

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

22 OCTOBER, 1894, TO 29 MAY, 1895,

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXXVII.

BEING No. 1 OF THE NINTH VOLUME.

(THIRD VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



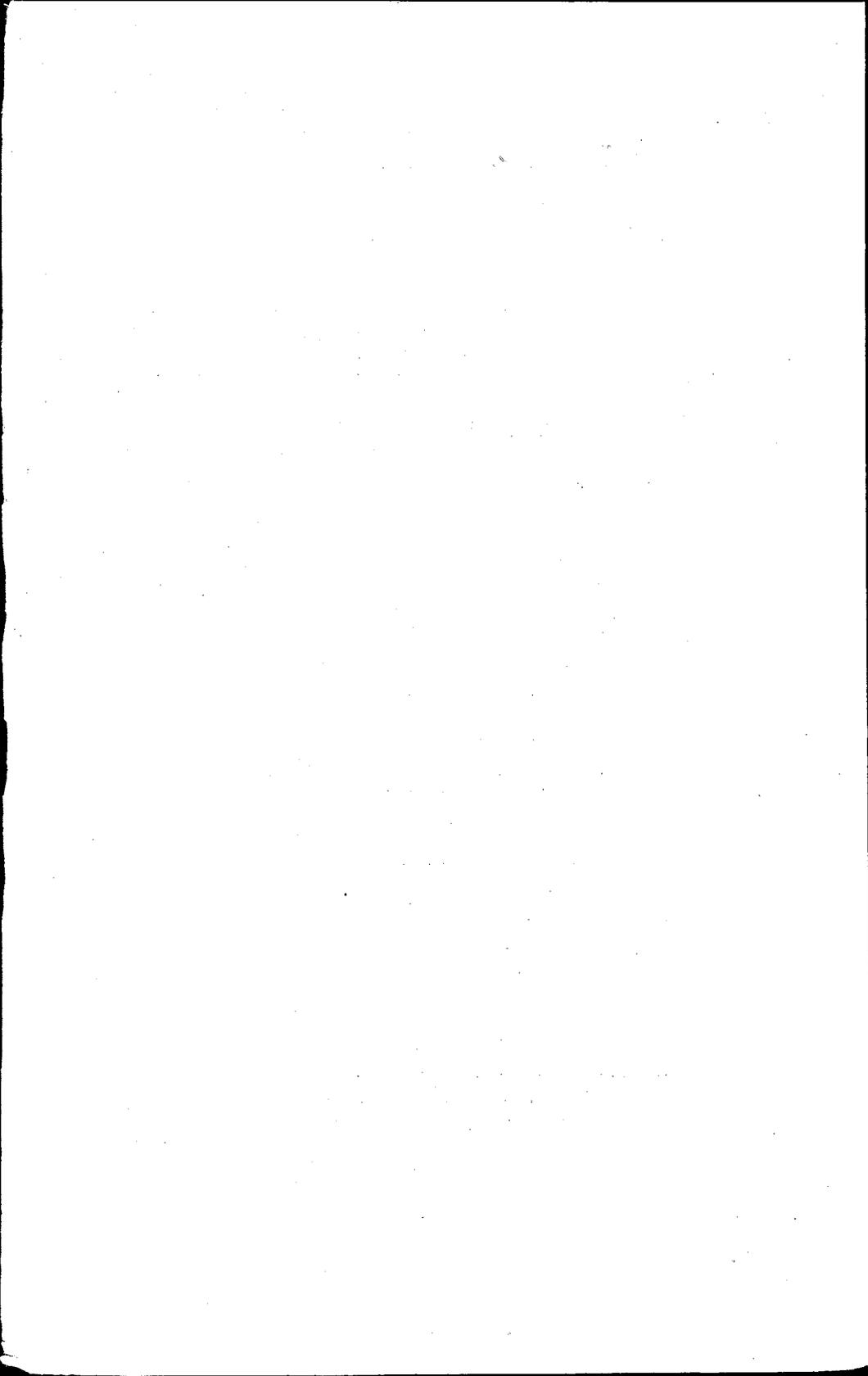
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possibly other portions of the glass from the side-chapels, has found its way to a Church in Middlesex, that of Great Greenford, of which this college are patrons. The Rev. Edward Betham, Bursar in the last half of the eighteenth century, was Rector of Greenford, and is doubtless responsible for the transfer. Some pieces of this glass have been figured in the Transactions of the Middlesex Archæological Society¹.

But, further, some portions of the glass have found their way into the upper windows of the Chapel. The most conspicuous instance is the head of the lowest Messenger (central light) in the third window from the west on the south side. He is an angel properly, but either Harlock or someone equally intelligent has given him a bearded head, which seems to be of the size and character of the heads in the side chapels. I hope some day to see this and other absurdities, which now glare upon us from the windows, set right. Yet the work is a very formidable one for us now, as twelve windows will have to be releaded, and one of them is the east window, which might count for two. The average cost for one window is over £200. I think I need hardly say more. *Quis reparabit?*

WEDNESDAY, *November 7, 1894.*

W. M. FAWCETT, M.A., President, in the Chair.

The election of the following members was announced: The Rev. John Hawke Crosby, The College, Ely: Mr William Eaden Lilley: Mr Edwin Wilson.

The Rev. John Watkins, M.A., made the following communication:

ON THE HISTORY OF WILLINGHAM CHURCH.

In preparing this paper on the Church of St Mary and All Saints at Willingham, I have made large use of the report drawn up by the late Mr R. Herbert Carpenter at the com-

¹ I owe this information to the kindness of Mr J. E. Foster.

mencement of our work, in the historical details of which he received much valuable assistance from the Rev. J. H. Crosby, Librarian of Ely Cathedral.

During the progress of the work, as was to be expected in a church which had fallen into such a lamentable state of decay, Mr Carpenter found reasons for altering some of the conjectures made in his report, and, since his untimely death in April of last year, further discoveries have been made with a similar result. Yet the general correspondence of the ascertained facts with his first formed opinions, bears striking testimony to the correctness of his judgment, and to the keenness of his insight into architectural problems of no slight complexity.

Some historical facts in connection with the Parish and its Church throw considerable light upon the alterations made at various periods.

First among these stands the grant of the Manor of Willingham to the Convent of Ely by Uva or Ulva in the ixth century, and possibly we have traces of a Church, or at least of a Burial Ground of that time in some fragments of lattice-worked stones, re-used by the Norman builders and carved with "Chevron" pattern for shafts of a doorway, of which about half the arch has been found in the chancel walls.

To this connection with Ely we probably owe the Chapel at the east end of the north aisle—possibly the Lady Chapel, enclosed with oak screens of early Decorated patterns.

This Manor passed to the Bishop of Ely on the foundation of the See, but was alienated to the Crown, like so many others in the county, in the same reign.

By Elizabeth it was granted to Thomas Parkes, of Wisbech, with whose daughter and co-heiress it passed to Sir Miles Sandys, of Wilburton, and afterwards into the families of Holman, Brownell, Askham and Hatton, the present lord being the Rev. W. R. Finch-Hatton.

The second Manor of Brunnes or Bornays, as it is now called, was at an early date in the possession of the families of Brune and Druell.

To this Manor was attached the chapel at the east end of the south aisle, enclosed by oak screens of 15th century date, of which the broken altar stone has come to light.

The registers of the Cathedral show that certain ordinations were held in the Church in or about the year 1340, so that then the restored Church must have been completed.

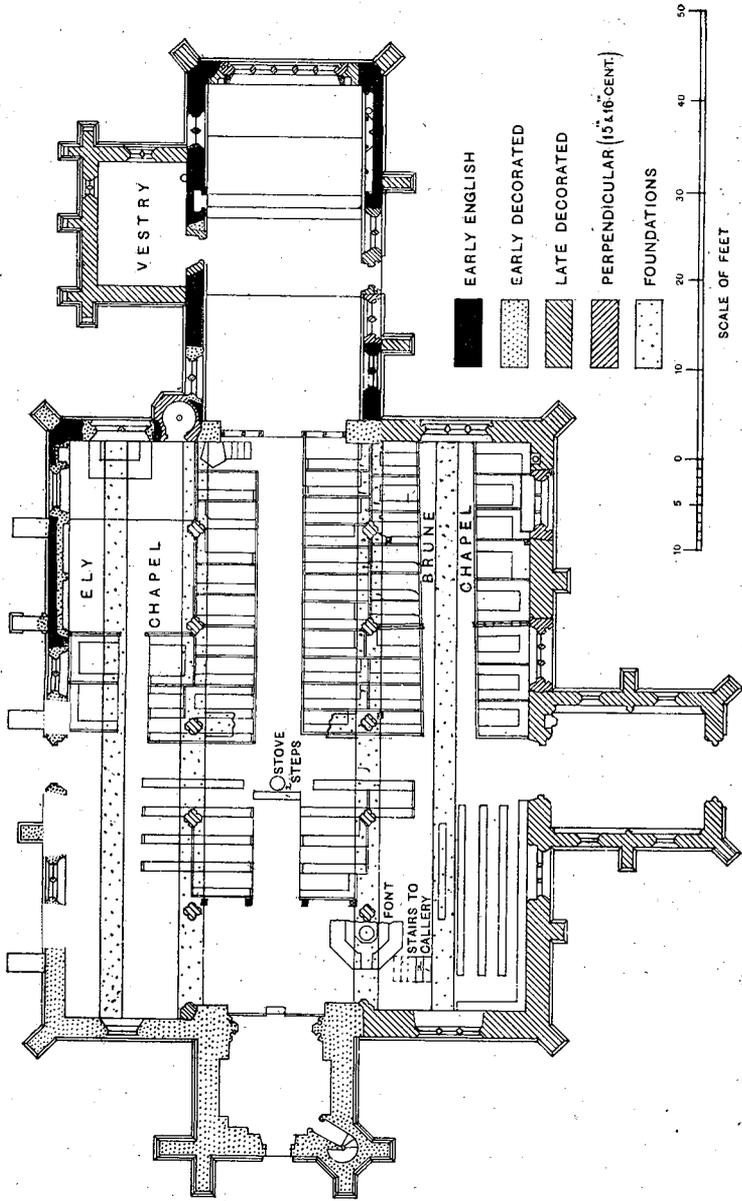
The Brunet Manor certainly passed into the possession of the Bishop, of whom Richard Druell held it in 1496. In 1632 it became the property of Mr Marsh and in 1705 of William Parker, ancestor of Col. Parker Hamond, of Pampisford, who has, I understand, recently sold it to Mr Prior, of Cambridge.

Of the third Manor in the parish, that of Rampton, we have no further record in connection with the Church, and it is now enfranchised.

Of the general appearance of the Church I need give no detailed description, as it is within easy reach of Cambridge, and is well known to most of the members of this Society. Suffice it to say, that it consists of a chancel, nave, with north and south aisles terminating eastwards in chapels, to a great extent of 14th century date, with a fine western steeple of Barnack stone, and therefore, except as to the buttressed pinnacles and the highest stage of the spire, in good condition.

One of the most striking features of the building is the beautiful chapel or Sacristy of the 14th century on the north side of the chancel, with its remarkable stone roof supported on arched and traceried principals. The whole is a work of great architectural skill, and fortunately remains in a perfect state, lacking only its gable crosses, the remains of which were found in the chancel walls, and retaining a pillar piscina inserted in the wall, against which the building was erected.

In order to understand the work which has been done during the past four years, and is still in progress, some slight idea is required of the state of the Church, as I first saw it in 1890. The south wall of the chancel, crumbling and bulging in parts, and supported by a huge brick buttress blocking up one window, was a foot out of the perpendicular, and the ends of the roof principals on the south side were so decayed, that



Willingham Church, Ground Plan,

neither of the two middle ones, on which most of the weight fell, rested on the wall-plate, but were precariously held in position by the lower trusses supported by small wooden corbels. The grand 15th century roof of the nave, which leaked in many places, had spread by its own weight and had thrust the walls of the north arcade and aisle in some parts nearly six inches out of line; the back boarding was rotten throughout, and the trusses so decayed, that the ridge and other beams were twisted and threatened to fall.

The roof of the south aisle was in even worse case, being supported on the north side by a rough construction of oak posts, all the ends of the beams under the gutter having rotted away from the walls.

Of the windows, those at the east and west ends of the north aisle, the first and third in the south aisle, five out of six in the clerestory, one in the east gable of the nave and that in the tower, through the sill of which a doorway had been cut, had lost all their tracery, and the exterior clunch work of most of the others was much decayed.

The interior of the Church was in keeping with the exterior. The beautiful thirteenth century sedilia on the south side of the chancel had lost the shafts, the bases and two caps; the corresponding moulding of the east end and of a recessed tomb in the north wall had been ruthlessly hacked off; the oak stalls of the Decorated period, decayed and patched with deal, were painted in oak graining, and the four return stalls had disappeared.

Of the screens, which must have formed a great feature of the Church, the Rood-screen had lost all but one of its traceried lower panels, and the upper part, as I found on a rough drawing among some old papers—labelled useless—had been placed as a kind of reredos under the east window, from which position it disappeared, alas! for ever, within the memory of persons now living.

In the nave and aisles some of the oak benches and ends remained, enclosed by deal pews of all shapes and sizes, in the construction of which the western doors of the two chapels had been employed.

Let us now turn to the history of the building.

The lower part of the chancel walls, with their moulded plinths, are of the Norman period, and are the relics of the Church erected possibly by Bishop Hervé or by Abbot Richard. The nave of the Church corresponded in width to the present one, as is shewn by the discovery of the foundations under the arcades, but was only half its present length, for we have recently made out the foundations of the original west wall and of two aisles of 6 ft. 6 in. internal width, and of the same length as the present aisles. To these probably belonged the water tabling under the clerestory. Whether they were partly of the Norman or wholly of the Early English Church is uncertain. One half circle stone of a column, two feet in diameter, unfortunately used by the masons for repairs, would point to the former alternative, while a small 13th century lancet at the west end of the south aisle would seem to indicate the latter.

The walls of the Norman chancel would seem to have given way from insecure foundations, and upon some five feet of the lower portions the 13th century restorers built the inner walls of a height marked by the clunch facing of the sanctuary, with a high pitched roof, of which the lead flashing was found in the east gable of the nave.

The handsome four arched Sedilia and Piscina belong to this date, as well as the remains of lancet windows in the north wall, and the two side windows of the sacarium, which were afterwards altered to receive their present quaint tracery. A very interesting feature of the chancel dating from the latter part of the 13th century (temp. Henry III.) is the "leper's window" formed by the continuation downwards of the two lights of the window above it, a transom forming the division. It has only recently been discovered, having been entirely filled in and hidden by the plaster: and there yet remains the ancient and much corroded ironwork, with the rebate in which the casement opening outwards was fixed.

Another discovery in the north wall of the sacarium is an aumbry with three of its ancient hinge hooks, and marks of a shelf.

Indications remain of a row of narrow windows in the north wall of the nave clerestory, which must have belonged to this period. The chancel at least of this church must have been partially destroyed by fire, for the old Barnack stone bears evident marks of burning—and after this followed the extensive restoration of the earlier and later 14th century, to which reference has been made. The steeple was then built against the west end of the nave, and has the water tabling of the roof then erected, which has been utilised for the present outer roof. New windows were inserted in the chancel and clerestory, the sill of one of which, and some existing splays, gave Mr Carpenter the clue to the design of the present windows. This window, the eastern on the south side, has tracery of the 15th century, and some of the painted tracery of the western window on the north side was found in different parts of the wall, enough to determine its design. In the same century, perhaps in the earlier and later parts, the north and south aisles were rebuilt on a much larger scale, and to their roofs belonged the corbels still remaining. The arcades were altered to their present form, possibly, as Mr Carpenter thought, without disturbing the upper walls, and the handsome south porch was built partly on the foundations of the earlier porch, which were of much slighter construction.

We found it necessary to rebuild the whole of the south wall of the chancel from the foundation, but each stone was numbered and replaced in its original position, except of course the rubble facing. In a recess behind the sedilia were found two silver pieces of one of the three first Edwards.

The east window of the chancel has an interesting history. We found it a low arched, five-light window, probably of 16th century date, which had appropriated the head moulding and jambs of early 14th century pattern, and had cut into the two side niches. This we had decided to retain, but in the wall outside we discovered the head stones of the inner arch of the Decorated window, and from the fragments, cleverly pieced together, Mr Carpenter was able to reconstruct the window as it is, which is very characteristic of the style of Alan of Walsingham.

At that period also the chancel walls must have been raised to their present height to receive a roof of the same pitch as the existing one, the buttresses were added, and the parapets, in which is that use of bricks with mouldings of stone, which was common in this locality in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The succeeding century witnessed the enclosure of the Brunel chapel and the erection of the rood screen, of which the gallery, approached by a turret staircase from the Ely chapel, formed a canopy over the return stalls. The stall under the doorway has been cut away to make room for the supports of this loft, and the marks of the rood beam and of the heads of the cross and usual supporting figures remain in the stonework of the arch on the western side. Lower down, on the north side of the wall, is the Consecration Cross painted in red and enclosed in a circle. The chancel then received its present roof, the principals of which with one length of ridge we had to renew, while retaining the intermediates and purlins strengthened by a backing of angle iron. The pulpit is a precious relic of this period. Not many years ago it was sawn off from its base and placed in the north-east angle of the nave, but has now been replaced with a new base and stairs in its original position.

To this time probably belong the earliest of the paintings on the walls, extending as far as the western extremities of the chapels, and consisting of a light red ground work with a yellow and darker red diaper pattern.

The picture of the Doom on the east gable has lost its central figure by the later insertion of a window. St Christopher is represented on the north wall, and on the same side is depicted the allegorical legend of St George and the Dragon. On the south wall eastwards is a well preserved picture of the Visitation, with scrolls over the heads of SS. Mary and Elizabeth. "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" and "Beata tu es inter mulieres." Further west is the lower part of what was probably the Assumption, through which an unauthorized window hole had been cut in later times to throw light on the pulpit.

Below these are three shields bearing emblems of the Passion, and corresponding shields on the opposite side, one with the three crowns of the See, the others charged with heraldic devices. On the north side, eastwards, are traces of figures too slight to give a clue to the subject, and westwards a picture of the Annunciation. Over all these and between the lower braces of the present roof, were painted in the first six bays on either side, figures of Apostles, for the most part destroyed by the Puritans, the other spaces being filled on the south with figures of Faith, Hope and Charity, and on the north of Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude, of which only the first remains. The spandrils of the arches bear traces of the Ten Commandments in curiously varied borders.

These were all thickly coated with yellow and whitewash, the careful removal of which occupied myself and Mr George Horsley, the foreman of the works, for six months, but the greater share of credit is due to him for his assiduous and patient labour.

And now we come to the history of the 15th century roofs.

Dr Cole mentions a tradition that that over the nave was brought from Barnwell Priory, and, when the erection of a scaffold brought us to closer terms, it was seen to have been the roof of a wider Church, with the apex cut off to enable it to be narrowed to the width of our walls. On one of the lower hammer-beams was found the noteworthy date 1613.

The roof of the south aisle is of similar date; but when it was recently stripped and examined, we found it to be also a foreign importation.

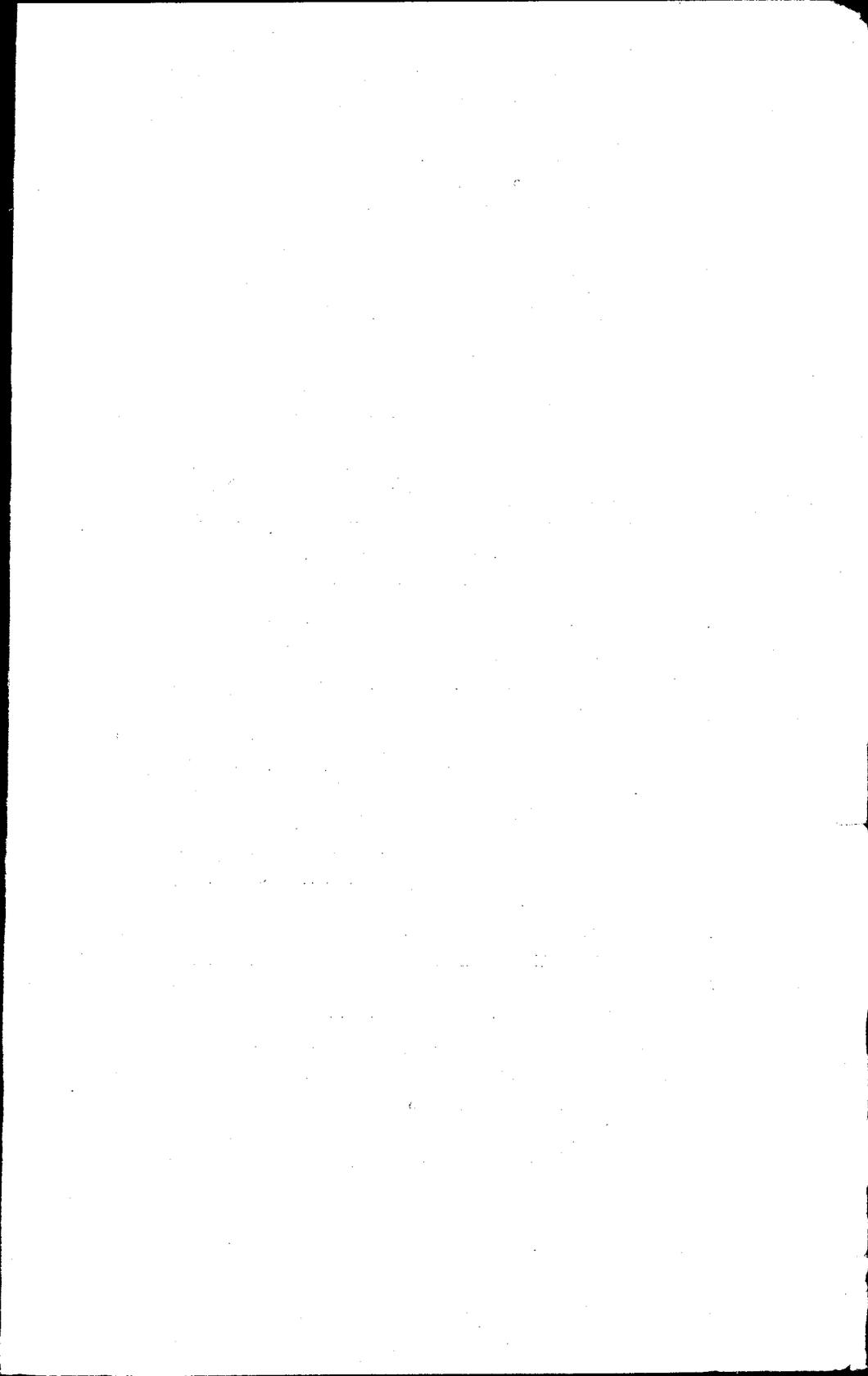
A good deal of repair yet remains to be done, for which we still require at least £1,500; but the work so carefully and lovingly begun by my dear friend who is gone is being continued with equal care and no less ability by his friend and coadjutor, Mr Benjamin Ingelow.

The result will tend, I humbly trust, in years to come, to change "the black spot in the Diocese," as Bishop Woodford used to call the Parish of Willingham, into a jewel not unworthy of the crown of the Mother Church at Ely.

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