

Transactions
OF THE
Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire
Archæological Society

(FOUNDED A.D. 1900)



VOLUME IV. PART IV.

EDITED BY THE REV. W. M. NOBLE, B.A.
RECTOR OF WISTOW, HUNTS.

Cl

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY
G. H. TYNDALL, THE MINSTER PRESS

1923

PRICE (NON-MEMBERS) SEVEN SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE

Contents of Part 4, Vol. 4.

Papers.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| THE CARTULARY OF THE PRIORY OF ST. MARY, HUNTINGDON, by <i>The Rev. W. M. Noble</i> | 109 |
| A BELLARMINE JUG FOUND IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE, by <i>Mrs.</i> <i>Alice Yeatherd</i> | 125 |
| ABBOT'S RIPTON BRIEFS, by <i>The Rev. E. H. Vigers</i> | 127 |
| PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY, by <i>The Rev. John Griffin</i> .. | 160 |
| REPORT AND BALANCE SHEET | 162 |

PROCEEDINGS

OF

The Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire - Archaeological Society.

The first excursion, since 1914, which the Society has been able to arrange took place on July 1st, 1919, when about eighteen Members visited St. Albans. Mr. C. H. Ashdown, F.R.G.S., F.C.S., very kindly arranged to meet the party at the station and to act as guide; and to him the members are indebted for a most enjoyable day.

The Abbey Church was the first gem of antiquity to be visited: it is wonderfully rich in its variety of architecture, still possessing some remains of its original Saxon foundations; while of the Norman work, the church having been rebuilt by Abbot Paul de Caen (1077-1093), much of great interest remains. The great central Tower of Abbot Paul's Church, built of Roman bricks brought from Verulam, is 144 feet high. But of all the styles, the Abbey is richest in that known as Early English; while work of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is well represented.

In 1862 some well preserved mural paintings of thirteenth and fourteenth century date were discovered on the piers of the north arcade of the nave, under layers of lime-wash.

A treasure of the Church which interested the visitors was the beautiful-ecclesiastical brass of Abbot Thomas de la Mare (1349-1399), one of the finest known. It is interesting to know that English Churches are unique in the possession of large numbers of brasses, whereas the brasses once in the Continental Churches have largely been lost.

Perhaps one of the most interesting objects within the Abbey is the shrine of St. Alban; having been destroyed at the dissolution of the Monastery it is now rebuilt and is a monument to the skill and patience of the rebuilder.

Outside the Abbey Church one cannot but help wishing that the Abbey itself could be restored—even as the Shrine—on the now desolate site of its former splendour. To visit such historical places as this is to bring home very forcibly the reality of the troublous times of the middle ages. This Abbey, magnificent in

its architecture, equalling, if not surpassing, all other English Monasteries in its influence not only on the religious life of the Country but also politically and in the sphere of art and learning, was destroyed during those times of stress.

The great gateway of the Monastery still remains with its dungeons into one of which John Ball, the wandering preacher and champion of the poor, was cast to await his execution, in 1381. The gateway is used as part of St. Albans School today, which carries us back in thought to the early history of the Abbey.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries St. Albans was a centre of learning attracting students from all parts of the world. It was not an easy matter to become a member of the Monastery—Nicholas Breakspear, who afterwards became Pope, was refused admission as a monk. Cardinal Wolsey held the Abbacy *in commendam* from 1521 to 1529.

The tour of the Abbey Church and Great Gateway occupied the morning. Time, as is his wont on such occasions, made great and hurried strides. After a somewhat belated lunch, the party journeyed to the site of the Roman City, Verulam. The site of this ancient city (A.D. 42) at first is disappointing, having the appearance of open fields, but under able guidance and tuition the city rises before one's mental vision; but by no means is it necessary to visualize altogether this city. There is the actual causeway across the marsh, over which you pass from the Abbey Church to Verulam; also the ancient dykes, surmounted in places by remnants of very massive walls.

Owing to a very violent thunderstorm, the party were unable to traverse the site, but within the walls many and important buildings can be traced.

The storm drove the members hurriedly to St. Michael's Church, a building full of historic interest, containing a monument to Sir Francis Bacon who in 1620 was created Viscount St. Albans. His private residence was at Gorhambury, a mile and a half away. There is also within the Church an Elizabethan pulpit with the preacher's hour glass. In the vestry is a portion of an old doom picture painted on a wooden panel.

Amongst those who took part in this excursion were: the Reverends E. W. Porter, J. A. Ross, J. Griffin; Dr Newton, Mr. H. Downie, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Yeatherd, Miss Baldwin, Miss Carnegie and others.