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Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

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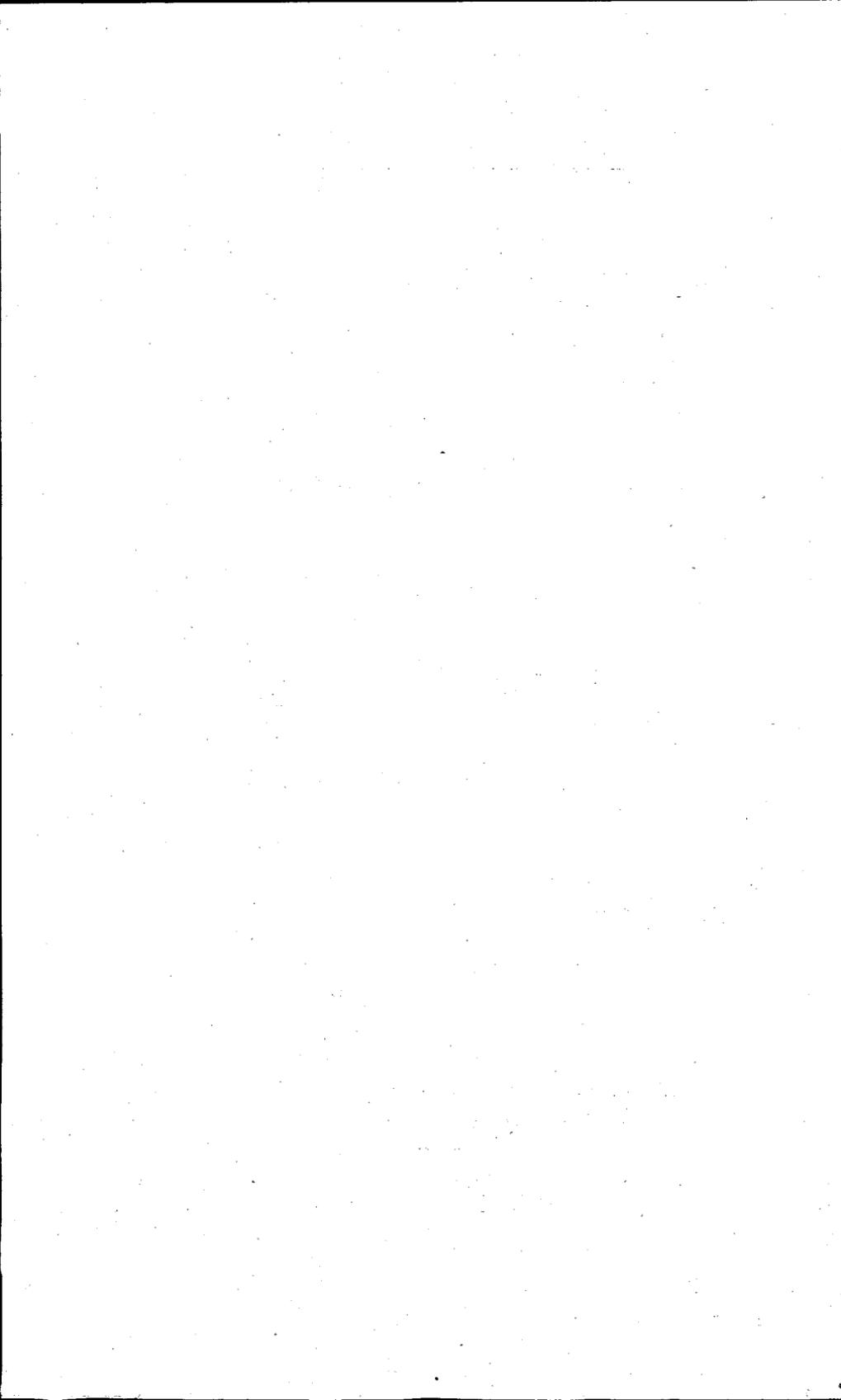
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modern history,—there are vast stores of documentary evidence which still require to be investigated.

And so far as our national history is concerned, it appears to me that careful and minute investigations, such as those undertaken by an Antiquarian Society, render important service. I doubt very much whether any great historical writer would be willing to take all the published labours of the Royal Historical Society as proven and final; but unless some special reason for scepticism arises, the historical investigator does not want to ransack the charter, the deed, and the will, the parish register and the mortuary roll, for dates, names, and facts which previous research has already sufficiently established. And in work of this kind, unpretending though it be, there is not only a great satisfaction to the worker, but a service rendered to others which, however beyond his power to estimate, is none the less real and permanent.

Mr J. E. FOSTER made the following communication:

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF EXNING.

The name appears in Domesday as Esselinga, and in the grant of the church to Battle Abbey, by William Rufus, in 1087, as Exelingas. The shortened form of Exning, or Ixning, which is subsequently used, has no connection therefore with the Iceni as has been suggested, but the name is probably a tribal or family one.

There is a strong local tradition which looks upon Exning as the birthplace of S. Etheldreda, and a spring in the parish is pointed out as the scene of her baptism by Paulinus, Archbishop of York. The only MS. authorities are the "Liber Eliensis" and the "Historia Eliensis," which erroneously quote Bede's work, "De gestis Anglorum," otherwise the "Historia Ecclesiastica," as the foundation for the statement. The passage relating to S. Etheldreda in the 17th chapter of the 4th book gives no information as to her birthplace, but refers only to her parentage.

The chroniclers differ as to whether Exning was the scene of the marriage between Ralph Wader, Earl of Norfolk, and Emma, daughter of Roger FitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford, in one of the years 1074 or 1075, at which the conspiracy against the Conqueror was set on foot.

Matthew Paris states that Norwich was the place of the marriage, and the *Flores Historiarum* places it in Norfolk, but Ralph de Diceto, Roger de Hoveden and Walter de Coventry support Exning, as does the manuscript in the library at Douai in France, containing the life and passion of Count Waltheof and his countess. This manuscript is of the 12th century or beginning of the 13th, and belonged to the Abbey of Croyland, whence it was carried to Douai at the dissolution of the monasteries.

It seems, however, somewhat doubtful whether a place in which the influence of the Crown was so strong as Domesday shows it was at Exning would be chosen as the scene of a ceremony which had been expressly forbidden by the king. The Earl of Norfolk had no property there.

The parish is described in the Cambridgeshire portion of Domesday, under the name of Esselinga, and was then of equal size with Burwell and larger than Soham, though now both these parishes have a greater acreage, probably owing to the inclusion of the fen land which was unproductive marsh at that period.

There is no mention of Newmarket in the return, as that town was not then in existence.

Exning was one of the churches given to Battle Abbey by William Rufus when he attended at the consecration of that monastery in 1089. The deed of gift is among the Cotton manuscripts at the British Museum (Domitian, A II), and is also set out at length in the *Monasticon*. By this gift the advowson only passed, as the Bishop of Norwich, in whose diocese the parish lay, still continued to nominate candidates to the vicarage, who were presented by the Abbot and Convent, and this practice continued till the dissolution of the monastery, as I am informed by Dr Bensly, the Registrar for the Diocese

of Norwich. Among the miscellaneous charters at the Bodleian Library are two dated the 9th of November, 1229. One of these recites a grant of the church of Exning by the Bishop of Norwich to the Abbey of Battle, after the death of George Vercellis, then rector, and Wido, the vicar, and the other contains a covenant by the Abbey to find the vicar a house and six marcs annually, and to pay the ecclesiastical dues for the rectory.

There are various charters relating to Exning in the public collections. The following may be mentioned :

Among the Chartæ Antiquæ at the Record Office is one whereby Galfridus Ridellus, Archdeacon of Canterbury, granted the Manor to Robert de Insulis or de L'Isle and Galiene, his wife. This was confirmed by the king when at Argentan, in France, between November 29 and December, 1167. [See Eyton's *History of Henry II.* p. 3.]

Amongst the Rawlinson charters at the Bodleian Library is one dated in the 50th year of Edward III., whereby Gilbert Talbot, of Irchenfeld, mortgaged the reversion of the manor, then held in dower by Maria, late wife of Audemar (or Aymer) de Valence, Count of Pembroke.

Mary de Valence is well known to all Cambridge men as the Foundress of Pembroke College, and Gilbert Talbot was a grandson of one of the sisters of Aymer de Valence, to whom his estates descended as co-heiresses, subject to his widow's right to dower.

In the first volume of the Calendar of Extracts from the Papal Letters relating to Great Britain, recently published in the Rolls series, is an entry of a dispensation dated 2 Id. Aug. 1255 and granted to Daniel de Bechles to hold this with another living, and the register of Bishop Fordham amongst the episcopal records at Ely contains an entry dated the 2nd of November 1389, whereby indulgences were granted to all benefactors to the construction or repairs of St Mildred's chapel at Exning and to the sustentation of Philip de Clisson, a poor hermit custodian of the said chapel.

Among the documents in the parish chest is a book con-

taining the accounts kept by the churchwardens between the years 1590 and 1624. The items in these accounts are similar to those in other parishes, but a transcript of them is placed in the Library of the Archæological Museum for reference.

Attention may, however, be drawn to one or two items. One brief only appears in them by which collections were made towards a "great loss of fyre" in Devonshire, in 1598.

In 1596 one of the bells was re-cast at Cambridge by Mr Nychollson, a well-known Cambridge founder, of whom an account will be found in the 'History of the Church Bells in Cambridgeshire,' by the Rev. J. J. Raven, published by this Society.

A book for fasting days was purchased in 1597. This was probably one containing the list of such days appointed by the various Acts passed in the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth for the preservation of the sea fisheries.

A few words may be said on the reason why Exning parish forms an outlying part of the county of Suffolk, entirely separated from it by parts of Cambridgeshire, and also as to the origin of Newmarket.

There is no explanation of the first fact from documentary evidence so far as I know. Exning, however, lies in the middle of the parishes in the Hundred of Staplehou, which all lie on the eastern side of the Devil's Ditch, and formed a part of the Diocese of Norwich till quite recently, and it was also probably the site of the palace of Anna, King of the East Angles, and father of S. Etheldreda, and of some of his successors.

It seems probable, therefore, that the Devil's Ditch was the boundary between East Anglia and Mercia when the counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire were formed as suggested by Camden in the *Britannia*, and that the presence of the king's palace in Exning caused a stronger influence towards union with East Anglia to be exerted upon it than upon the neighbouring parishes, and accordingly it remained politically a portion of that kingdom, whilst the adjacent parishes became portions of the Mercian county of Cambridge, though still retaining their connection with the East Anglian diocese.

The foundation of the township of Newmarket is not recorded. It is mentioned in the Hundred Rolls in an inquisition of the year 1276, when a horse was stolen there; and also in one taken in 10 Edward III. preserved at the Record Office amongst those of the following year. By the latter it was found that there was a certain chapel there dedicated to the Blessed Mary and taxed at 40*s.*, the patronage of which was in Lord John D'Argenthal at his death, and also that there was a second chapel there, called the New Chapel of the Blessed Mary in the patronage of the Prior of Thetford, but annexed to the parish church of Woodditton, now the next parish to the south of Newmarket. These are believed to be the earliest documents evidencing the existence of Newmarket.

Exning is connected with Sir George Ripley, Canon of Bridlington Priory about 1490, who is stated to have written his book, called "The Compende of Alchymye," there. The Prior of Bridlington declined to receive him on his return from a visit to Rome, where he had obtained a Papal dispensation enabling him to hold his canonry without performing its duties. He thereupon retired to Exning, and subsequently became an anchorite of the Carmelite order at Boston, where he died.

Monday, 16 November, 1896, at 8.30 P.M.

Dr GLAISHER, Vice-President, in the Chair. The election of the following candidates was announced: Rev. Andrew James Campbell Allen, M.A., Pet.; the Very Rev. the Dean of Ely; Miss Emma Miller, Scroope Terrace.

Professor HUGHES gave a description of objects exhibited by Mr S. J. Freeman.

Professor Hughes complimented Mr Freeman upon the skill and care he had shown in collecting and restoring the relics of Old Cambridge, of which he had given an example in the specimens exhibited that night.

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