

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

AT ITS THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 19, 1873,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY

(INCLUDING THE ANNUAL REPORTS XXVII—XXXII),

1866—1873.

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ALSO

**Communications**

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XVII.

BEING No. 3 OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED FOR THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY.

SOLD BY DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.; AND MACMILLAN & CO.  
G. BELL AND SONS, LONDON.

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1878.

*Price Eight Shillings.*

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN  
COMMUNICATIONS,

BEING

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS

OF THE

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society.**

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1866—1873.

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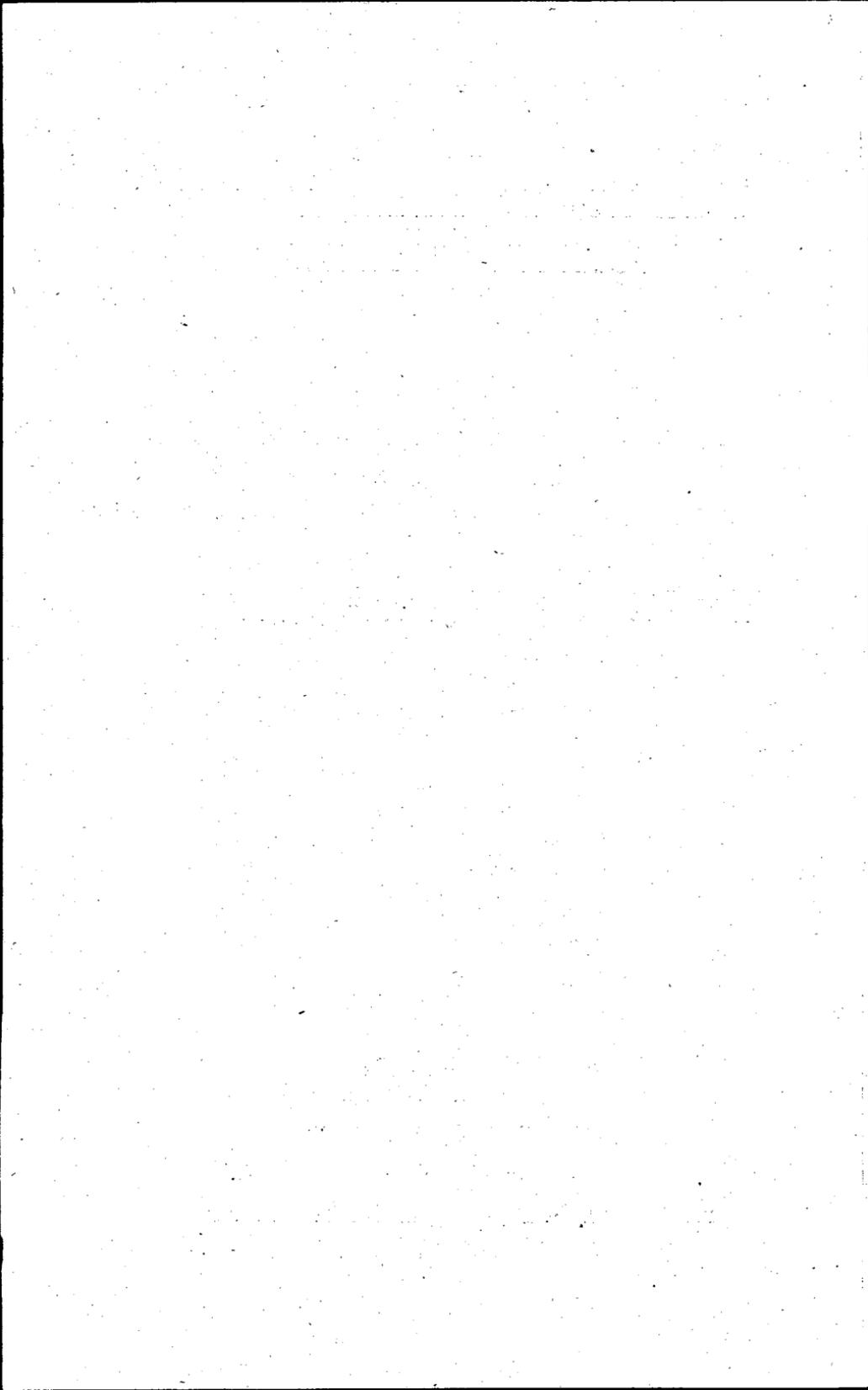
CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A.

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

M.DCCC.LXXVIII.

N.B. No. XVI. was erroneously printed on the title No. XV.



## CONTENTS.

1866—1867.

	PAGE
VIII. A view of the state of the University in Queen Anne's reign. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., King's College. (With a facsimile.) . . . . .	119
IX. On the Earliest English Engravings of the Indulgence known as the 'Image of Pity.' Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., King's College. (With a facsimile.) . . . . .	135
X. Two Letters of Sir Isaac Newton. Communicated by the Rev. T. G. BONNEY, B.D., St John's College . . . . .	153

1867—1868.

XI. A Letter from Bishop Bale to Archbishop Parker. Communicated by the Rev. H. R. LUARD, M.A., University Registry . . . . .	157
XII. A Letter from Dr Bentley to Lord Chancellor King. Communicated by the Rev. H. R. LUARD, M.A., University Registry . . . . .	175
XIII. On the Musea or Studiola in Dr Legge's Building at Caius College. Communicated by C. C. BABINGTON, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., Professor of Botany . . . . .	177
XIV. An Inventory of the stuff in the College Chambers (King's College), 1598. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., University Librarian . . . . .	181
XV. On some entries relating to the Marriage and Children of John More, apparently the father of Sir Thomas More. Communicated by W. ALDIS WRIGHT, Esq., M.A., Trinity College . . . . .	199

1868—1869.

XVI. An Account of the Election of Sir Francis Bacon and Dr Barnaby Goche as Burgesses in Parliament in April, 1614, written by Dr Duport, Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Communicated by W. ALDIS WRIGHT, Esq., M.A., Trinity College . . . . .	203
---	-----

## 1869—1870.

	PAGE
XVII. Letter from Peter Salmon, M.A. to Samuel Collins, D.D., Provost of King's College, written from Padua in 1630. Communicated by the Rev. T. BROCKLEBANK, M.A., King's College	211
XVIII. Some account of St Vigor's Church, Fulbourn, lately enlarged and restored. Communicated by ARTHUR W. BLOMFIELD, Esq., M.A., Trinity College, Architect. (With four plates.)	215
XIX. Remarks on a Bronze Statuette found at Earith, Hunts. Communicated by S. S. LEWIS, Esq., B.A., Corpus Christi College. (With two lithographs.)	231

## 1870—1871.

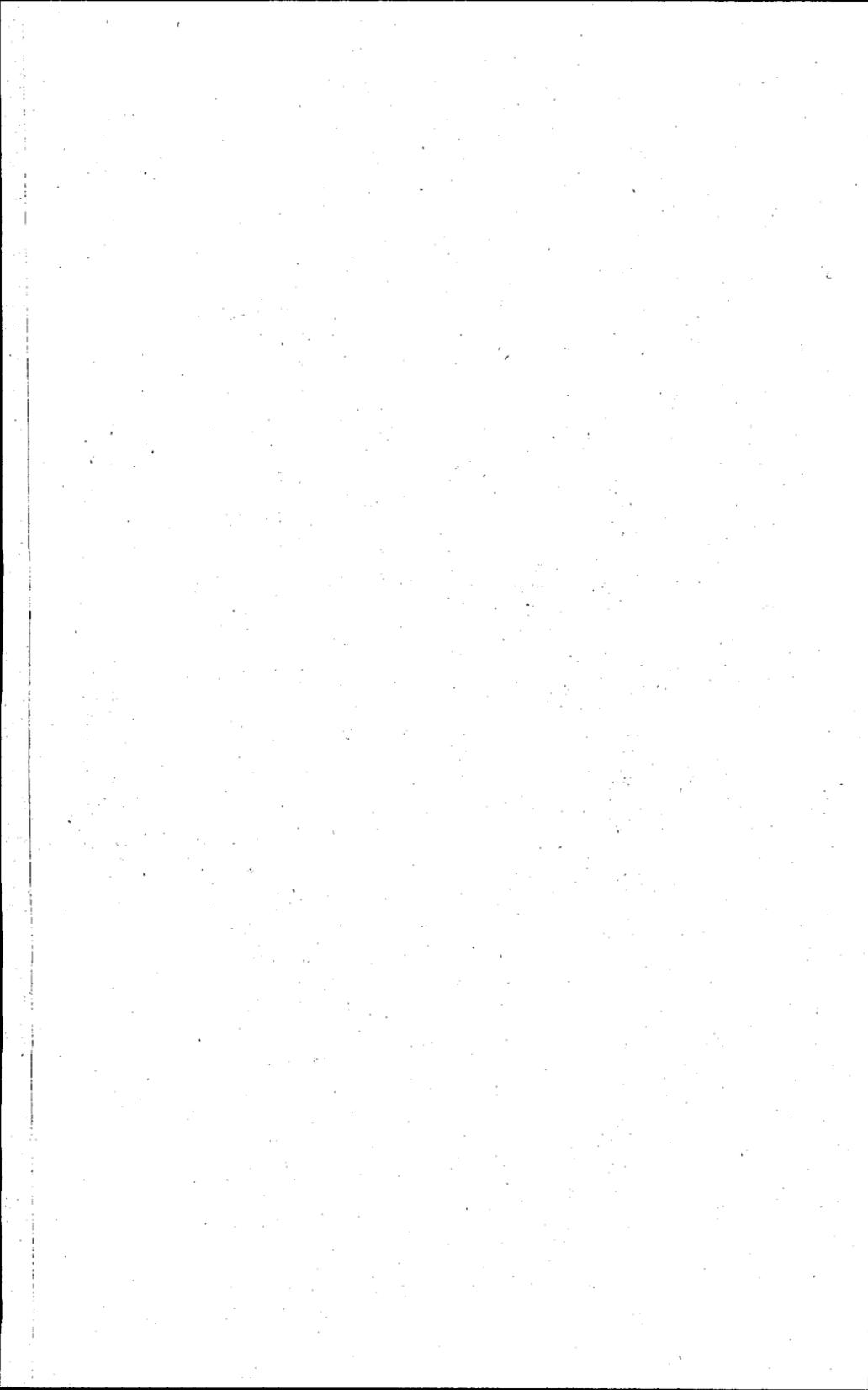
XX. On the Engraved Device used by Nicolaus Gotz of Sletzstat, the Cologne Printer, in 1474. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., University Librarian	237
XXI. On Two Engravings on Copper, by G. M., a wandering Flemish Artist of the xv—xvith century. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., University Librarian	247
XXII. On a Bronze Ram now in the Museum at Palermo. Communicated by S. S. LEWIS, Esq., B.A., Corpus Christi College	259

## 1871—1872.

XXIII. On the oldest written remains of the Welsh Language. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., University Librarian	263
XXIV. On the West Towers of York Minster. Communicated by F. A. PALEY, Esq., M.A.	269
XXV. A Letter to the University from Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter. Communicated by the Rev. H. R. LUARD, M.A., University Registrar	273
XXVI. On the Collection of Portraits belonging to the University before the Civil War. Communicated by HENRY BRADSHAW, Esq., M.A., University Librarian	274

## 1872—1873.

XXVII. Notes on some Remains of Moats and Moated Halls at Coton, Granchester, Barnwell Abbey, and Fen Ditton. With Remarks on Manor-House and College Boundary Walls, Fish-Ponds, and <i>Columbaria</i> . Communicated by F. A. PALEY, Esq., M.A.	287
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XXVII. NOTES ON SOME REMAINS OF MOATS AND  
MOATED HALLS AT COTON, GRANTCHESTER, BARN-  
WELL ABBEY, AND FEN DITTON. WITH REMARKS  
ON MANOR-HOUSE AND COLLEGE BOUNDARY WALLS,  
FISH-PONDS, AND *COLUMBARIA*. Communicated by  
F. A. PALEY, Esq., M.A.

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[May 19, 1873.]

THESE are all sites of some antiquarian interest; but I do not know if any accurate account exists of them, or of the houses or the families connected with them; or if in recent times they have been much explored, or indeed, if they have attracted any attention.

That at Coton is simple, and not a vestige remains of the old house, which I suppose occupied the site, or nearly so, of the present Rectory. One side of the moat, that on the west, is yet tolerably perfect; that which ran at right angles to it on the south is also visible, with its embankment, though it is partly filled up. There are faint, but sufficient, traces of it also along the north side of the present Rectory garden; but none can be made out on the eastern side, unless indeed the present pathway, leading from the field into the main road, now occupies that side of the moat, filled up for the purpose. This moat, or rather, perhaps, fishpond, was supplied by the spring still existing and still used by the villagers on the north side of the church, where it forms a small and shallow pond.

There can be little doubt, from its situation, that this spring was one of the very numerous holy wells; and the site of a Norman chancel, of rather early date, close by, may probably be referred to traditions connected with it as a sacred locality. Be this as it may, it cannot be doubted that the water from this well once filled the moat. The streamlet still passes along one side of it, as I have said, and then runs off across the field to the south, into the brook just below. There are vestiges of a trench at the south-east corner of the moat, extending along the present hedge, and perhaps this formed the outlet or an extension of the moat in that direction. I cannot learn that any record remains of a building within the narrow area of this moat. I incline to think it was the site of the old Rectory. That *some* hall or house once stood here can hardly be doubted, from the analogy of very many similar sites.

This however is but a small and insignificant example. At Grantchester there is a much more extensive moat connected with the picturesque and nearly unaltered old Manor house on the south-west side of the church. Part of this moat, which was much more complete a few years ago, runs along the side of the road towards Trumpington, continuing from the end of the old Manor wall that bounds the road from the east end of the church. This wall is built of peculiarly shaped bricks, four inches in thickness and a foot long,—a very uncommon proportion. It seems as old as the Manor house, about the time of James I., or the first Charles at least. The moat was supplied at this end by a spring, which may yet be noticed, though it is now only a neglected and dirty though rather deep pond, within the inclosure of the wall, which separates it from the road, whence it may be seen by looking over, the site being marked by hazel-trees. That it is a spring is proved by the oozy ground around it. The moat, now turned into a garden, takes a bend towards the west just where the road turns in the opposite direction towards Trumpington;

and you follow it by getting over the stile. It is very perfect here, and forms a wide and rather deep ditch, fringed with very old pollard willows and maples. The back entrance to the Manor house, now a farm yard, is probably the original one; for it is flanked by a deep arm of the moat on the right, or east side, and by a pond on the west, or left side. This pond (or ponds, for there are two) was the feeder or reservoir of the moat. If you follow it, you will find it is (or rather was) supplied by a tortuous channel, now partly filled up, but marked by a line of old walnut and other trees, from two other ponds, evidently springs, lying considerably further to the west. You pass close by these ponds by a field-path over a stile, on the left hand of the road that leads from Grantchester to the Barton road. They seem to have been formerly connected, and undoubtedly were the feeders of the nearer ponds, which are on a little higher level than the moat. The old *columbarium*, or dove-cote, was a few years ago turned into a cottage, which is conspicuous from the road. The original Manor wall, which seems to have joined the church wall, though it is now separated from it by the lodge gateway, is continued round the south side of the church, and then joins another wall, now the western boundary of the churchyard, and inclosing the Manor garden. The western, or further wall from the church, ends at the point where the ditch that fed the moat meets it at an angle or elbow in its course from the springs.

This affords a good example of a feature very common in manor houses, and still to be seen in some of the colleges, of an inclosing wall carried down to the edge of a ditch, moat or river. Thus, the very old wall that encloses St Peter's grove, as seen from Coe fen, is carried to the brink of the ditch that separates the college garden. The wall of Trinity Hall, on the left hand just before you cross the Garret Hostel iron bridge, extended to the edge of the river, the present garden wall along

the river being more recent. Queens' College has also a wall extending along the river, perhaps as old as the college itself, and another very old wall which may be seen from the Newnham side. This formerly came down to the edge of the ditch or moat that extended to the river parallel to the road. The square garden has a somewhat later wall round two sides; but the original garden was between the road and the south wall of the present square garden, and occupied the site of what is now the kitchen garden and the cottage lodge. But the best example of this kind of coped brick wall is that which bounds the fellows' garden on the side furthest from the college. It seems as old as the foundation of the college, and is not only very perfect, but it extends along the length of that garden, which is one of the largest in Cambridge. Still another very old brick wall of this kind runs along the back of the Hospital garden in Tennis-court Road. As it is at right angles with the old part of the still remaining wall in front of the Museum in Pembroke Street, I have sometimes fancied they may have been connected; but I know nothing of the history of either. A portion of old wall, apparently once connected with that in Pembroke Street, remains behind the Corn Exchange, going from thence to the Post Office, and another small portion adjoins the house of the late Mr Kerrich. All these walls have a coping formed on a simple but most effective principle. The upper course of bricks projects end-wise or diagonally, so as to present a saw-tooth appearance, carrying a brick laid flat upon it and borne by it as a kind of corbel-table. Then two bricks, end to end, slope upwards, and the top course is formed of bricks laid close together erect on their sides, or laid flat end to end.

It is a question if these moats were not often used merely, or at least chiefly, as fish-ponds. I have seen many moats where a fourth side is wanting, and not a vestige of it can be found. As a rule, old ditches filled up can nearly always be

traced. I am very familiar with two, where this partial moat is to be seen, which are interesting as inclosing considerable remains of buildings of the fourteenth century; one is called "Low farm," close to Peterborough Cathedral, at the south-east end, and another, three or four miles off, called Eybury, the burgh or stronghold of the village of Eye. Both these were abbey granges in the old time. Low farm has a good example of a *columbarium*. Fish-ponds were then much more cared for, because sea-fish could not be brought fresh from the sea from the badness of the roads and the length of the journey. Stewed eels and carp and tench were then much used as ordinary food. I do not know if many have noticed that the *vivarium* or fish-pond of Barnwell abbey remains still as nearly perfect as possible,—an oblong rectangular depression, on the site of the present Barnwell spring, which supplied it. The most perfect I have seen, by far, is at the curious old Bishop's palace at Lyddington, near Uppingham, where the ponds were laid out with great regularity and skill, though now drained. I recommend any one who has not explored it to spend a day in doing so. It is now used, I think, as a kind of bede-house, and everything remains as it was before the reformation. There is also a fine moated house at Woodcroft, near Peterborough, of the fourteenth century, where the moat is still deep and full of water, and has its old draw-bridge, if I remember right. But moated houses, in fact, are very common in Northamptonshire and Rutlandshire, as in other counties, such as Norfolk and Suffolk. Probably many may still be traced, though so nearly filled up as to escape general observation. There is a very old farm house at Cherry Hinton, on one side of which are seen remains of a trench. How far these were moats for protection, or merely fish-ponds, or both, is often a curious question of antiquarian inquiry.

A word or two on *columbaria*, dove-cotes, which are par-

ticularly common in moated granges, of course as supplying a conveniently accessible and unfailing kind of food. I have seen many of them, some of them of considerable age. They are generally without windows, with one door, and an open wooden louvre or turret, at the top. They are constructed internally with numerous holes or cells for the doves to build in. A most curious one, of the end of the fifteenth century, exists near that fine Elizabethan mansion which many know as the White Hall at Shrewsbury. Here a curious and ingenious contrivance may still be seen. A central pillar moves round on a pivot, and from a strong projecting arm hangs fixed a dragging ladder, so that access is given at all heights and to all parts of the circular building. One is surprised that such things as *columbaria* are not more in use now as appendages to a farm. With the present price of provisions, farmers might realise a great deal by attending more than they do to small profits. Pigeons are now worth 2s. 6d. a couple, and they cost next to nothing to breed and keep. Possibly from the frequency of the diet arose the saying that no man can live on pigeons every day for a month together. It is like the salmon of the Severn.

Another old, though small, house and manor wall still stands near the site of Storey's alms-houses in Castle end. The house is an excellent specimen, and very picturesque, though much dilapidated, and with its carved oak windows partly blocked and disfigured. The old wall and gateway in front were pulled down a year or two ago, and to save a few pounds, rebuilt in the plainest and ugliest style, the old one being an excellent specimen of ornamental red brick masonry. The enclosure must have been large, for the manor wall bounds the road in Castle Street for some way, and portions of it are continued on the other side down Mount Pleasant or the sloping way leading to the Madingley Road. A portion well worth inspecting may be seen by going through a door-

way into a small court in this part. By its style, I should think it is of the date of James I. or Elizabeth. These manor walls, it may be remarked, are nearly always constructed on the same principle, with a coping carried by bricks projecting endways or diagonally, as may be seen in the old botanical garden wall in Pembroke Street, mentioned before.

The old Manor house, a very fine one, at Barnwell, had also, to judge by present appearances, a moat or fish-pond in front of it. There is a marked depression in the field just in front of it; and the wall, which is built in part of stones from the old Abbey, appears to occupy the site of the old ditch that fed it from the river. Part of this ditch remains, viz. that next the river, separating two fields on the right as you walk towards Chesterton. It is fringed, as these moat ditches almost invariably are, with old trees; but it stops, *i.e.* is filled in, where the wall to the Manor house begins. The old moat or fish-pond supplied by this ditch may have belonged to the Abbey, and have been filled up when the Manor house was built. I have heard, I think, that a stream once ran here; but I cannot verify any such tradition by present appearances.

A particularly interesting site is the old Manor house near the church at Fen Ditton. It is well worth a careful exploration; it would take too much time now to describe it in full. The moat or ditch running at the back or river side has the old wall running down to it, and the bank is occupied by farm buildings, partly of considerable age. Two elder trees may here be seen which have attained the unusual girth of four feet, this tree being one of very slow growth, and, like the ivy and the whitethorn, however old, rarely attaining great size. On the other side, viz. near the pathway leading up to the church, a depression in the field was formerly, I believe, a fish-pond. I even found at the bottom of the old wall, opposite the path, the drain or sluice that probably supplied it from the moat or ditch that ran up from the river by the

side of the Rectory garden. The field between the Manor house at Fen Ditton and the river was then more or less a bog; and a considerable portion remains of a raised causeway which led across it to the Rectory, the Manor house, and the church. The part nearest to the village may be traced; but the causeway has been dug down and used to fill the side ditches in order to level the field. This raised way extends parallel with the river to the little plantation of trees, where it suddenly ends; and here, I conjecture (from some marks of an abrupt curve towards the river), was a ferry that brought people from Chesterton to Fen Ditton. The Manor house, which had a park in front, had a double avenue up to it, part of which still remains; but between the central row of trees there is now an oblong fish-pond of considerable size. I think this fine old Manor house, with its picturesque grounds, remarkably fine elms, and its old yew tree, and really pretty situation close to the church, is not as much appreciated as it should be. It seems about the same date as Madingley Hall; it is still fairly perfect, and could easily be restored, as a smaller one of about the same age has been, so effectively and in such good taste, on the Chesterton Road. Windows have been barbarously blocked up, but the bulk of the building, externally at least, remains nearly unaltered.