placed in the Old Temple Gardens. It is said to have been placed in a lead coffin and suspended from a tree, where it remained for nearly 20 years.

While the Earl lay wounded at Mildenhall the Abbot of Ramsey, repaired thither, and found that he had left instructions with his son to restore the Abbey, possibly it was this tardy repentance that induced Pope Alexander in 1163, to pronounce his absolution. After this his remains were interred at the New Temple where an effigy said to be his, exists.

The Manor on which the Castle stands had been given to Ramsey Abbey by King Edgar and Elflure de Langyath. On the Dissolution of the Monasteries this Estate was granted to Sir Edward North, who 5 years later surrendered it to the Crown.

Another Manor in this parish is that of 'Tiptofts' which takes its name from the baronial family of Tiptoft

which possessed it as early as the year 1277, before which it had belonged to the family of Camoys.

John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, who was executed at the Tower of London, (of which he had lately been Constable) in 1470, held this Manor, from him it passed by descent in the latter part of the 16th century to Sir Thomas Lovell; in 1632 it was held by the family of Marshe.

The 'Tiptofts' also owned another Manor in the parish called Dullingham's which was held in 1632 by the Cromwells, both the above in 1810 belonged to the Earl of Aylesford, whose father acquired them in marriage with the younger daughter of Charles Duke of Somerset.

A Manor called S. Omer's was owned in 1632 by the Goodwins, and then passed to the Isaacsons, and in 1810 was owned by Mr W. Sandiver of Newmarket.

There were formerly two Churches in Burwell. That of S. Andrew has entirely disappeared, though some remains of the West End were still standing in 1770.

The Ordnance Survey map marks the Girls' School which is built on the opposite side of the road from the present Church, but, very near to it, as being built on the site of St. Andrew's Church.

Some description of the present Church of S. Mary will be found in the Proceedings.

#### JERUSALEM GARDEN.

This is said to have been a Jewish burial ground.

In the reign of Henry II, a collection of money in connection with Jews, was made at Bottisham and also at Holm: the latter has not been identified, but Exning Holme lies just outside the boundary of the Parish of Burwell. It is possible that Jews at Holm and Bottisham had a burial ground at Burwell, distant some 5 or 6 miles.

From notes supplied by

W. O'FARREL HUGHES.

## Contents of Part 8, Vol. 3.

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### Papers.

	PAGE
I. INCUMBENTS OF THE COUNTY OF HUNTINGDON, by <i>Rev. W. M. Noble</i> .....	271
II. THE DEVILS DITCH, by <i>R. Stephenson, Esq.</i> .....	287
III. BURWELL, ITS CASTLE, &c., by <i>Rev. W. O'Farrel Hughes</i> .....	291
IV. WERKWELL, IN KIMBOLTON .....	294
V. SAWTRY ABBEY, HUNTINGDONSHIRE, by <i>S. Inskip Ladds, Esq.</i> .....	295
VI. REPORTS AND BALANCE SHEETS .....	323

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### Illustration.

PLAN OF SAWTRY ABBEY, HUNTS.