

Transactions
OF THE
Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire
Archæological Society

(FOUNDED A.D. 1900)



VOLUME VI. PART III.

EDITED BY THE REV. E. H. VIGERS, M.A.
RECTOR OF ABBOTS RIPTON WITH LITTLE STUKELEY, HUNTS.

Gly

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY
MASON & DORMAN LTD., THE MINSTER PRESS

1940

PRICE (NON-MEMBERS) TEN SHILLINGS

Contents of Part 3, Vol. 6.

Papers.

	PAGE
INDEX OF WILLS PROVED IN THE PECULIAR COURTS by the <i>Rev. John A. Humphries, M.A.</i> ..	79
ROMANO-BRITISH BURIAL AT HUNTINGDON, by <i>J. R. Garrod, M.D.</i>	97
NOTES, by <i>J.R.G.</i>	98
DR W. M. PALMER. M.A., M.D., F.S.A., by <i>Catherine E. Parsons</i>	99
REPORT	102

Illustrations.

	PAGE
ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY FROM BOUGHTON, HUNTS. <i>to follow</i>	96
SPALDWICK MILL BEFORE FALL OF THE SAILS	
SPALDWICK MILL AFTER FALL OF THE SAILS	
ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY FROM HUNTINGDON <i>to face</i>	97

DR. W. M. PALMER, M.A., M.D., F.S.A.

BY CATHERINE E. PARSONS.

WILLIAM MORTLOCK PALMER was born of yeoman stock on February 25th, 1866, at Meldreth, Cambridgeshire, where his family had lived for about three hundred years. He was the second son, in the family of nine children, of George Palmer and his wife Sarah. From childhood he possessed a pronounced personality and took for himself an independent line. After attending a dame's school for a while at Melbourn, he went on to Victoria House School, Royston, until 1881, when he was apprenticed to the late Alderman A. S. Campkin, a Cambridge chemist. At twenty-one he qualified as a chemist and druggist, and shortly after entered Charing Cross Hospital as a medical student.

During his six years in Cambridge his love for his native county became firmly established. He was at that time a great reader on a variety of subjects, particularly astronomy and botany. Whilst at Cambridge most of the local specimens were collected for his herbarium and his knowledge of the flora of Cambridgeshire became comprehensive. Botany was the first subject upon which he wrote in his contributions to the *Elite Magazine*, a manuscript magazine which was started by him and his eldest sister, and ran from 1885 to 1894. His hospital days gave him the opportunity to begin his local research work at the Public Record Office, the British Museum and Somerset House. After qualifying M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. and L.S.A. in 1892, he stayed on at Charing Cross Hospital for a time as Resident Obstetric Officer. He next became House Surgeon of the Portland Town Free Dispensary, then took *locum* work, and was for three years a Boat Surgeon to the P. & O. Company.

During and between such appointments he collected much of his record material on Cambridgeshire. At first records relating to his native parish engrossed him, but he soon realised the importance of transcribing certain classes of records covering the entire county. Some of this work was published in the *East Anglian*, then edited by his friend the Rev. C. H. Evelyn-White, F.S.A. Later on Dr. Palmer became assistant editor for a short time, sharing both the work and financial loss of this valuable publication until it ceased in 1910.

Dr. Palmer was an ardent supporter of Mr. Evelyn-White's idea of founding our Cambridgeshire and Huntingdoushire

Archæological Society, and lost no opportunity of giving his help to further this project, which materialized in 1900. He served on the Council of this Society, and contributed papers to its Transactions, the last being an account of the Society's founder, which appeared on page 55.

Dr. Palmer settled in practice at Linton in 1900, and joined the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in the following year. It is difficult to assess the work he did for that Society, and the happiness he found in that work. His valuable documentary researches enabled him to reconstruct the early history of Cambridgeshire parishes, houses, families and much else in a way unequalled even by William Cole or any other former Cambridgeshire antiquary. Later he became an authority on the Ecclesiastical Records at Ely. For many years he served on the Council of the C.A.S. and on many Committees. In addition he became the recognised authority on the antiquities of Cambridge Town. His lectures were appreciated both in the Borough and County. He made large contributions both to the Proceedings of the C.S.A. and to its special publications. He took also an active part in the excavations undertaken by the Society and was the leading spirit of its Photographic Record.

With his love of hard work, his wonderful brain and memory, and his splendid physique he was always able to get through an extraordinary amount of work. One of his charms was his natural modesty about his learning. His tolerance and generous nature will be long remembered. During our life-long friendship he more than once remarked "leisure has no place in my life."

As a medical man he was considered far in advance of the ordinary general practitioner, and to the more modern members of the profession his knowledge of dispensing and pharmacy was astounding. When he came to Linton his practice consisted of ten straggling parishes. Although, like his antiquarian work, that of his practice continued to increase, he conceived the idea of taking the Durham M.D. This he did in 1908. With occasional assistance he went through the Great War single-handed. He was Medical Officer to the V.A.D. 16 Hospital and the Prisoners of War Camp at Linton, for which work he was awarded medals both from our own and the Belgian Governments. His practice continued to increase, stretching many miles round Linton and it was not until 1920 that life for Dr. Palmer became less strenuous through his good fortune in taking Dr. H. M. Wilson into partnership, so that his medical work became less of a tie. He retired in 1925, and continued to live at Richmonds, his house at Linton, where he fulfilled all the duties required of him in the social life of the parish.

One of his pleasures was the annual wild flower show which he held for the school children in his garden. He became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1921. In 1933 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the County and sat on the Linton Bench, and in 1935 he was further honoured by an honorary M.A. from the University of Cambridge and he was invited to become a member of Pembroke College.

He did not like to be regarded as a collector of antiques, yet many came into his possession, over a hundred of which were given by him to the Cambridge and County Folk Museum on the Council of which he served. He also served on the Committee of the Museum at Saffron Walden.

Some idea of Dr. Palmer's work and industry may be gathered from the catalogue of the Cambridge University Library, where thirty-three publications are listed under his name. To this Library he bequeathed his wonderful collection of record manuscripts as well as his collection of ancient deeds and maps.

Dr. Palmer died, a bachelor, at Linton on the 19th October, 1939, at the age of 73. He was buried at Melbourn with his forefathers in the burial-ground of the Congregational Chapel.