

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LIII

JANUARY 1959 TO DECEMBER 1959

CAMBRIDGE
DEIGHTON BELL

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REVIEW ARTICLE

City of Cambridge—A Survey and Inventory by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 2 vols. and folder of maps, pp. cxxix+480. H.M.S.O. 1959. Price £5. 5s.

[*It is unusual to review books in these Proceedings, but the appearance of these volumes is of such importance to Cambridge that the Editorial Committee agreed that an exception ought to be made.*]

The arrival in 1959 of these volumes and of the volume of the *Victoria County History of Cambridge* dealing with the Town and University of Cambridge, make the year an *annus mirabilis* for local historians and provide a full and up-to-date documentation with which very few other cities can compete. A series of unavoidable factors have held up the Royal Commission volumes—World War II, a fire that destroyed much of the accumulated material and finally the important change in policy of the Commission in 1946 which led to the inclusion in their Surveys of select monuments of the period 1714-1850—a step which necessitated considerable extra labour. But the final result is more than worth waiting for, and constitutes one of the most attractive and worthwhile studies of local archaeology to appear since the war. Equally welcome is the fact that, in this case at least, high-level prodding has led the Stationery Office to abandon that infuriating policy of printing small editions of these invaluable surveys which has led to seventeen of its previous twenty English volumes and eight of its nine Welsh ones being now out of print.

The Cambridge Survey consists of an elaborate text with no less than 310 pages of photographs as well as many diagrams and plans. These illustrations are a most notable feature of the book. The photographs are of the highest quality both pictorially and technically, and the blocks reach an unusually high standard. A series of admirably conceived diagrams reinforce the photographs. These include outlines of Cambridge in 1280, 1380 and 1688, the site of Trinity before the foundation of the college, comparative plans of college halls and kitchens, masons' marks of King's Chapel, numerals on its roof trusses and elevations of New Square and Downing Terrace. (The use of black and blue in the map on p. xxxviii is unfortunate as in artificial light they are indistinguishable.) With these go numerous plans. Those of most of the colleges are rather on the small side but King's, Trinity and St John's have followed up the acquisition of the chief places in the Senate House by privileged treatment here. They are given enormous plans which, with the General Distribution map of the monuments of Cambridge require a special folder to contain them. Attractive as they are, these must have added unnecessarily to the cost and are too large to be conveniently used—that of St John's, for example, is nearly five feet long.

It is to be regretted that these plans do not give a complete picture of the colleges as they now exist, most of the post-1850 buildings having been omitted even in outline. Thus we still need our Willis and Clark and still await an up-to-date overall architectural picture. Loggan's view of Cambridge is not very successful as a dust-cover design.

The long introduction (in which the pagination in Roman numerals proves irritating) is much more elaborate and systematic than those in previous volumes. If Cambridge's historians have not provided anything to vie with the great series of the local sources contained in the Oxford Historical Society, its archaeologists have rendered conspicuous service and their work is summed up in an admirably clear opening section, which covers the period down to the Norman Conquest. It is rather surprising to note how much still remains to be done to solve the full history of the Roman settlement on Castle Hill. A useful bird's-eye view of the archaeological development of Cambridge from 1066 to 1850 follows (pp. xlii-lviii) after which comes the Sectional Preface in which the various antiquities are considered by types, some valuable pages on building materials and building procedure being included for good measure.

This is a prelude to the main body of the text with its detailed descriptions of the antiquities of Cambridge. (The Survey includes Cherry Hinton, Chesterton and Trumpington as being within the present City boundaries.) These are very full, and though some may find the flow of technical terms rather heavy going, this is probably unavoidable. As with the Oxford volume the old arrangement of the Survey by parishes has wisely been dropped, and the monuments are studied in groups. The first of these is 'Earthworks and allied structures' (pp. 1-8) to which it would have been convenient and logical to add the 'Earthworks medieval and later' that end the inventory (pp. 391-2). The dominance of colleges over University in early academic life is curiously illustrated by the next section where 'University buildings' are safely covered in a mere sixteen pages (pp. 9-25). This introduces the most massive and important part of the book, 'College buildings' (pp. 25-254). College plate, pictures and movable furniture are omitted except that of an ecclesiastical nature. Absent also are most statues, by a rule explained in the only piece of pure *Whitehallery* in a well-written work (p. cxxvii) and, as noted, we have only incidental reference to buildings since 1850. But it would be singularly churlish to grumble at these omissions, so much does the Survey give us. Here we have a complete, clear and expert inventory of that great part of college antiquities which falls within the Commission's terms of reference, carried out in very great detail.

One result of such a survey is to draw attention to college possessions little known even by local antiquarians. How many have seen the fourteenth-century chest front in lecture room 5 at St John's, the brazier at Trinity bought in 1702-3 ('a most rare survival'), the panelling 'from the old battleship the Duke of Wellington' and the altar frontal from hangings of the old Houses of Parliament both at Jesus?

After the colleges come 'Ecclesiastical buildings, etc.' (pp. 254-304). This is principally concerned with the churches and chapels of the town, but ends broad-

mindedly with Mill Road Cemetery and the parts of Inigo Jones's choir screen for Winchester cathedral now built into the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The following section is 'Secular building, etc.' (pp. 304-91). This surely includes as fine a miscellany as any town in England can boast, with such choice pieces as Hobson's conduit, the 'female Refuge' (pp. 313-14), a Female Servants Training institution founded by the Regius Professor of Greek complete with iron bars (p. 359), the probable residence of the procurator of the abbey of (St Andrea) Vercelli at Chesterton (pp. 381-2) and the Trumpington Road milestones which are hailed as 'the first true milestones to be set up in Britain since Roman times' (p. xc). Four interesting pages of Cambridge mouldings are followed by an elaborate Armorial Index (pp. 397-414), the usual architectural glossary (which should surely include 'astylar') and the Index. The overall picture which is built up by this careful survey of ancient Cambridge is of great interest and importance and is one which provides curious contrasts with that of Oxford.

Archaeology and history alike show the minor place of Cambridge in medieval times. Cambridge owed its early significance, such as it was, to the conjunction of a not very important road and a not very important river. Neither its Roman settlement nor its Norman castle were more than second-rate examples of their kind and there was nothing to promote any important economic growth in the later Middle Ages. No good building stone lay near to hand, and the University, as is now known, originated almost a century later than that at Oxford and was slow in offering it serious rivalry. Because of such factors as these, the medieval architecture of Cambridge would not have risen much above the mediocre had it not been for the utterly unexpected and unparalleled piece of royal munificence which we know as King's College Chapel, one of the classic achievements of the medieval West.

Medieval Oxford was far better placed in the busy Thames area. Its early importance is shown not only by the important assemblies held there in Anglo-Saxon times, but also in its remarkable town planning which dates fundamentally from pre-Conquest times. From the late twelfth century its academic rise was rapid and within a century it had made considerable contributions to medieval learning. Further, Oxford enjoyed a position on the best belt of building stone in England.¹ It is thus not surprising that, architecturally speaking, its medieval heritage clearly eclipses that on the Cam. Oxford's bevy of spires include one of the earliest and one of the most elegant of medieval England; Cambridge can muster but two. Partly because of its Puritans, but more because of these general factors Cambridge cannot compete with the magnificent series of stained-glass windows which make Oxford the best place in England in which to study the development of stained glass (the glass of King's Chapel is of course one of the great treasures of Europe but was unique both in its magnificence and in escaping from the infamous Dowsing), or with Oxford's brasses.

¹ This has not proved in the long run to be an unqualified advantage. This belt of building stone unfortunately includes some bands of little durability, some of which outcrop near Oxford, and the Oxford masons succumbed to the temptation to use them extensively. The result is that many Oxford buildings have had to be entirely refaced, and the process continues. They are an exact parallel to the Gate of Honour, of which our reviewer complains.

The great medieval reredoses and the medieval stallwork find no parallel here and the Old Schools look insignificant when compared with Oxford's exquisite Divinity School.

It was in the course of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries that Cambridge came into its own architecturally. The process began with Christ's, St John's and Trinity with its barn-like chapel and rather country cousinish Great Court. But none of this reaches the first rank any more than such buildings of the early seventeenth century as Emmanuel's Brick Building. The map on p. lxxxiii of the Survey shows the immense amount of building in seventeenth-century Cambridge which coincides with a rapid increase in numbers which was to make the University 'larger than it was to be for the succeeding two hundred years'. By this time the old medieval buildings were somewhat bedraggled and a process of refacing old work began which, as in Italy, hides much evidence that the modern archaeologist would have uncovered. A golden epoch comes with the rebuilding of Clare, the elegant work wrought by Wren at Trinity, Emmanuel and Pembroke, and the new St Catharine's. The great tragedy of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cambridge was the infuriating inability of the dons to agree on plans for new university buildings to replace those which Evelyn rightly described—'The schooles are very dispicable and publique librarie but meane'. The sad story of this is noted in the Survey (pp. lxxv-vi, 9-10). It left the University with only that jewel of Cambridge, the Senate House, to set in the balance against the Bodleian, the Sheldonian, the Clarendon building and the old Ashmolean.

But the mass of attractive Cambridge building and furnishings in the seventeenth century and beyond is remarkable and furnishes one of the most impressive parts of the Survey, whilst the Survey claims—'The apogee of portrait sculpture reached in the 18th century is more notably represented in Cambridge than in any other place outside London' (p. cxvi). Later dates saw such memorable Neo-Gothic work as the screen of King's and the New Buildings of St John's as well as the attractive Neo-Classic work at Downing. That the Survey ends before the arrogant demolitions and proposed demolitions of Victorian Cambridge is perhaps just as well.

The standard of accuracy of the Survey is a very high one and deprives the reviewer of much chance to quarrel, but a few comments may be offered.

The reference to the early form of the name Cambridge is scarcely accurate and should be modified in the light of the information furnished in P. H. Reaney, *Place-names of Cambridge*. . . I, 1, 36-7. With regard to the origin of St Andrew the Less, the dependents of Barnwell priory whom it served would normally have been allotted a chapel in some part of the conventual church. That this was not done here is almost certainly because St Andrew's stands on the site of the hermitage which is known to have preceded the priory at Barnwell. Medieval man was most unwilling to abandon such sites to secular uses and this one could not conveniently be combined in the new cloister buildings further down the slope, so it almost certainly was retained as a separate chapel. We find the same problem arising and the same solution adopted at Lantony where there is also an independent chapel clear of the cloister court on a site which was probably originally a hermitage.

The question of the original purpose of the small fragment of Barnwell priory which remains is obscure. Much depends on its original position *vis-à-vis* other cloister buildings and this has not yet been established; the elaborate plan drawn by St John Hope and published in *Proc. C.A.S.* VII, 248 is too full of hypothetical elements to be taken very seriously. The building is here termed the Cellarer's Checker. If there is any literary evidence for this it is not given, and there seems to be no proof that the title was a traditional one here or indeed that it existed amongst houses of the monastic order to which Barnwell belonged. The Survey suggests that 'it may have been a kitchen' but this scarcely agrees with the conclusion of that very shrewd archaeologist T. D. Atkinson who notes 'it is clear that it formed a living room where refinement and comfort were thought of' (*Proc. C.A.S.* VII, 24). This latter fact suggests that the remains may have been part of the prior's house. In the case of Austin canons this was often situate in the western range of the cloister as was probably the case here, and the reviewer's researches on the architecture of the other houses of the order have shown that the prior's house was very frequently the only part of the main cloister range to survive, being retained at the Dissolution as a dwelling house for the new secular owner of the premises. Incidentally it is not certain or likely that Barnwell had thirty canons in the twelfth century (p. lxx).

The sixteenth-century statue of Our Lady in the Roman Catholic Church presents an interesting problem. It is said to have come from Emmanuel College, which stood on the site of the medieval Dominican friary where a statue of our Lady of Grace had become the centre of a local cult by 1515. But the reviewer has found no good evidence to support this place of origin either in the college archives or elsewhere and suspects it to be a Victorian fairy tale. The statue is probably foreign and is by no means certainly as early as 1515. In the unlikely event of the Dominican statue having escaped the Dissolution in 1539, it seems unlikely that it would have survived the half century which preceded the foundation of Emmanuel in 1584, since in this period the buildings seem to have been uninhabited and they were probably far from intact when the college was set up. That the statue was concealed there and later discovered is feasible but unproven.

Only on one major point does the reviewer find the Survey going beyond the evidence. It claims that 'the front court of Trinity Hall is the earliest of the kind to include a chapel' (p. 246) and rejects the established view that this distinction belongs to Pembroke. This claim is based on the fact that Pembroke had papal permission to build a chapel in 1366, in which year a bull refers to the chapel of Trinity Hall as built (p. lxxvi, cf. p. 245). But herein the Survey overlooks the fact (noted in Willis and Clark, I, 134 and in A. Attwater's *Pembroke College*) that Pembroke's papal bull of 1366 had been preceded by one of 1355 allowing them to establish a chapel there. To this Trinity Hall supporters may retort that their founder had episcopal as distinct from papal permission to build a chapel in 1352 (*ibid.* p. 245). The critical question is when the two foundations utilized these permissions to build. Willis and Clark were of the opinion that at Trinity Hall the building of the chapel 'probably lingered for many years after the licence had been obtained' (*ibid.* p. 220) and were prepared to

see the chapel unfinished as late as the mid-fifteenth century. But though late medieval papal bulls are by no means invariably accurate on local details it would not seem reasonable to dismiss the evidence of the bull of 1366 that Trinity Hall had some sort of a chapel by this time. We cannot be certain when Pembroke put into effect its permission of 1355, but the founder of the college was wealthy and influential and as such is more likely to have obtained the first papal privilege for a college chapel and to have built it speedily than the comparatively minor magnate who founded Trinity Hall. It is to be noted that the bull of 1366 to Pembroke differs from that of 1355 in specifying that the chapel erected shall be one *cum campana et campanile*. It is by no means certain that this means there had been no chapel hitherto, but quite likely that the second bull implies the rebuilding of a chapel on a more elaborate scale or possibly the erection of a permanent instead of a temporary one. But the two chapels if not absolutely contemporary were clearly very nearly so, though we cannot at present be sure which of them was the earlier.

As Dr Bushnell has pointed out, descriptions of medieval ecclesiastical vestments are curiously inaccurate. The figure of a bishop from Holy Trinity Church is said to be shown in a cope but is obviously in mass vestments (Pl. 68), the brass of Dr Walter Hewke at Trinity Hall (p. 249) shows a cope over surplice and almuce, not over a Doctor's habit as claimed, and in the brass of Provost Robert Brassie of King's (Pl. 5) the pendants of the almuce are incorrectly taken to be the ends of a stole.

A few minor *corrigenda* may be noted. P. xxix for 'tower arch' read 'tower and some walling' (cf. p. lxvii), p. xlii for 'about 1112' read 'in 1112', p. xlix for 'prior of Anglesey Abbey' read 'prior of Anglesey', p. lxxiii for 'college of the hall' read 'college or the hall', p. cxxiv for 'Dining Room' read 'Old Library'. Capital letters are used rather overlavishly and not always consistently, for example, Regular Canons (p. xlii), Canons Regular (p. lxvii), canons regular (p. 290).

Cross-referencing to objects removed from their original home is not completely systematic. Though the door at Ely Cathedral that probably came from Jesus College is properly noted in the survey of the college (p. 89), Emmanuel's unnecessary generosity in giving its pulpit to Trumpington Church (p. 298) and its (?altar) table to St Edward's (p. 274) is not recorded in the college account and the same applies to the pulpit from King's at St Edward's. (Research would probably reveal a fair number of college antiquities scattered over the countryside and a list of these would be useful. Pembroke's organ case of 1674 is now in Framlingham Church and part of its contemporary altar rails at Tarrant Hinton; altar rails from King's are in Milton Church.) Contrariwise it would be useful to note where fittings have been imported from elsewhere, such as the medieval glass in Emmanuel parlour and much of the later glass in its Hall.

There have been several changes of some importance since the book went to press. Thus the Silver Street bridge shown on Pl. 38 is now a thing of the past as is part of the 1824-5 building of Emmanuel, and Pl. 70 shows the Senate House without Sir Albert Richardson's new lighting. There has been little new evidence to record

but Mr Salway's recent excavations at Sidney Sussex have revealed some traces of the Franciscan church and a very unusual amount of medieval glass. Recent work at Emmanuel suggests that the hall there (marked simply as medieval) may belong to the late thirteenth century (*Emman. Coll. Mag.* 1959, pp. 40-3), a likely enough date.

The question as to how far the staff of the Survey should involve themselves in historical research to date the objects they describe is a thorny one, though less so in Cambridge than elsewhere owing to the comparative richness of historical work already available. Here the volume has probably struck a reasonable balance. But it may be legitimate to grumble at the rather scanty indications given of sources utilized. These are not detailed in the Introduction, and the General Bibliography (pp. cxxviii-ix) leaves much ground uncovered. Too often interesting statements have to be taken on trust. Thus no indication is given as to how it is known that Fitzwilliam House was built in 1727, or that the monogram there designates John Halstead. It would be unfair to add heavily to the investigators' burdens, but it would certainly be useful if brief bibliographies could be inserted at frequent junctures as in the *Catalogo delle Cose d'Arte e di Antichità d'Italia*.

The intense delight furnished by these volumes is tempered in two ways. First, they provoke a certain disquiet at the archaeological casualties sustained in Cambridge in recent years. One college has recently seriously damaged an early medieval kitchen block, destroyed an early seventeenth-century wallpainting and immured interesting stained glass in a cellar; another has mislaid an eighteenth-century altar painting; another removed fine eighteenth-century railings. Radical restoration is far too prevalent in Cambridge these days. It has unduly affected the tower at Chesterton whilst the Gate of Honour at Caius has been so radically restored as to cease to be an antiquity, and the same is true of the battlements of the aisles of Great St Mary's.

Even more melancholy is the present rate of progress. (Few of us are likely to see the completion of the Survey of the county of Cambridge and Isle of Ely.) The pace of the Commission's work has never been considerable, largely because of the extreme paucity of its staff. The decision to include in their Surveys monuments after 1714 has imposed a heavy additional burden on it with the result that it has accomplished only a very small part of its labours. The first of the English volumes appeared in 1910 and the total number that have so far seen the light of day is twenty-two (counting Cambridge as two). These concern only ten counties and the city of London. Of the ten counties five are small, all but one of them having been covered in a single volume, the only major areas completely surveyed being London (5 volumes), Essex (4 volumes) and Herefordshire (3 volumes). Had these been done in the detail accorded the most recent work of the Survey and included post-1714 material they would have been much longer. As it is, most of the giant repositories of antiquities such as Norfolk, Suffolk, Yorkshire and Wiltshire are as yet entirely untouched, apart from a survey of the city of York which is now under way. To cover the whole of England on the present scale (the only one worthy of modern scholarship) would probably require two hundred volumes or more. As only two volumes

have appeared since the end of World War II it is open to the pessimist to conclude that the end of the present Survey may be expected about the year A.D. 3460. By this time some of the post-1850 monuments will have acquired a certain antiquity and some don or other will have unfairly proposed that the Stationery Office be renamed the Stationary Office. Furthermore, since we are at present destroying ancient buildings with a vigour unsurpassed since the Suppression of the Monasteries, much material is likely to disappear before being noted in the Survey. There is no reason to assume that the surveyors are dilatory in their immensely complex task and every reason to stress that the only answer to an otherwise intolerable cultural problem is a very radical increase in the size of their staff. As we know on the highest authority that 'we've never had it so good' it would not seem inopportune to press for this.

J. C. DICKINSON

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