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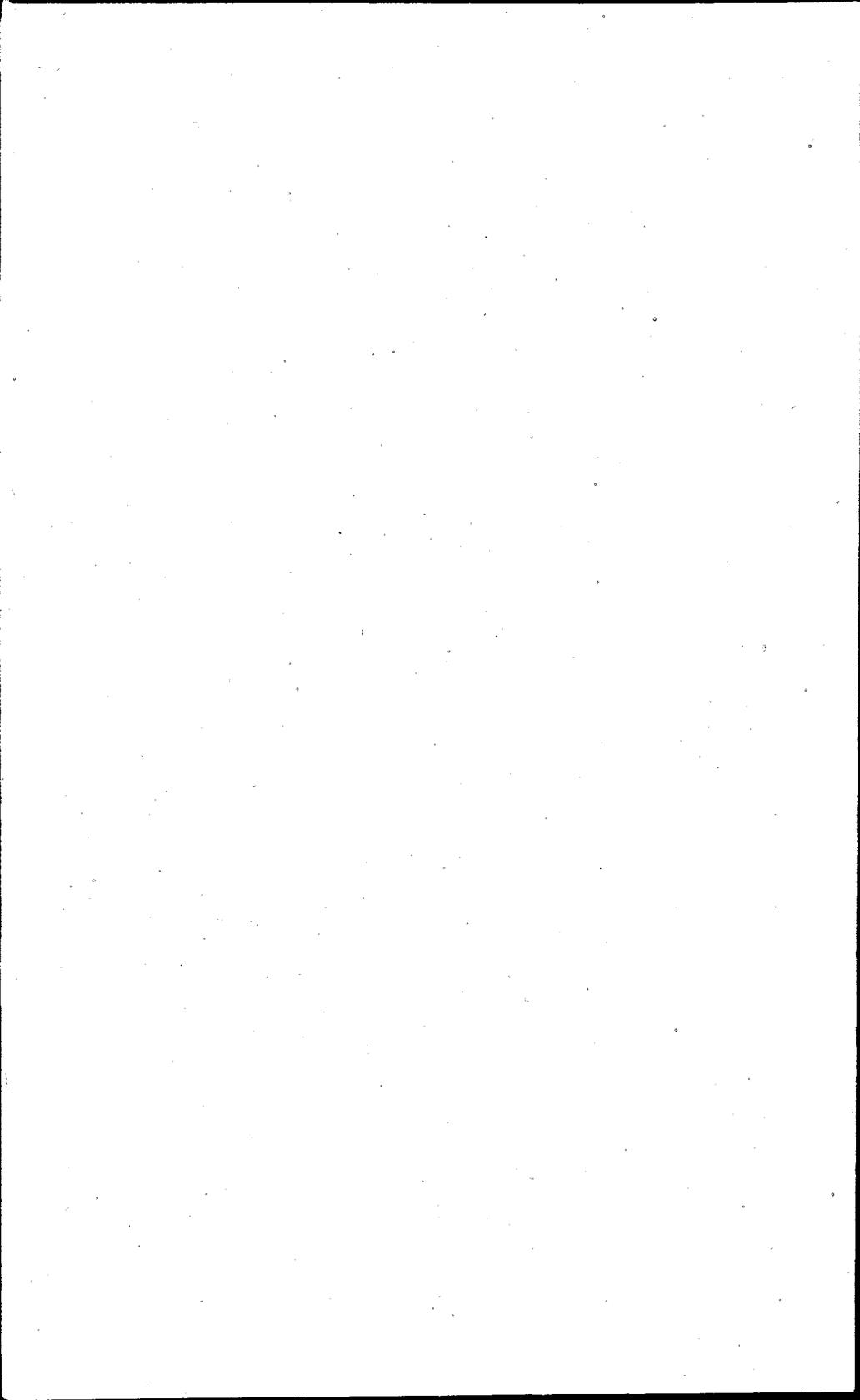
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Mr E. M. BELOE made the following communication :

ON THE GREAT FEN ROAD AND ITS PATH TO THE SEA.

I APPROACH this subject in the presence of this Society with some diffidence as regards myself, but confidence in my authorities, for the paper will simply be a string of authorities in support of the suggestions which I make.

About eight miles to the east of Lynn is a village now almost deserted, but retaining its church, with a tower in a very early pre-Norman style, which looks on a village green; it stands on a slight bank, sloping down to the road running past it due north and south. This village in Domesday is called simply Thorpe¹,—its designation in Freebridge Hundred being sufficient to distinguish it from the many Thorpes in East Anglia. In the Institution Books of Norwich it is called Ailesway-Thorpe,—the Thorpe on the Ailesway, or the Thorpe on the Ægelsway, the great road dedicated to the god Ægel, the archer-god of Scandinavian mythology, in the same manner that the village Wansford is Wodensford. Many places are called after Ægel, as Aylesbury, Aylesford—written in ancient charters Ægelsbury, Ægelsford. If we go along this road southwards for about 40 yards from “Thorpe” we come to a field called Walton field, containing 600 or 700 acres. Here was a mound, which by an unlucky accident was removed without having been examined, so that there is no record of its contents. It stood at the foot of the Kettle Hills, named after the Scandinavian invader Ketel, often mentioned

¹ For the roads and places mentioned in this description, see Plate xxvi.

in Norfolk, and under this mound were probably buried his followers, whose remains were about three years ago taken up and reburied. There is only left now for us an earthen jar, which, by the kindness of Mr Anthony Hamond, I am able to exhibit to you this evening. The bones which were found were of great size. The bodies, it is said, lay as men do in a tent, with feet to the pole; and the surface under the bodies was black with human remains. It was a very fine tumulus, standing on an eminence overlooking the whole country; but it is gone, and we can say no more.

Turning on the road again, northwards, in a field to the left, about 100 yards, is another tumulus standing, covered with aged trees. It is on the very summit of a hill, and is seen for miles all round. I have been told that when persons are rabbiting here bones are discovered. The first tumulus is southward just over the boundary of Ailesway-Thorpe, now distinguished by the neighbouring village as Gayton Thorpe. The second tumulus is to the north, on the bounds of the parish of this Ailesway-Thorpe, which I will now call Gayton Thorpe. Whether tribes met here in conflict, and these two tumuli contained the remains of the killed, I must leave to conjecture. Along this road, now all deserted, Roman coins have been found close to it on either side, four of which I have with me. The road stretches to the south over to Narford, where it passes the Nar,—not, I am told, by the present bridge, but through where the lake now is, and the older map points to this; then, turning abruptly to Narborough, it reaches the Devil's Dyke, to which it clings close until it passes the Little Ouse at Brandon Ferry; then going south it joins the Icknield way. To the north it is the path of the Great Fen Road to the Sea.

There is a village about a mile from Gayton Thorpe called Gayton. From Gayton, for seven miles in a straight line, is a road without villages to Gaywood, where it ends on a pro-

montory of land before it reaches the marsh at Lynn. This road was then extended over a causeway till it entered Lynn by Littleport street, through the Dam Gate, now Norfolk street, straight to the Ouse. These two villages distinguished by the name of Gay, and being at either end of a road, rather suggest their name. And this is more than a suggestion; it is, I think, capable of proof. As is well known, there are three divisions of the older Teutonic languages: the old High German, the old Low German, and the Scandinavian. Now the old High German for ford is *wat*. The Scandinavian form of the same word is *gat*, which we have in Catte-gat, and which comes down to our shores marked in the maps of the last century as Happisburgh Gat, St Nicholas' Gat, and the Gat sand through which runs the sea-way to Fleet. So also the southern Worth becomes the northern Garth. This interchanging of consonants is well acknowledged; but the change of *g* into *w* has never been so clearly defined as I think it might be. I am not now referring to the Teutonic *w* which had to be adapted to the French having no *w*, and had to be turned into *gu*. That is another phase of the same principle. But I am now speaking only of the absolute change of the *g* to *w*. This we have in garnish and varnish, which are the same words; we have gage and wage; we have Copen-hagen, which is synonymous with our haven. We have the Hague; and to come to very recent times, this change is even acknowledged in the Norfolk dialect, for Forby says that wallop is equivalent to gallop. I will encumber you with only two more examples—Gatton is on the Watling street and is the Way-town; our Watton in like manner is on the Paddars way; and the Way-land Hundred is named so because the Paddars way goes through its centre. Watford, in Hertfordshire, is on an important ancient road; and Watlington, in Oxfordshire, is on the Icknield way. If the "ing" is descriptive, Watlington is the town of the people on the Way;

and this points to an explanation of Watlington in Clackclose Hundred as the town of the people on the passage of the Ouse, or of one of the important roads from Stow passing through it. And again, taking this road eastward, we go through Gately to Guist on the Wensum. Now Guist looks a very unpromising etymology, but in Domesday it is Gegge Set—the settlement on the Gegge or ford—and if we soften, as is the custom in the English of Saxon words, the final gge—as in day from dæg—we shall get in “Gey” something very near our Gayton and Gaywood. Having now, I think, proved that we have here the Wayton and the Waywood at the two ends of this road leading from the Ailesway, we can give you further examples of its use in Fotheringay, which is the Ford across the Nene, going completely round the Castle Hill. We have also Bungay, the “Fort” ford, and Gayton in Lincolnshire is on the road from Burgh to Caistor Castle,—both names suggestive of early settlements; and I think we shall see that this word “gay” will be of very great assistance to us hereafter.

We all know that there are four great roads in England which had in early times the protection of the King’s peace. Two of them went north and south, and two went east and west. They were under the jurisdiction of the central authority; the smaller roads that went from town to town were under the care of the counties¹. These four great roads were the great communications of the country. They have now for nearly their whole length become track-ways, bare of traffic, which has passed to the roads crossing from village to village; for it is one mark of the ancient track-way that it escapes all villages and goes in a direct course, and we can note the change whereby routes passed from village to village, by the laws themselves. The statute of Winchester, 1285, commanded that highways leading from one market-town to another should be enlarged,—

¹ Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Inst.*, Vol. I. 447; *Arch. Journal*, Vol. XIV. p. 99.

the market-town being of course every village or nearly so,—that all bushes, dykes, and trees should be removed 200 yards from the centre, and in case of murders thereon the lords should be fined at the King's pleasure¹. The King's peace, which was only specially conferred upon the four great highways of the kingdom, we here find transferred to the roads from village to village, which have now become the means of communication across the country. This was previously given wholly and solely to the earlier great highways. They were then the highways, and the roads from them to the towns the bye-ways or town roads, and this seems to account for the term "highways and bye-ways." The two great highways which are of interest to us are the Ermine street, going from north to south, and the Icknield way, from the north-east to the south-west. To obtain communication from the Ermine street as it passes the great station of Castor in Northamptonshire, to Lincoln, and thence to the Humber, into the land of the Iceni, and southwards to the Icknield street, it was necessary to pass the Great Fen, then, I need hardly tell you, completely flooded with water in winter.

To understand the passage of this great fen road, bridging as it were the barrier, and carrying the traffic from central Britain to the important country of the Iceni, it will be necessary to give you a slight description of the Fens,—not for your information, for you know them, but in order to form a kind of sketch-map, so that you may appreciate the statements which follow. The fens are a bay, bounded by the high land, which frequently drops down abruptly into them, sometimes sending out a spur, a kind of promontory; and within this basin rise up the islands which form the lands at Whittlesey, March, and Chatteris². The whole of this basin, except these islands, has an underlay of peat. Over this peat, from

¹ Stubbs' *Documents*, 1870, p. 463.

² These are coloured yellow on the map (Plate xxvii).

the coast inland, was deposited by the sea a layer of silt in different depths¹. I do not think this spreading out of silt has been sufficiently considered. It goes right to the sea at Lynn, Hunstanton, Holme, and Brancaster. It overlies the peat from the shores inland throughout the greater part of what is called the fen district. Where it has not covered the peat, there of course the peat is uppermost, and is pure fen². This silt formation will be a very important subject for remark in what follows. Now to get over this great fen, from the land at the west to the land at the east, was a great effort of our ancestors, and they constructed one of the greatest works which is to be found in Britain, and it is of this I have to treat. The first appearance of it is a mile or three-quarters of a mile to the north of Whittlesey. It runs westward to Stanground (Plate xxvi), and how it reaches the Ermine street I do not intend to trouble you with this evening. When it goes eastward, the first thing it has to pass is the small strip of fen to Eastrea, which it crosses by a layer of gravel, only appearing now by a small section on this eastern side. Its thickness is about 2 ft. or 3 ft., but it has been removed on this small piece of fen, which is about 300 or 400 yards across³. It then goes on, still to the north, to the little village of Coates (Plate xxviii, No. 7), reaches Eldernell, and then goes sharp to the south-east in order to find the fen and grapple with it. The high land here drops down suddenly, and at its extreme point, enclosing a large space, is a camp, or perhaps it may be a fortified village. It is a kind of defence which might have enclosed either. Mr Ground, from whom I have received every kindness and attention, resides

¹ The part of the fen covered with silt is coloured brown on the map.

² The fen uncovered with peat is coloured a light black.

³ The Sections are given on Plate xxviii, and are all marked on the map (Plate xxvii), numbered where taken with numbers corresponding to those on the plate of sections.

at this spot; and his sons, Mr William Ground and Mr George Ground, have worked this camp or village with great industry, and the Roman finds have been very successful. I have the pleasure of exhibiting some of these (Plate XXIX)¹. There is pure Samian ware, with the potters' marks upon it, and several vases, two or three of which are probably from the neighbouring furnaces of Castor. There have also been found there two flint celts, and a bronze hammer of the usual type. The road drops into the fen, as I have said, and for the first quarter of a mile its course is a field-road, to which it owes its preservation. I give you here a section of it (Plate XXVIII, No. 6). When it leaves this duty it continues its course over the pure fen; but, unfortunately, some 20 years ago, by the order of Mr Childers, one mile of it was taken away bodily to make a road, which runs parallel to it. Fortunately it remains here in three parts, marked upon the recent Ordnance 6-inch map. I am able to give you a section of one of these parts (Ibid. No. 5), but it affords no possible idea of the very striking appearance that so slight an elevation as 3 ft. 6 in. of gravel running across a dead level country has. It really appears a very grand work; and when we consider that the whole road was laid on trees, now as perfect as when they were put down, and that the gravel is so hard that it is impossible to make any impression upon it, it seems a great pity that such a monument of industry and usefulness should have been removed for the sake of saving a few shillings. It is going now, and the 47 yards which remain will very soon be a thing of the past. But I am glad to have been able to keep some record of it by sections and description. The track of it runs over the fields; until it has to perform its original object, for about another half-mile; and it is there lost entirely except by the gravel which

¹ All were found at Eldernell, except the small broken dish second from the right as you face the plate, which is the one often referred to as belonging to Mr Curtis of Chatteris.

was not removed, and which slightly remains upon the peat, until it reaches the high land by March (Plate xxviii, Nos. 5^a, 4^a). Here it enters the high land, after a passage of four miles, at a place called Grandford, which evidently implies its name,—the Great Ford. It is astonishing how cunningly it runs. It hugged the gravel promontory at Eldernell until it was obliged to part with it, and then finds on the opposite shore, as it were, a projection to take it on its way. It runs by the side of the elevated land and over it on to the other side of this March formation. And now it is clear why, of all the islands that run down the centre of the fen, this is the only spot that is called the “March” or boundary; it tells of the division of Mercia and East Anglia; like “Devizes” in Wiltshire, which is its Latin substitute, and which marks on the road from London to Bath the division in their contests of the Saxon and the Celt.

And now comes a point of very great interest. On the eastern side of the island where March stands, the gravel projects in a kind of ridge, with deep fen on either side. At the extreme eastern point of this ridge,—and the Great Fen road runs on the northern slope of it,—the silt begins, and the silt and the gravel there seem to kiss each other. It is evident to the eye that it is so; and on taking the plan annexed to the report of the Geological Survey of the Fens this is clearly seen¹. Now this projection to the east of March, and the nearing of the silt to it, was taken advantage of by the men who made this road, and the road passes exactly at the point where they join. From this point to Denver, where it runs up to the high land of Norfolk, the road passes on the silt, and it no more touches the pure fen except in one place, of which we shall have a good deal to say. And what is the most remarkable part is this,—that not only does it lie on the silt, but it is covered by the silt. We quote now the well-known passage in Sir William Dugdale’s book on drainage:

¹ Miller and Skertchley, *The Fenland*, 8vo. 1878, p. 497.

Neither is that long causey made of gravel, of about three feet in thickness, and sixty feet broad (now covered with the moor, in some places three, and in some others five feet thick) which extendeth itself from Denver in Norfolk (near Salters Lode) over the Great Wash, to Charke; thence to March, Plantwater and Eldernell, and so to Peterborough, in length about xxiv miles, likely to be any other than a Roman work¹.

The truth of this statement of Dugdale has been denied by all subsequent people who have assumed to know anything about the Great Fen Road². The fact is this,—they never took any trouble to learn; and the only way to learn is to work, and therefore in order to ascertain what was under the silt, by the kindness of Mr James Hart, a surveyor of great experience residing in Lynn, I have been enabled to present you with sections of this road, not only as it is from Eldernell to March, but in its almost more interesting course from March to Denver. Now I am not a geologist; nor am I a scientific man; I leave it to others to account for what appears to me this almost marvellous deposit. But there the Great Fen road goes onward for miles on the silt, covered by the silt,—sometimes 3 feet, sometimes 4 feet, and sometimes 5 feet. Section after section I have given you, taken by Mr Hart, by the kindness of the many persons who occupy or own lands through which the road runs, and who have given me every assistance. By the kindness of Mr Nix, of Neatmoor, we took a section of it on the edge of his farm, and there first was a foundation of a thin layer of burnt clay, then the road, and on it some two feet of silt (Plate xxviii, No. 3). At this point there seems to have been a kind of siding, for a loop comes out from the road by a pond near Mr Nathan Booth's, goes over the

¹ Dugdale's *History of Imbanking and Draining*, Ed. ii. p. 174.

² The only person who has intelligently studied, and carefully written on; the fen road is Mr W. C. Little, of Stag's Holt, who was almost literally born on it. He has much assisted me by his paper and letters, but his attention has been directed almost solely to the portion from Eldernell to March, and he does not therefore touch the part the description of which follows.

gravel road, and joins the fen road again at Mr Nix's. It is traced by the line of gravel on the fields. Specially must I also name my friends Mr Scott, Mr Reuben Tuck and his nephew, Mr Fred Tuck, and Mr Watson, of King's Land Farm. I must make particular mention of Mr Scott, who is now, I think, 76 years old, and the great energy and interest he displayed in the matter. With his own hands he helped his men to cut up his fine pasture, he being determined to give me sections of the old road (Plate XXVIII, No. 4). It is as clear that the silt is a deposit from the sea as it is clear that the peat is the production of fresh-water vegetation. After the road was made the sea therefore must have broken in again and washed for years backwards and forwards with its daily tides and raised this deposit. Taking the section at Mr Scott's farm, from the sides of the road to the top of the surface of the soil is 3 feet or 4 feet, covering the crown of the road 1 foot; and again, taking the section near the draining mill at Nordelph, the silt covers the top of the road to the extent of 4 feet (Plate XXVIII, No. 2^a).

Going onwards towards Denver we cross the estate of Mr Curtis, of Chatteris. We have given a section at a point on his farm; the road lies undisturbed under the whole of it (Ibid. No. 2). In digging a drain there a few years back a Roman vessel was found, but unfortunately it was crushed to pieces by the spade. By the kindness of Mr Curtis I am able to shew you the cover. The road has been cut through by the Old Bedford river, and goes on to the farm of Mr Reuben Tuck, which lies between it and the New Bedford river. Now it was here that I made my first study of the Great Fen Road. It was on a bright morning in February that we started in a wagonette from Downham for a day in the fens. Mr Tuck was ready for us with his labourers, and here we had what was to me a great discovery. At it we went. First lay the silt, then the peat under it, and under it again lay the great road,—the fen road of gravel covered by silt and peat (Plate XXVIII, No. 1). Perhaps

the description which my boy home from school gave to his other parent will best depict to you the scene. He said: "You should have seen father down deep in a trench with a spade in his hand working like a navvy. He was covered with mud, his hat was knocked in, and presently he came screaming out with gravel in his hand. He had found, he said, the gravel under the peat." The boy seemed shocked a little; but I pity any man who is so dead as not to scream out with delight when he found the road lying under the peat. Look at what it means! It means that there was there civilisation; that there was traffic; that there had been going to and fro of human beings passing with their merchandise, doing the business of life; in fact it shewed that the whole place was one line of communication from the great centre of England through the fen to the sea; and that after this the floods stopped all life and traffic.

I have taken the Great Fen Road from its inland to its eastward point. It is more than doubtful whether it was so made. I have not hitherto gone into the question whether the road was made from the sea or to the sea. By the heading of the paper I have made it the path *to* the sea; but I now suggest, and more than suggest, that its path was from the sea. And for these two reasons: We hear of no outgoing of the inhabitants of Britain invading and colonising the north, but we do hear of the colonies of the north coming and colonising Britain. In that case of course they would come from the sea inland. Again, at the fords we find the settlement to the north of them. Persons coming from the north, just coming to the ford, would there refresh themselves. When they got over they would be very glad to go straight on their way. Sedgeford is on the north side of the ford, so is Fordham. The village settlement of Guist (Gegge set) is on the sea-side of the river, where the ford is still used to avoid a tolled bridge at its side. Southery could only be south to those abiding in or going from the north. But it will be more convenient to

still continue on our course in a way the reverse of that in which we suppose that the road was made. We have now taken you to Denver.

The road having left the fen, and done its duty there, runs up to the high land. This joining of the Great Fen Road and its path to the sea on the high lands of Norfolk is of no little interest, and I have taken much pains to trace it. The result is that from the eastern bank of the New Bedford river which was cut through it, it went straight to the river Ouse—but not finding a convenient crossing at that point it went southward about a furlong—and was there taken over the river, going straight up past the front of Silt Fen Farm—through the Stoke railway just where it bends to go into Denver station, and then upwards by the line roughly marked in Plate xxvi—the surface of the fields give indications of its course.

It then has to meet another ancient road from Littleport, the *Akeman Street*, which I will not further go into, but which I leave entirely to Professor Babington (*Ancient Cambridgeshire*, pp. 64—68). This southern road joins the Fen Road a little to the north of Ryston, and both go on together by the stone cross, marked on the Ordnance map, to Bexwell. Here we will leave the southern road, interesting though it is, and give undivided attention to the Fen Road. From Bexwell this latter road goes eastward to Stradsett, written in Domesday Strateset, or, “the settlement on the street”. Thence it takes a northerly direction, through Fodderston Gap, straight to Wormegay. Wormegay now lies off any track or road; it is one scene of desolation; no one ever goes to it. Blomefield describes it as follows:

Wormegay is environed with water and low grounds, fens and marshes; the chief and most safe entrance is by a causey on the west side, where, on the right hand, stood formerly a castle...The present village is a very mean one¹.

¹ Blomefield's *Norfolk*, iv. 214.

That is the description written in 1775; the village is no better now. The castle was the seat of a great honor and barony. It stands exactly where the road crosses the small river running into the Nar. It had 20 knights' fees under it, including so great a manor as Litcham. It had its priory standing by the river side; afterwards its manor-house; and it is now a waste. Why was it once so great? Because the great road ran through it. It was on one of the great highways of the country, Wormegay,—the way dedicated to the Great Serpent God, precisely in the same manner as the way by Gayton Thorpe was dedicated to the Great Archer God Ægel. Away the road goes through Wormegay until it reaches the shore of what must once have been almost a gulf, through which the river Nar flows, for it is a feature in our coast that these gulfs run inland from the sea or shore, having in the midst the rivers coming from the higher ground. The roads pass these gulfs at their head, at the first point where they narrow and where the passage is shortest. The moment the road gets over the gulf on to the dry land on the other side, we come to a Benedictine Priory. We wonder why a Priory should rise in a place so utterly desolate, so far now from human traffic. The Priory was by the great way. Thence the way went up the Mill Drove, and not by the present course, passing on the left a Celtic fort, which fortunately has been secured, so that it may not share the fate of the tumulus on the Walton field. The road then descends into the valley, and we have the castle of the Scales's in Middleton Towers, which must have been away from human habitation, in a desolate pass by a reach of sand hills. Why was the Celtic fort there? And why is Middleton, Middleton? Because it lies by the way, on the ridge between the two marshes, the one at Wormegay and the other at the Towers, for the Towers are at the head of another gulf, more of a lake before drainage than that at Wormegay. And it is at the head of this gulf

that the road passes. Each of these gulfs had its fort. Wormegay, Middleton, Gaywood, and Castle Rising, were all at the head of bays, and the fine earthworks which still exist guarded these inlets and the road which passed by them. The tracing of the course of the great way lights up the whole district. Beyond Middleton, going eastward, is Leziate—Lesegate in Domesday. Gate of course is road. It then takes its rise to the right by Leziate, dividing parishes, and therefore shewing it was there before the settlements came, into that road which I told you runs between Gayton and Gaywood, and so straight away to win the great Ailesway which I described at the beginning of this lecture.

Now we will take this Ailesway, grass-grown and deserted, on its path northward to the sea. It goes, after passing by Congham, to Hillington, passing nearly a mile eastward of the village. It is there called the East Gate Drove, and went over by the mill, now taken down, and its course is slightly altered to go over a bridge, instead as formerly through the ford, which is still perfect in the river at the back of the Hall. We find the Manor House, formerly of the Abbot of West Dereham, now the site of Hillington Hall, standing on it, and the maps which have been kindly lent me by Sir Wm. Ffolkes shew that before 1593 there were three other seats of manors close by. Why were these manor houses there? Simply because the great way passed them. It had some trouble to extricate itself from the marsh near the ford, and turns a little to the left, and very shortly goes due north straight away from Flitcham. One mile from Flitcham, Blomefield says, is Flitcham burgh; and he quotes the writ of William Rufus, by which the inhabitants of the three hundreds and a half were called to decide the right of the abbot of Ramsey to land at Holme, near Ringstead (*quæ pertinet ad Ringstedam*)¹. This Flitcham-borough is on the top

¹ See *Chronicon Abbatie Ramesiensis*, Rolls Series, 1886, p. 214, where the writ is quoted at length.

of the chalk downs, which seem to chase each other on their way northwards. It is on a highly elevated spot above all the country round, now planted with trees, and called Paston Clump, and the ditches are but little altered. Blomefield says that it was square. It is a mile, or a mile and a half, from any habitation; and one asks oneself why the meeting of the hundreds should be held there. Because the great way ran past it. Ramsey is about nine miles from Whittlesey across the fen, and if the monks who attended that meeting did not wish to go across the fen, they could very easily go round to the north by Peterborough down the Great Fen Road, and on straight to their place of meeting, which was probably chosen on account of the directness of the route from Ramsey to Flitcham-borough. The road has been here used for ordinary traffic for two miles, but from Flitcham-borough the trackway is simply a way through the fields, and has never been anything else, and here we have the only part of the original Ailesway left to us. It extends for about 2 miles, when we come to an enclosure, and then it has been widened by hedges and left to take care of itself; but here through the fields it has no hedge; it has simply the ruts that were left there when far beyond medieval times the road was used. It is taken over the valley by an embankment, and through the next hill by a cutting, all shewing that it was made. Onward northward it goes, until, as I have said, it becomes a wide road between two hedges, where it is called the Street Ford Road. Even the name and tradition mark it as a public road—the street. On the summit of the hill, as it dips down to the ford at Shernbourne, another road crosses it from west to east, and the crossing is marked High Cross on Bryant's map of Norfolk, 1826. High Cross does not, in my opinion, mean height in point of elevation, but it means an important crossway like the High street. There is a High Cross at Tottenham, where the Ermine street goes out of London. The principal High Cross

in England is where the Fosse crosses the Watling street, in Warwickshire. The road then continues through Sedgeford—in Domesday Secheford—straight to Ringstead, and then it has to turn a little to the left to escape that very remarkable dépression called Ringstead Downs. To avoid this, it runs near, and almost parallel to, the other great way, the Paddars way, for a short distance, and finally reaches the sea at Hunstanton. Here it formed the outside northern boundary of the park before its recent enlargement, but now runs through it, and ends apparently a little to the north-east of the front of the Hall,—for the last 30 or 40 yards on an artificial embankment. All round we have signs of the importance that was attached to the head of this great road. Below towards the sea are moats, and immediately above them to the east of the churchyard are signs of earthworks¹. The scene, with the Hall and ancient trees, is a highly picturesque one; but it is not with that we have to do. We have to take on the road from its apparent ending to the beach. It crosses at a spot to avoid the river, and it next turns to the right, westward of the church, keeping to the spur of the Chalk hills, which are thrown out here, and goes down the original trackway (now enclosed by two hedges) quite on to the beach. This last piece of the trackway is marked on the 17th century plan (kindly placed at my disposal by Mr le Strange) as the Haven gate. It may be interesting, as the Paddars way so nearly touches it at Ringstead, just to describe the ending of that way, within half-a-mile of the spot where our way finishes. On the marsh at Holme there is a small rising of the Chalk Downs as if it had been thrown there. Into this the Paddars way goes. Seaward of this mound the

¹ In Hunstanton churchyard, to the N.E. of the church, there is a mound suggestive of the Toot Hill, or people's meeting-place, at Peterborough. Below, in the field, is a square enclosure surrounded by a slight bank. These are close to the old path of the road, and near its end. I would suggest that we have here an important place of meeting accessible by the ancient way.

tidal river flowed, and around this elevation entrenchments have been made, now filled with water. All this is very apparent, and to those who have studied it as I have done, it is very interesting.

Now it will be asked: Why do these two ways fall both into this bay—the one at Hunstanton, the other at Holme? This is remarkable, and I must ask you to follow me. Between the high lands of Weybourne and Hunstanton lies the north shore of Norfolk, and between them are the chalk downs which go continuously from the Chilterns to the German Ocean, but they drop short generally for a mile before reaching the sea, except at Hunstanton, where they seem to throw themselves into it, and form Hunstanton cliff, and at Holme, where they fling themselves into the marsh. Between Weybourne and Hunstanton, the sea, when it goes backwards and forwards, does not deposit silt, but the whole stretch of waste is covered with marsh, over which the sea now flows, and over which there is very difficult passage. But at Hunstanton and Holme people could land and at once proceed without danger on their way inland. One sees now exactly why the tradition of St Edmund landing at Hunstanton is a fact; because when he came to his kingdom of East Anglia he would land where he could get inland by one of the great ways of the country; for it appears equally necessary, not only that he should have a landing-place on the shore, but that he should have access from it to go inland. And thus ends the path of the Great Fen Road at the sea.

When was that path made? I will give one addition to the very many theories that have been for years made as to the settlements of the people in this our far east. I take for my guidance the words of the earliest historian who came and saw us, and sent home the reports he could obtain of what we were like and what our habits were. One of the observations of Cæsar was that the inland people were aboriginal, but the

coast population had come over from, as he says, the Bèlgæ,—because he wrote from Kent and saw no other country—and having come either for plunder or war, they had settled here,—and mark this,—had caused their settlements in this country to be called after the cities or towns in the country whence they came. Now that the population from the continent pressed not only on Kent, but also on the north, we have clear evidence in two great camps—Brancaster and Burgh by Yarmouth—that were made in East Anglia in order to prevent the inroads of what were called by the general name of Saxons. Therefore there was the same pressure on the coast of Norfolk as there was on the coast of Kent by these incoming invaders. Those coming into Norfolk in after-times we know came from the north. My suggestion, and nothing more, is that long before Cæsar came the same process had been going on on the northern coast of Norfolk as in Kent, only in our case from the north. That remarkable sentence has always struck me,—that Cæsar thought they had called the places in Britain by the same names as the places—*civitates*—they had left on the continent. The very first place that we find after the invaders had stepped upon the land at Holme (which only meant the low marshy ground, and is hardly the name of a place) is Ringstead—the capital of the kingdom of the Danes, and where the Danish kings now lie is Ringstead in Denmark. This carries out the view of Cæsar, and shews that the settlement was there before Cæsar came, called after the city the Danes had left in their own land; that they had merely done what he found other nations had done,—come over and called their settlements by the names of their old homes. Cæsar found in Britain a highly trained and intelligent people, with a great population; and this all shews that there must have been a high village organisation, and particularly directed to that subject which has occupied our attention this evening, namely roads. Cassivelaunus, when he retreated after his final

defeat, harassed Cæsar by attacking him through roads which the Britons knew, but which Cæsar did not,—*visis notis semitisque*. I believe this was one of those roads,—not one of those by which Cæsar was attacked, because they were too far off—but one of the systems of roads which Cæsar found here developed, and not a road made afterwards by Cæsar's successors,—by the men who made the camp at Brancaster. If so, the Paddars way would have run into the camp, but it ends 5 miles to the west of it, and is a totally independent work. Therefore my conclusion is that the road which I have been lecturing upon this evening was formed long, long before the Romans visited us.

MONDAY, *February 3*, 1890.

Professor Hughes, M.A., President, in the chair.

The following new members were elected :

Hubert Humphrey Middlemore Bartlett, Trinity College.
 William Hepburn Buckler, Trinity College.
 Rev. Newton William John Mant, M.A., St John's College.
 Rev. Benjamin Reed, B.A., London.

The following objects were exhibited :

A bronze Ring-Dial, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, found at Abington Pigotts, exhibited by Rev. W. Graham Pigott; a second from Cumberland (where it is known as a *Shepherd's Watch*), exhibited by Mrs Hughes; and a third exhibited by Professor J. C. Adams, who made the following remarks on these objects :

An account of the Ring Dial with an explanatory diagram is to be found in an edition of *Chambers' Cyclopædia*, edited by Abraham Rees, early in the present century, from which the following particulars are extracted.

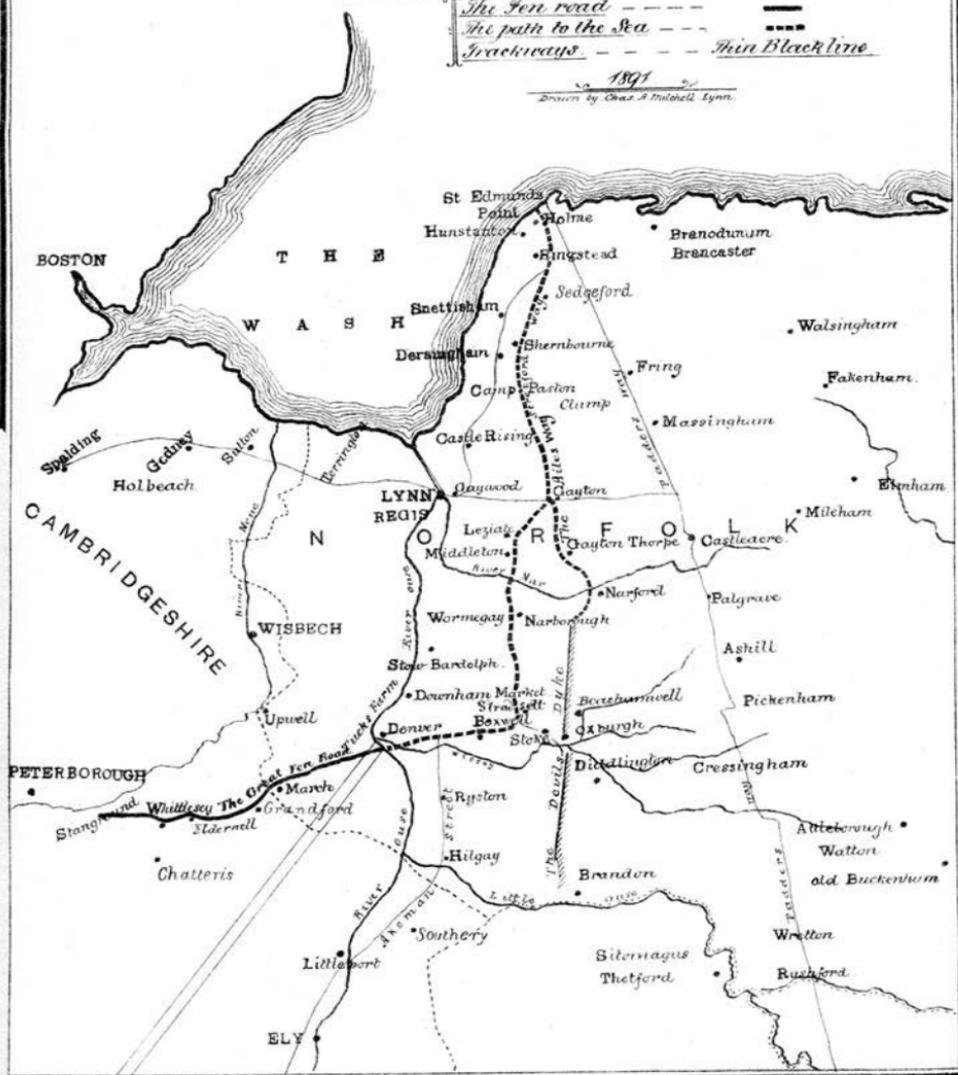
THE GREAT FEN ROAD

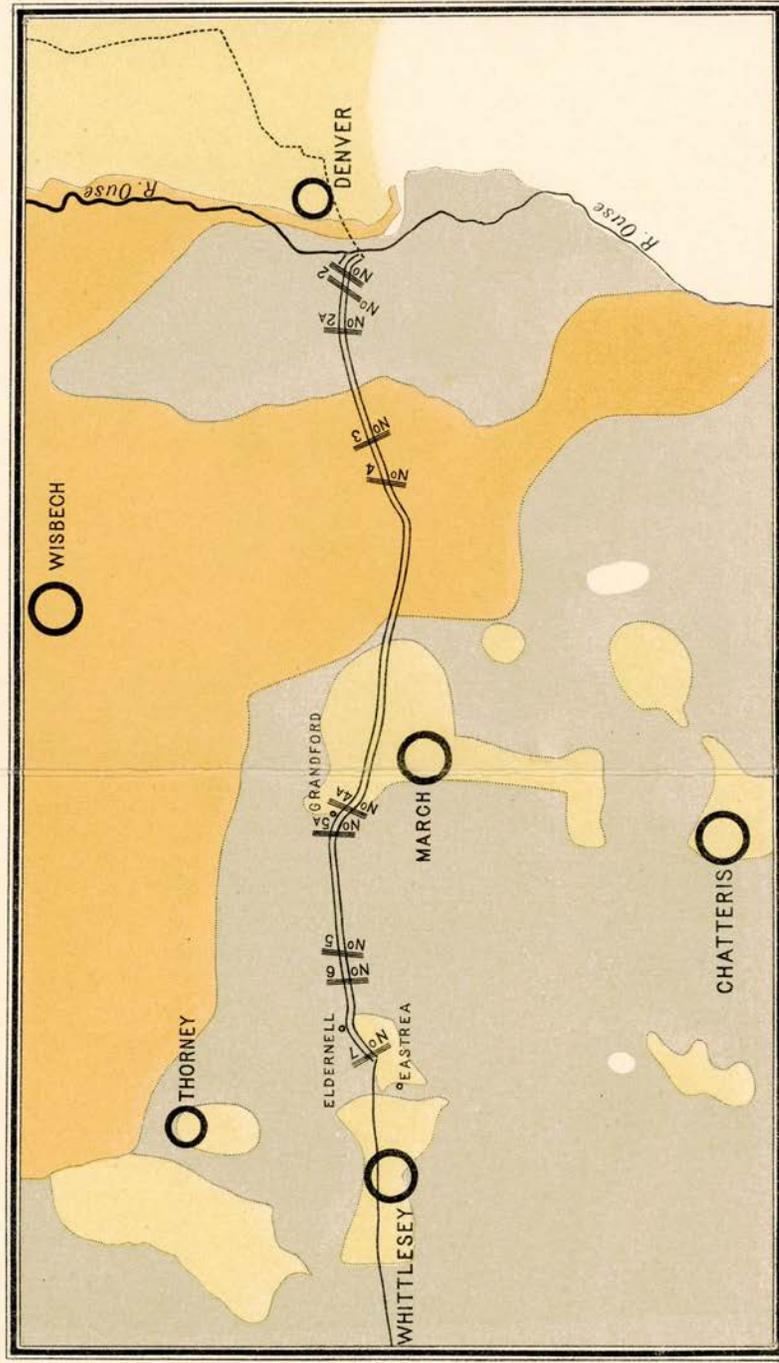
Sketch plan showing its path to the Sea

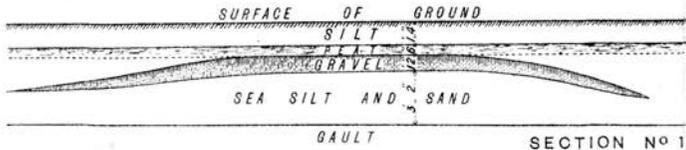
The Fen road - - - - -
 The path to the Sea - - - - -
 Trackways - - - - - *Thin Black line*

1891

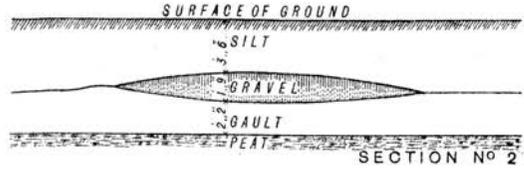
Drawn by Chas. A. Mitchell, Lynn.



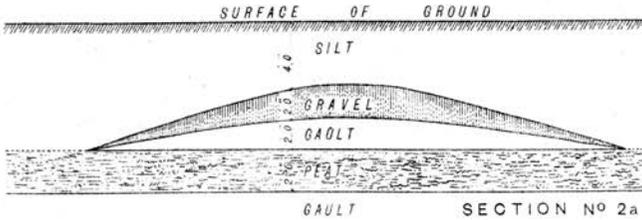




IN WICK FEN ON MR R. TUCK'S FARM



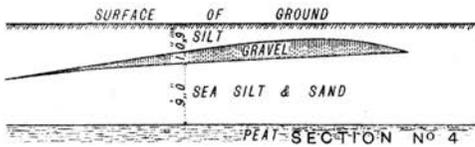
IN WICK FEN ON MR CURTIS' FARM



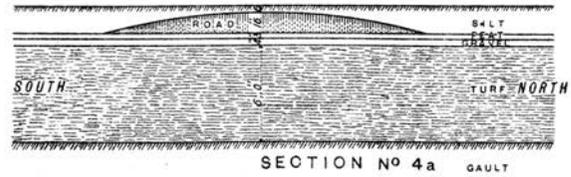
IN WICK FEN ON MR F. TUCK'S FARM



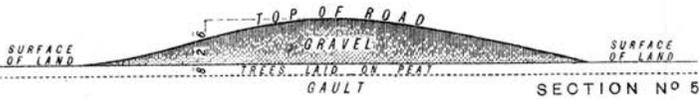
IN NEATMOOR FEN ON MR NIX'S FARM



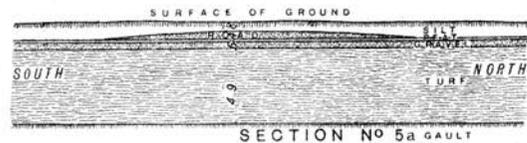
IN NEATMOOR FEN ON MR SCOTT'S FARM



NEAR GRANDFORD



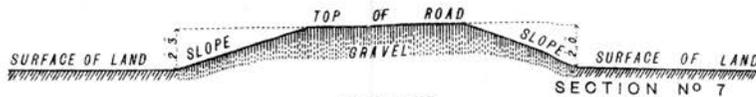
IN EASTREA FEN ON MR WATSON'S FARM



NEAR GRANDFORD



IN EASTREA FEN ON MR GROUND'S FARM



AT COATES



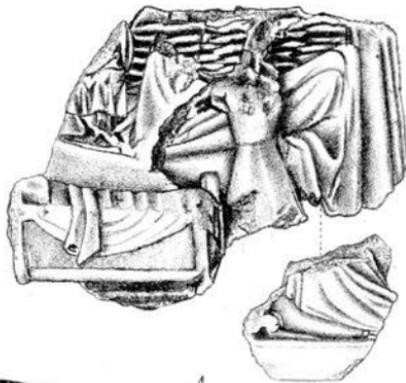
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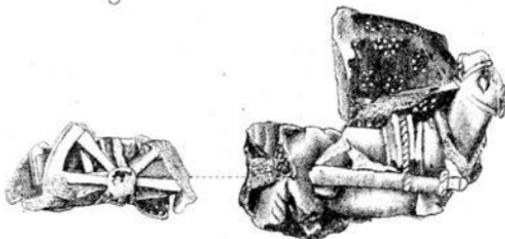
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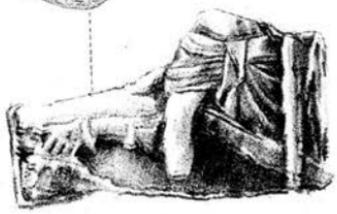
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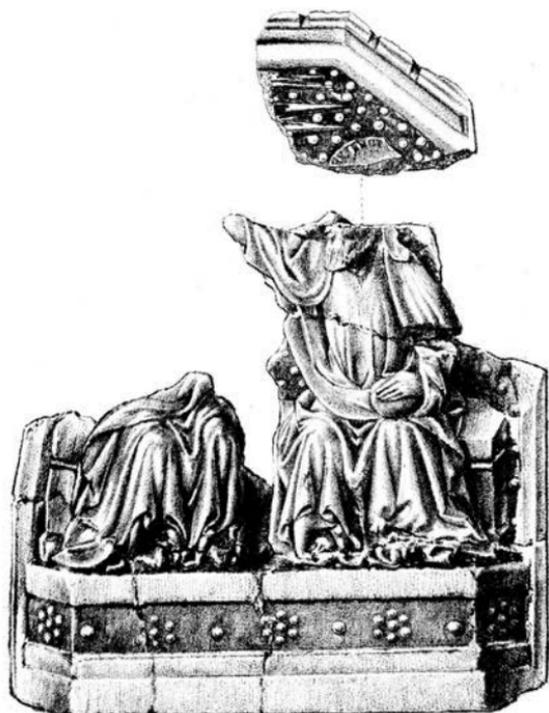
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"The Ring Dial is usually small and portable, consisting of a brass ring or rim, seldom exceeding 2 inches in diameter and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in breadth.

"In a point of this rim there is a hole through which the sunbeams being received make a lucid speck on the concavity of the opposite semicircle, which gives the hour of the day in the divisions marked therein. * * * * In order to have the Dial perform throughout the whole year, the hole is made moveable, and the signs of the Zodiac or the days of the month are marked on the convex side of the ring, and by means of these the position of the hole is determined for the time of year. * * * * To use the dial, put the moveable hole to the day of the month or the degree of the Zodiac the sun is in; then, suspending the dial by the little ring, turn it towards the sun till his rays, passing through the hole, point out the hour among the divisions on the *inside* of the ring dial."

The dial may be constructed so as to give the accurate time throughout the day, about the time of the Equinoxes; but at other times of the year the hour will not be correctly given except near noon.

There were also exhibited:

By Professor Browne:

A plate of figures of the inscribed Stones of Scotland, in illustration of his lectures this Lent Term.

By Professor Hughes:

A gold reliquary from Rio Janeiro; a grey stoneware jug and a 'Bellarmine' said to have been found in digging the foundations for the Perse School, Hills Road; various objects from Barnwell, Sandy, &c.

By Mrs Hughes:

A water-colour drawing of the frescoes of St George and the Dragon in Pickering Church.

The Ven. Archdeacon F. R. CHAPMAN read a communication and exhibited documents, on the purchase of the Manor and

Advowson of Mepal in the 14th century by the Prior and Convent of Ely, as witnessed by a series of parchments which are preserved in the muniment-room of the Cathedral.

The document of chief interest which he exhibited was a *Computus* Roll of a certain monk, William of Wysbech by name, presented to the Chapter in the year 1361, which contained a detailed account of moneys which he had received and expended for the Convent in the purchase and mortification of the Manor and Church.

By this account it was shewn, that only a small portion of the necessary funds were provided from the Treasury of the House, the greater part having been voluntarily subscribed by the monks themselves and their friends in the neighbourhood. The names of all the donors are set out at length with the sums which they gave; and special gifts are recorded of silver vessels, forks, cups, and mazer-bowls. The amount of the purchase-money is the first item on the debit side, and there follows an exact entry of three several journeys which the monk had taken to London for the purpose of obtaining the king's licence for the conveyance of the property to the Church of Ely, with his personal expenses, and the fees which he paid to the various officers of the king.

Other documents, to the number of twenty-four, were also shewn and described, by which were illustrated the several legal processes which had to be gone through, and the various transfers which had to be effected, before the requirements of the mortmain-acts of that time could be satisfied, and the property legally conveyed to the "dead hand" of the Church.

A few observations on Archdeacon Chapman's paper were made by the Rector of Mepal and by Professor Middleton, who explained (in answer to a question from the Archdeacon) that *furatus* meant *perforated* in mediæval documents.

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