

## BURNHAM ABBEY.

BY WM. LOFTIE RUTTON, C.E.

A VISIT made last summer to the remains of Burnham Abbey interested the writer in its history, and the suggestion of his companion that an account of it might be acceptable to the Architectural and Archæological Society of Buckinghamshire, on the occasion of a proposed visit to the spot, induced him to collect the information which he has now the pleasure of contributing.

It may be well first to name the books that mention the Abbey, in order that reference may be made to such works by any whose interest in the subject may so incline them.

Not a little disappointing is it that Matthew Paris, who lived and wrote his valuable chronicle at the time of the founding of the Abbey, makes no mention of it. The Monk Historian tells us much about Richard King of the Romans, the founder, and in a very interesting manner describes the foundation and dedication of Hales Abbey in Gloucestershire, by the same Prince, even stating its cost as related to him by the Prince himself;\* but although this record of Hales leads us to expect similar mention of Burnham, we are in that disappointed.

The oldest book in which we glean information is Speed's "*Historie of Great Britaine*," published in 1611, and here there is merely a line, in a table of the suppressed monasteries, stating the name of the founder, the date, the order of the nuns, and the revenue at the dissolution.† Next in Dugdale's "*Monasticon Anglicanum*," date 1655—1673, we have the Foundation Charter in Latin, nothing more.‡ Browne Willis, to whom archæologists are so greatly indebted, published in 1718-19 his "*History of Abbeys, extracted*," as the title sets forth, "out of very curious manuscripts, etc., which have

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\* M. Paris, Giles Trans., vol. ii., pp. 177 and 464.

† Speed's History, ed. 1632, p. 1044.

‡ Monas. Angl., ed. 1682, p. 534.

been many years collecting by the most eminent antiquarians, and faithfully published." Willis's account of the Abbey, though concise, is very valuable, the main facts of its history are here for the first time collected, and the results of his research have been used by all succeeding writers. He does not, however, specify, as we might wish, the "curious manuscripts" from which he has derived his information, and somewhat strangely omits the name of the founder, which must have been known to him from the Foundation Charter, cited in the "*Monasticon Anglicanum*."\* Very soon after Willis we have Stevens's "*History of the Antient Abbeys*," published in 1722 as an addition to the *Monasticon*, but in respect to Burnham merely quoting Willis.† Next we have the valuable "*Notitia Monastica*" of Bishop Tanner, published in 1744, in which the founder is named; and a list given of the ancient documents bearing on the Abbey's history.‡

Lysons's "*Magna Britania*," 1813, in addition to what we have already learned, affords us the history of the Manor of Burnham, which belonged to the Abbey.§ A new "*Monasticon Anglicanum*," by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel, appeared in 1830; it is a large work of eight folio volumes, handsomely illustrated with engravings, and professing to be only a new edition of the old work used as its basis, is very much more comprehensive. It arranges all the facts hitherto ascertained, annexes the Foundation Charter and a return of the property belonging to the house at the time of its dissolution, and moreover furnishes an excellently engraved view of the ruins, supplied to the editor by the then proprietor, Lord Grenville.||

Lastly, Dr. Lipscomb's "*Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*," published in 1847, contains the most complete account, compiled in the main from the authors preceding him. Accompanying the text there is a small woodcut, representing a portion of the ruins; it is, how-

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\* B. Willis's *Hist. Abbeys*, vol. ii., p. 15.

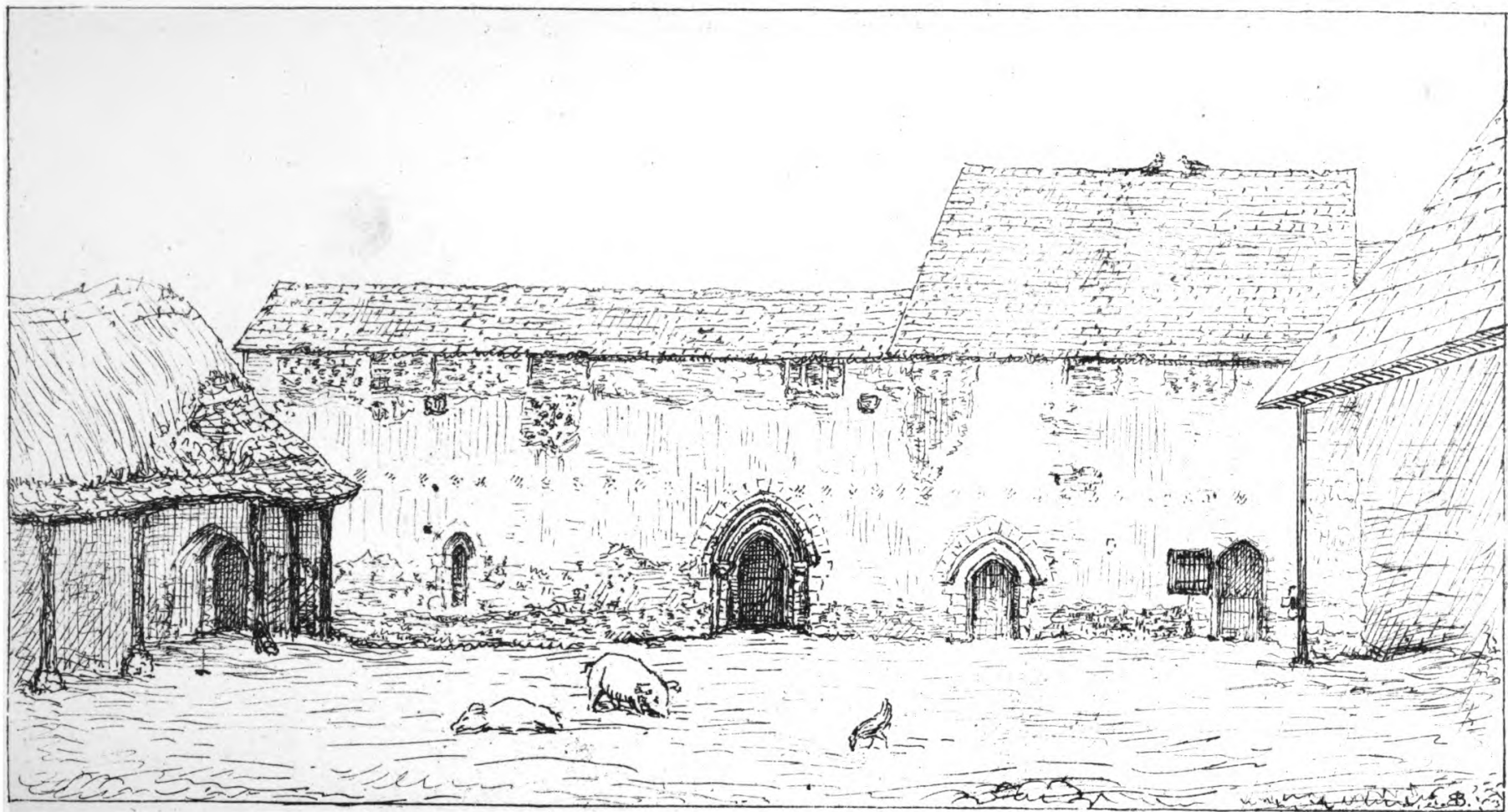
† Stevens's *Hist. Abbeys*, vol. i., p. 521.

‡ *Notitia Monas.*, ed. 1744, p. 32.

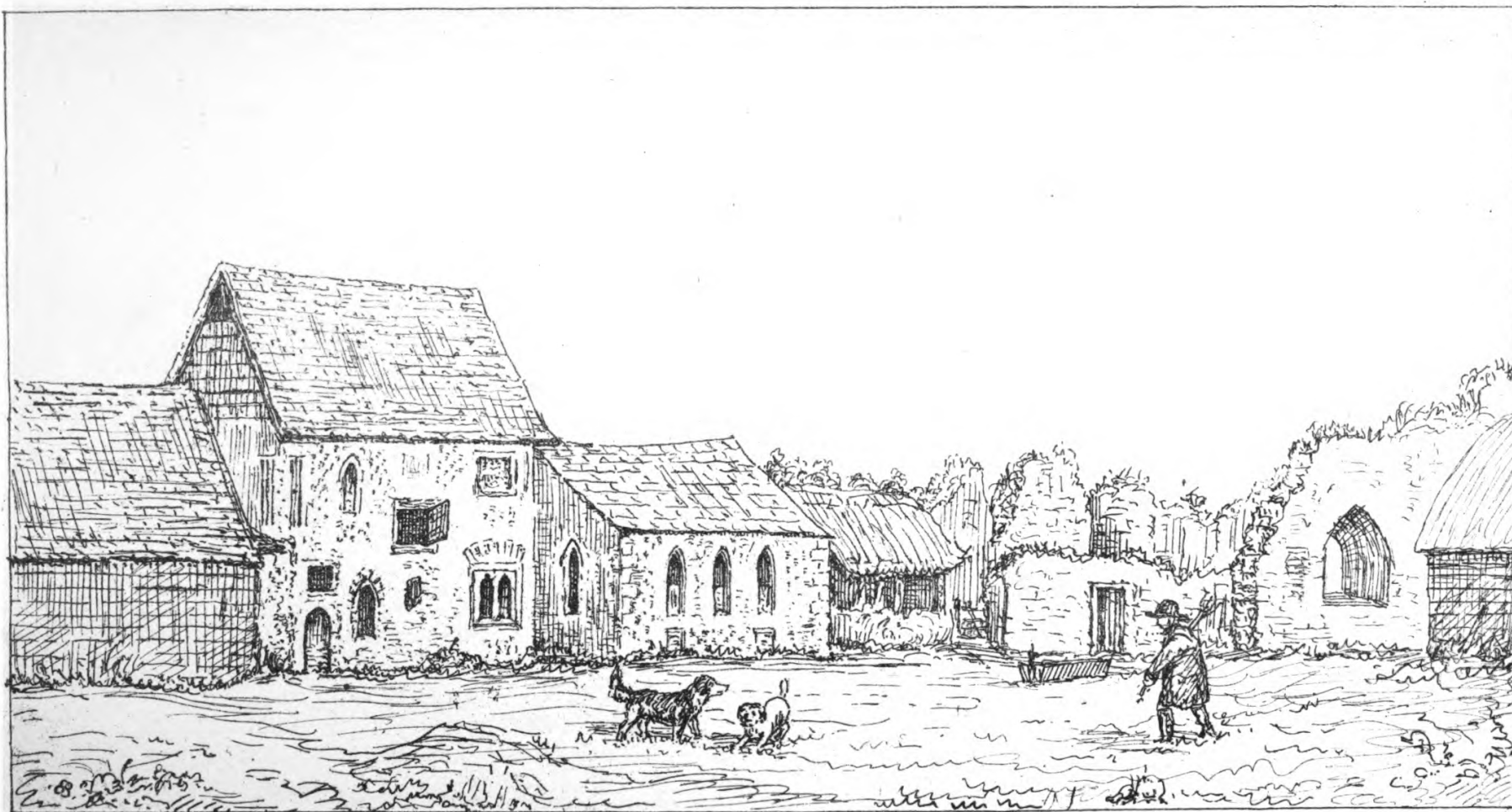
§ Lysons's *Mag. Brit.*, vol. Bucks, p. 531.

|| *Mon. Ang.*, vol. vi. pt. 1, p. 545.





*Burnham Abbey West View. 1878.*



*Burnham Abbey. East view 1870.*



*Burnham Abbey. West view. from Monast. Anglic. Edition 1830.*  
B.

ever, very inaccurate, and appears to be a drawing from imperfect recollection, rather than a sketch made on the spot.\*

In regard to the foundation of the Abbey, Bishop Tanner states that "Richard King of the Romans, A.D. 1265, began here a nunnery of the order of St. Augustine," and he gives as his authority the Lincoln Registers, that see having formerly, and until late years, included Buckinghamshire.† Also the Foundation Charter, dated 18th April, 1266, by which the same Prince grants to the Abbey the Manor of Burnham and other lands, clearly sets forth that these grants were made to the "Monastery of Burnham, *which we have caused to be founded*" (quod fundari fecimus).‡ Nevertheless, with this evidence before him, Mr. Cole, known in his day as the "Cambridge Antiquary," and now by the many volumes of valuable manuscripts which he bequeathed to the British Museum, finds room for doubt whether the Prince really founded the Abbey. Mr. Cole, who was for six years (1774—80) Vicar of Burnham, and must therefore have taken special interest in the antiquities of his parish, bases his doubt on the fact that the Monastery had not adopted the arms of the King of the Romans, but those, with a difference merely of colour, of the family of De Molins; from which circumstance he reasons that one of that family may have been the real founder, although, as had been done in other cases, the lustre of a royal name was borrowed, the Prince thus becoming the nominal founder.§ But there is no evidence that the Abbey derived any benefit from the De Molins family till seventy-three years after its foundation; that is, till 1338, when Edward III. conferred the advowson on Sir John de Molins, who had some few years previously obtained by marriage the adjacent Manor of Stoke Poges, and Sir John (whether before or after becoming patron is uncertain) endowed the Abbey with his Manor of Silverton, in Northamptonshire.||

It is probable that at this time in acknowledgment of

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\* Lipscomb's Antiq., vol. iii., p. 206.

† Not. Mon., ed. 1744, p. 32.

‡ Mon. Aug., 1830, vol. vi., pt. 1, p. 546.

§ Cole's MSS., vol. xxxii., p. 38.

|| Dugdale's Baronage, vol. ii., p. 145.

benefits derived from its new patron, the Abbey assumed his arms with a difference; prior to this period, it is possible that no arms had been adopted, for which supposition there appears to be some reason in the fact that the arms of the founder were already borne by the older and more important Abbey of Hales.\* However this may be, surely in the circumstance that Burnham did not bear the shield of its founder, but that of a later patron, there is not sufficient reason for casting doubt on a fact so plainly recorded in the Lincoln Register,† and set forth in the Foundation Charter; the Prince in the latter document appearing not only the nominal but the virtual founder, by his grant to the House of its earliest and chief endowments.

In regard to the arms which occasioned Mr. Cole's doubt as to the founder, Browne Willis states them as depicted in the sketch accompanying this paper; ‡ he does not give his authority, and Mr. Cole points out that the reading is probably incorrect as being "false heraldry," or metal on metal. The question is merely one of colour; the arms are shown on the seal attached to the instrument of surrender, from which, however, it is impossible to learn the *tinctures*. Mr. Cole, on the other hand, has noted in his MS. certain arms which he found in a window of Burnham Church in 1761, several years before he became vicar; he was not at the time aware that they pertained to the Abbey, but afterwards discovered this, and then, as is apparent in the MS., he added words to that effect.§ The shield he noted in the window is the centre sketch; it is, probably, the correct representation, the field and charges being *gules*, and not *or*, as stated by Willis. The arms of De Molins (or Molyms or Moleyns), preserved, as we learn from Mr. Cole,|| in a MS. in the library of King's College, Cambridge, were *sable* on a chief *argent* three lozenges of

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\* For arms of Hales Abbey, see 'Tanner's Not. Mon., p. xlv.

† Extracts from the register have been courteously supplied to the writer by one of the Lincoln Canons, and are appended. (See p. 67.)

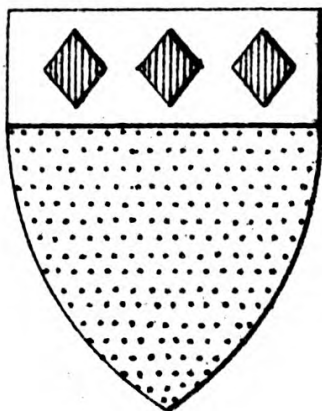
‡ B. Willis, *Hist. Abbeys*, vol. ii., p. 16.

§ Cole MSS. vol. xxxii., p. 27. The unfortunate destruction of the arms is also recorded.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 38. The family of De Molins died out in 1428. Tombs of the family are to be seen in the church of Stoke Poges.

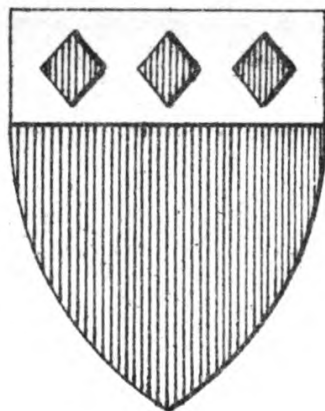


— Burnham Abbey. —



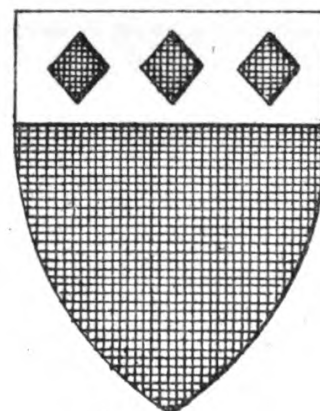
Arms according to  
Browne Willis; probably  
incorrect, as shewing  
metal on metal.

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Arms according to  
M<sup>r</sup> Cole formerly  
shewn in a window  
of Burnham Church.

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Arms of Sir John de  
Molyns; patron 1338;  
whence the Abbey arms  
were probably derived.

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the field, and for *sable* substituting *gules*, we have, most probably, the arms of the Abbey.

The history of the founder of any edifice or institution is so much a part of its own history, that a short sketch of the career of Richard King of the Romans, seems here to be demanded. He was the second son of King John, nephew to his famous namesake Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and brother to King Henry III., in whose reign he was a very prominent, if not the most prominent, character. Endowed with greater ability, prudence, and firmness, than the weak, impetuous king, he obtained considerable ascendancy over him, and, as Earl of Cornwall and Count of Poitou, was granted great estates and revenues, as well as other means of acquiring wealth, by which he so adroitly, and not always scrupulously, profited, that he came to be regarded as the richest prince in Christendom. He is accused of cupidity and violence, but the times were rough, the strong will aided by the strong sword dominated, and it was well when valour and generosity redeemed in some degree the less noble qualities of the warrior. If Richard took with one hand, he gave away with the other, and many proofs exist of his munificence. As before shown, besides Burnham Abbey, he founded that of Hales, on which Paris records he spent 10,000 marks,\* which sum would now be equivalent to about £190,000, and these were not the only Religious Houses which benefited by his wealth and liberality. On account of his princely qualities, but more because of his great wealth, he was, in 1257, elected to the Imperial Throne of Germany, then vacant, by certain of the Prince Electors of the Empire, and, his ambition overcoming his prudence, he accepted the perilous distinction offered to him. The Empire at that time was in a state of distraction, almost indeed of dissolution, consequent upon the long-continued struggle for supremacy between the Emperors and the Popes, the valiant Emperor Frederick II., the last of his line, having died six years previously, deserted by fortune, and deposed by his papal enemies.

After his death three Princes in succession were elected to the throne by the dominant portion of the Diet, not by all the Princes who were rightfully electors. The

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\* M. Paris, Giles Trans., vol. ii., p. 464.

last of these three Princes thus elected was Richard, the King of England's brother; he was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle with all due and accustomed solemnity, receiving the title, "King of the Romans." The nature of the title is well explained by Speed, in his notice of the event. "The greatest worldly honour that since Constantine ever fell upon an English subject was at this time, in regard both of his birth and riches, derived and tendered to Richard, Earl of Cornwall . . . who from thenceforth was King of the Romans, that is Emperour elect, which title is used till they receive the crown imperial, though to all purposes he is Emperour, so that King of Romans seems to answer to the title of Cæsar, which under the ancient Roman Emperours was given to the heire-apparent of the Empire, or Coadjutors."\*

The Sovereigns of Germany, or rather of the Empire, which included Germany and Italy, claimed to be the successors of the Roman Emperors of the West, and derived that title originally from the Pope, however questionable may have been his competence to grant it. The Sovereign was elected by the Diet of Princes, and by them crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle, or other of the chief places of the Empire, but it became established that the full Imperial dignity was not acquired until the Pope, with his own hands, had conferred the Imperial Crown.

Thus there was a coronation at Rome to follow that of Aix-la-Chapelle, and in many instances the second ceremony did not take place until after the lapse of some years, the delay arising from the difficulties and contentions which, in those very turbulent times, the sovereign had to surmount before he could reach Rome. The position of the Sovereign in the meantime seems to have been King of Germany and Italy, and Emperor elect, and the title used until the full Imperial dignity had been attained was King of the Romans, which, as Speed says, meant Emperor elect. Moreover, the Imperial Crown being elective, not hereditary, many of the Emperors in order during their lifetime to secure the succession to their sons, had them elected by the Diet, and on the heir thus created was then conferred the above title.

Richard, elected by the Princes of the Diet, though

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\* Speed's History, Ed. 1632, p. 616.

not by the whole body, and crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle, became Emperor elect or expectant, and according to custom received the title King of the Romans, which he henceforth used—not that of Emperor, by which he has been sometimes erroneously designated. Ambition doubtless lured him with the prospect of triumph over such of the Princes who opposed him, their submission to his sovereignty, the union of the factions in his interest, and ultimately the sanction of the Pope and coronation from his hands. But although he obtained considerable success over his opponents, whom, Paris says, he “subdued, enticed, and attached to his cause,”\* though acts of imperial authority, and acts of great service to the Empire are recorded of him, and though his partial sovereignty was maintained for a period of fourteen years, that is until his death, yet the full measure of his ambition was not attained; his crown could have brought him but little satisfaction, his wealth being wasted in attempts to conciliate the greedy Princes who had elected him, only that they might enrich themselves. Paris recounts, that he took with him to Germany, “never to return,” seven hundred thousand pounds,† which would now be represented by about twenty millions sterling;‡ to this statement we may have difficulty in giving full credence, but we can readily believe that the sum was immense and the expenditure enormous.

Although after his acceptance of sovereignty in Germany, he passed several lengthened periods there, he by no means disassociated himself from the affairs of

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\* M. Paris, Giles Trans., vol. iii., p. 266.

† Ibid., vol. iii., p. 230.

‡ It is not possible accurately to determine the value of money at a former period of our history, or to state its present equivalent. The difference of *nominal value*, or that resulting from the greater or less number of shillings into which, by State enactments, the pound Troy of silver has been divided, can readily be ascertained; the cost of commodities may also be compared, old accounts for this purpose furnishing sufficient data; but the difference in the value of money attributable to change in the mode of living and of social habits, and consequently of the necessities or demands of life (the luxuries of one age becoming the necessities of another), cannot with precision be estimated. The result, however, of a careful calculation made by the writer is, that for the conversion of sums mentioned at the periods respectively of the foundation and dissolution of Burnham Abbey, 28 may be used as an approximate multiple for the former, and 9 for the latter period.



his own country, now involved in trouble through the misgovernment of its weak monarch. In the contentions between the King and Barons he appears to have acted the part of mediator as long as it was possible, and when at last arms were resorted to, he supported, as was natural, the cause of the King, although differences between the Royal Brothers had previously not been infrequent.

After the battle of Lewes, in which the Royal cause was defeated, he had to endure nine months' imprisonment in the Tower; in the following year, that is in 1265, peace was made through Richard's influence, and as an act of thanksgiving to Heaven, it is said, he then founded Burnham Abbey. Afterwards he passed about three years in his German kingdom, from which he returned finally in 1268, and having lived peacefully and usefully another three years, he closed his eventful life at his Castle of Berkhamstead, on April 2nd, 1272, a few months before the King, his brother, his body being interred at the Abbey of Hales, among the scanty ruins of which, his grave is now unmarked and unknown.

The Foundation Charter of Burnham (appended to this paper) is in Latin, and couched in the customary royal and legal phraseology. The founder is "Richard by the grace of God, King of the Romans ever Augustus," the royal deed is given at Cippenham (called throughout Cippeham), where there then existed a palace, and is dated "the ninth year of our reign," the witnesses being Henry, King of England; Prince Edward, his son; the Princes Henry and Edmund, sons of the founder, and others of less exalted station. The Abbey by this charter is endowed with the manor of Burnham, with all rights attaching to it, and the advowson of the parish; also with certain lands and woods specified in the manor of Cippenham. Later, the house possessed the manors, or portions of the manors of Stoke, Bulstrode, and Beaconsfield; in 1339, the manors of Holmer and Little Missenden were granted by Roger Le Strange;\* and in the same year was made the gift of Silverton manor, in Northamptonshire, by Sir John de Molins. Burnham

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\* Heir of his uncle, Eubolo Le Strange, who, *jure uxoris*, was Earl of Lincoln, or was so styled.



market tolls were also in the hands of the Abbess. The total annual income at the dissolution, according to the statement of the King's Commissioners—to which, knowing how iniquitously the returns were made, we can attach but little credence—was £91 5s. 11d.,\* equal in our money to about £820. This amount was subject to various “reprises and deductions,” which left £51 2s. 4d. clear, now equivalent to say £460. This income would—to get an idea of it—have paid the annual stipends of eleven priests of that time; but after taking the most enlarged view possible of the Abbey's revenue, and thinking it understated by the Commission, we must come to the conclusion that, gauged by its wealth, the House occupied but a humble position in the list of monasteries; it was, indeed, one of the *Lesser Monasteries*, as by the act were denominated all that had not an income of £200 per annum. The income of Hales, which, as we have seen, had the same founder, was nearly four times that of Burnham.

Let us give attention now to that part of our subject which probably is the most generally interesting, namely, the fabric of the Abbey, its church, and conventual buildings. We have no account of it, as it existed nearly three and a half centuries ago, when the abbess and nine nuns, with their dependants, inhabited here. The earliest account of the building, and it is very slight, is that of Browne Willis, who wrote one hundred and sixty years ago, but not until one hundred and eighty years had passed over the ruined Abbey, for it is probable that it was, in part at least, demolished immediately after the surrender; and the earliest view we have, taken in 1730, is too late to assist, but in a very slight degree, our conjecture of the fabric in its entirety. We can only examine the ruined portions of the monastery as we now find them, hear what tradition may say in respect to them, and thus form our surmises. Our first wish will be to see the church of the Abbey, always the principal and most interesting building of the Religious Establishment. But, alas! no portion of these ruins will satisfy our expectations. The principal division now existing (A on

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\* Speed's History, ed. 1632, p. 1044, and Monas. Ang. 1830, vol. vi., pt. i., p. 545.

plan) is an apartment—nothing more than an apartment—33 ft. in length from west to east, and 20 ft. in width, it is entered by a handsome pointed arch unmistakably of the date at which we learn the Abbey was founded, and of that pure early Gothic which commands in so great a degree our admiration—nay, even our reverence—associated as it is with the worship of generations long passed away, and in this place made venerable by the impress of six centuries. Three narrow lancet windows at the east end, fifteen inches on the exterior, splayed internally to a width of four feet, and one other similar window near the south-east angle, have lighted this apartment; there is no piscina or other feature which would lead us to suppose that it had been a chapel, except that the middle lancet at the east being shorter than those on either side, it may so have been for the placing of an altar. But although mindful that we are visiting the remains of a small monastery, and that consequently we cannot expect to find a church of grand dimensions, we are unwilling to accept this small place as the principal sanctuary; and happily we are relieved from the necessity of the conjecture, on learning the name by which the apartment is still known—its traditionary name—viz., “the Long Chamber.” We may think it possibly may have served as chapter-house, or perhaps as a hall for the reception of guests; but we shall go elsewhere to seek the church.

In another portion of the ruins there are the remains of what is still known as the “Lady Chapel”; for this and other names we are thankful, tradition being very valuable to us in this groping after the past. The “Lady Chapel” (marked B on the plan) is detached from the body of the monastery, and is in close proximity to the “Nuns’ Burial Ground,” as is still called a portion of ground between the ancient moat and the strong wall surrounding the precincts. The west and north walls, and part of the east, remain, the south wall has been demolished, so that we can scarcely tell what was the area of the building, though it would appear to have been shorter in its length from west to east than in its width.

There remain indications of two doors, one which gave entrance from the garden, and one communicating with the cemetery; two lancet windows (now filled in), larger

than those of the "Long Chamber," gave light from the west; the east end has been altered, and where the altar would have been there are now remnants of a chimney, which, with the remains of two Tudor windows, show that the building underwent transformation probably at a period to be referred to presently; one of these windows placed above the other making it evident that an upper story was then added. In the north wall there is a square recess for an ambry or locker, scarcely in position for the service of an altar at the east; it is the only feature that would seem to indicate that the place had been a chapel, which character it is not probable that we should assign to it but for the name it bears. Receiving, however, the traditionary name we may think this to have been a chapel for the more private devotions of the Abbess and nuns, perhaps in relationship with the cemetery close at hand; and we may even imagine the last offices of the Church to have been here rendered over the bodies of the deceased sisters ere they were deposited in their last resting place.

A cloister probably extended along the west wall of the principal block now remaining (at C on plan), square holes in the wall at regular intervals appearing as though for the reception of roof-timbers; and from the Cloister opened three pointed-arched doorways, the principal and central one giving access to the "Long Chamber" (A), a second, now blocked up (and replaced by a modern square door), leading into the now most southerly apartment (G), and the other opening into what tradition tells us to have been the "Refectory" (E). This latter apartment measures 49 feet by 21, two large windows yet indicated in the ruined wall looked eastward, from a third in the north wall was seen the garden which yet bears its old name "The Still-garden" (H), and into the Cloister peered a very narrow lancet, but six inches wide on the exterior, splayed internally. Remains of a fireplace appear in the south-east angle of the Refectory, and near the north-east there is a small rectangular recess in the wall similar to that noticed in the Lady Chapel; a door (now walled up) gave communication with the domestic apartments (D), and another opened into a chamber (F), the purpose of which taxes our conjecture. It bears the ominous name of "The Dungeon." Whether

this name has descended from monastic times, or whether it has been given to the place later on account of its peculiar windowless appearance—for it has been but very dimly lighted by two exceedingly narrow lancet-headed slits (two small square openings being probably more recent) cannot now be determined. On learning the name, however, we may think it not impossible that it was a place of punishment and penance, the more so when told that a pair of iron fetters were found some years since in a passage beneath the building.

“The Dungeon” would, if believed in, certainly bear its charms of interest and mystery, but sceptically we may inquire whether this peculiar-looking building may have served no more sinister purpose than as larder or store of the Convent; the now broken-down passage underneath being perhaps nothing more than a water conduit, or sewer, and yet if so why carried under the building? We must leave the place in doubt as to its character.

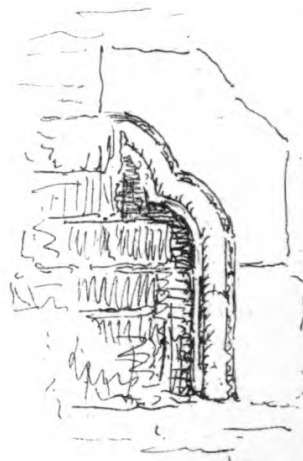
Here it seems fitting to remark that Burnham Abbey, like most places of mediæval times, has its legendary subterranean passage, in this case connecting the Abbey with Windsor Castle. In 1852 (March 13th) the “*Illustrated London News*” mentioned the discovery of an underground passage at the Castle, conjectured to be the traditionary communication with the Abbey; but to inquiry made by the writer through the medium of “*Notes and Queries*” it was replied, that the passage had been found to lead out into the fields near the Castle, and that another passage, discovered in 1862, had on investigation been found to have its exit in the ancient ditch of the fortress. It might add to the importance of our Abbey to find it thus connected with its Royal neighbour, but setting aside the difficulties involved in a tunnel more than three miles long, there was the river Thames to undermine, and we can scarcely credit the thirteenth century with such a work.

To return to the ruins; the domiciliary portion of the Convent appears to have been the north wing (D), of which but one of the principal walls remains, the chief feature being an ample fireplace, probably of the kitchen. The fireplace seemingly is of Tudor times, and an alteration of the original one, of which remain on either side slender shafts with “Early English” capitals.

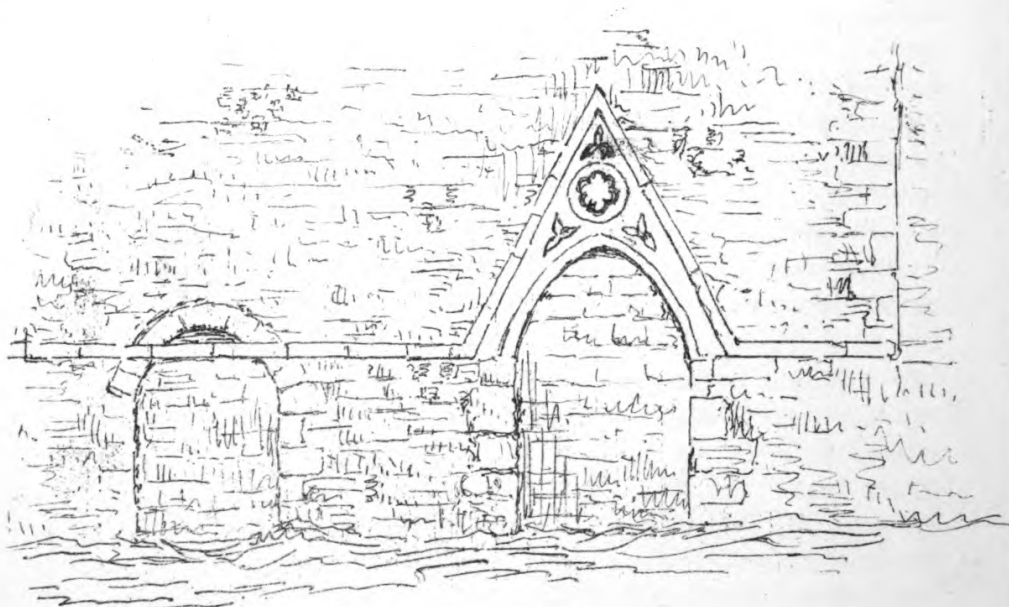




*Windows in East Wall of Long Chamber  
Interior*



*Stoup? to the left of  
arches in sketch below*



*Face of Wall (now within wooden barn) at S. end of buildings, 1878*  
B.



The only division of the buildings now remaining to be visited is the small apartment (G) at the southern extremity ; it does not assist us in the special search we have borne in mind, and we are perhaps leaving the ground without obtaining relief to our uncertainty in regard to the church of the Abbey, or any satisfactory evidence of one having existed. But passing round to the green paddock which extends between the ancient buildings and the moat, in order to obtain the view on that side, our attention is arrested by vertical mouldings at some height on the extreme south-east angle (*a*), and we speculate as to what they can have belonged. They seem to indicate construction on a nobler scale than we have hitherto seen ; and our first idea may tend towards the pier of a lofty arch of tower or chancel. On closer inspection, however, we see a series of small holes at regular intervals in the stonework, which suggest the insertion of the ironwork of a window-frame ; the vertical mouldings, too, are discontinued at a considerable height from the ground, and the wall below them has no smooth face, but is broken off, showing clearly that it had continuation eastward.

Entering now the modern wooden barn which abuts against the ancient wall, and seeing again the vertical mouldings stopping short, and the masonry underneath (the broken section of which we saw outside) running out beyond them, our impression as to a window becomes conviction ; the lower masonry was evidently that which supported the window-sill, and it can scarcely be concluded otherwise, than that here was a window of considerable dimensions looking *northward*.

Our attention is next drawn to a pointed arch traced on the face of the wall (at *b* on plan) ; it is enclosed within a moulding which forms a pediment or canopy over it, the triangular space being filled in with handsome tracery of the "Decorated" period. The arch and ornamental work is represented by the accompanying sketch, made by Mr. Burgess, who visited the Abbey with the writer ; the moulding and tracery have, alas ! been ruthlessly hammered off, the stone of which they were carved being now flush with the face of the wall, and in its mutilated condition the object of the work is somewhat difficult of surmise. We may at first think it to

have been a doorway, which served for communication with the chamber (G) on the other side of the wall; but for a doorway the work is not carried sufficiently low, and although there might have been a few steps for ascent, there appears no object for that arrangement. Also the superficial character of the masonry forming the arch, which is composed of long thin stones without key-stone at its apex, is not what we expect in a doorway or in an arch built to sustain weight; neither is our first impression confirmed by an examination of the other side of the wall, where, although there is a recess, it is of much less width than the arch, and being regularly formed had probably its own object. Dismissing the idea of doorway there is but one other purpose which, with sufficient probability, recommends itself to us, namely that of sedile, the arch with its superimposed carved work forming the canopy. This sedile, admitting it so to be, was, as we should suppose from its style, of later construction than the wall, and was but slightly bonded into it.

There is one other interesting relict in the wall before us—a small trefoil-headed niche, sadly mutilated, indeed half-demolished; it is found at the western end of the wall, and from its appearance was probably for a holy-water stoupe (see sketch).

We have now three architectural features tending to prove that the face of the wall on which they are found is an *interior*, not an exterior face. *First*, the vestiges of a window of considerable dimensions, the aspect of which, as is evident from the situation of the adjacent buildings, could only have been from the position now occupied by the wooden barn; *secondly*, the traces of a canopy which we think overshadowed a sedile; and, *thirdly*, the stoupe, which could not have been on the outside of a wall at the end of the conventual buildings, round the corner as it were. Convinced by these three witnesses that it is an interior wall face we have examined, we must also receive the conviction, that here on the ground which the barn now covers there once stood a portion of the Abbey, which has been completely removed, only the few vestiges of it which have occupied our attention remaining to prove its former existence; and further, judging from these vestiges the greater dignity of the work than that seen elsewhere, we may surely, without presumption, conclude

that the edifice which stood here was that which we have been seeking—viz., the Church of the Monastery. It is not impossible that its extent and form might be ascertained were foundations sought for; indeed, it is tantalizing to think what a few picks and shovels, wielded by sinewy and dexterous arms, might reveal to us. Masonry foundations have been discovered in the farmyard in line with the old wall, at six yards from its present termination, where, for appearance sake, it has, subsequently to the destruction of the building, been squared up as a buttress, this being evident from the character of the masonry, and from the mutilated condition of the niche. If the niche, however, inclosed a holy-water stoupe, the inference would follow that the western entrance of the church was near to it.

That the church was of later construction than the building to which it adjoined, or that at least an alteration was at some time made, appears in the fact that a circular-headed doorway has been built up, and a band of stone, or string-course, carried across it (see sketch); this string-course (which we may suppose to have been moulded, though now found hammered flat) being carried over the sedile to form its canopy. Whether the doorway was an exit from the building before the church was attached, or whether it was an original entrance to the church afterwards disused, and built up, perhaps, when the sedile was added, it is scarcely possible now to determine. The writer is inclined to class the sedile as "Decorated" work, which dates forty or fifty years later than the Abbey's foundation; possibly it may have been constructed in 1338, when Sir John de Molins became patron and benefactor to the House. If as sedile it was for the use of the officiating priest, we should necessarily conclude that the altar was near, and that the church did not extend so far eastward as might be inferred from the vestiges of the window close at hand, these vestiges indicating that the window had a northern, not eastern, aspect. If, however, the sedile were not for altar use, the suggestion arises whether it may not have been for the use of the Abbess, or any dignitary that might visit the Monastery.

To determine the extent of the church further investigation is necessary; for the present we must rest content

with the evidences of its existence and the ascertainment of its site.

The chamber (G) to which as yet no office has been assigned, may have been the sacristy or priest's lodging, though this is surmised simply from its proximity to the church.

Having found sufficient ocular evidence of the former existence of a church beyond the ruined walls yet standing, let us now see what written evidence we have, and carefully scan the brief description of the Abbey remains left us by Browne Willis, who saw them one hundred and sixty years ago: "The Mansion-House of the Convent seems to be entirely standing; 'tis built in shape of an L, and made use of to hold husbandry implements—viz., corn, hay, etc.—the tenant dwelling in a little house near it, where probably the chief hind anciently lived. I could learn no account of the church—viz., when it was pulled down."\* The L is at once seen following the letters D, E, A, G on the plan. We have been over the two wings, and have learned or conjectured the designations of the several divisions; we note also that Willis calls the L "the mansion-house of the Convent," meaning, we may suppose, the dwelling portion, not including the church or chapel.

Moreover from his words, he seems to have had no doubt that a church had existed, although he could not discover when its demolishment took place; and we may reasonably think that one hundred and sixty years ago he saw more remains of the edifice than we do to-day. The barn was not erected on the site until many years later, and is it not very probable that at the time of its construction many traces of the church were obliterated? Mr. Cole also gives it as his opinion that the "cloysters and chapel were no doubt pulled down."†

One other fact tending to prove the church's existence is found in Dugdale's Baronage; Sir John de Molins, whose connection with the Abbey as patron has been referred to, made provision for three chaplains at different places, one of them at Burnham, "to celebrate divine service at the same Abbey at the altar of St.


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\* B. Willis's Hist. of Abbeys, vol. ii., p. 16.

† Cole MSS., vol. xxxii., p. 38 b.



Catherine . . . for the good estate of himself and Egidia, his wife, during this mortal life," etc.\* The mention of an altar, other than the high altar and that of the Blessed Virgin, to whom the Abbey was dedicated, leads us to the inference that there was a church of some size.†

In going through both wings of the  we find evidences of an upper story, and over what we have supposed may have been the sacristy (now a stable) there is still an interesting chamber. It is probable that in the time of the nuns the upper story existed over part of the building at least, though what we observe is generally, if not always, of Tudor character. Mr. Cole says that Paul Wentworth, Gentleman, who came to reside here about 1574, that is thirty-five years after the dissolution, "turned the Nuns' Hall, which was open to the tyles, into a smaller room, and made chambers over it."‡ We should like to know for certain in which wing was what is here called the Nuns' Hall, though we may be inclined to think it was in the north wing (D). Wentworth was not the first possessor of the Abbey after its fall. The site was first given to William Tyldesley, and he was succeeded by Wentworth, who from the inscription on his monument in Burnham Church, appears to have married the widow of Tyldesley. The last-named is also buried in the same church, as is testified by a small brass scroll on the pavement of the chancel, Wentworth's mural monument being close by. The Abbey and lands were in the reign of Charles I. in the hands of Sir Henry Fane, and afterwards in the families of Darrel and Lovelace. Lord Lovelace sold his interest in the property to the Villiers family, who renewed the lease with the Crown in 1691; in 1813, when Lysons's work, from which these facts are taken, was published, the lease was vested in the Earl of Jersey,§

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\* *Baronage of England*, vol. ii., p. 147. For Wm. de Molins should here be read John de Molins, as is clear from the context.

† Here should be mentioned some remains of masonry to be found in the orchard. Distant as they are from any other portion of the ruins, it is difficult to account for them; they are, however, called by the people living around "the Tower," and as in the inventory, made at the time of the surrender, bells are mentioned, the question presents itself, whether the belfry may not have been here, detached from the other buildings as was not unfrequently the position of these structures?

‡ *Cole MSS.*, vol. xxxii., p. 38 b.

§ *Lysons's Mag. Brit.*, Bucks., p. 531.



and in the later "*Monasticon Anglicanum*," we learn that the reversion was purchased, about 1812, by Lord Grenville. Eventually, on the expiration of the lease about 1840, the property was sold by the Crown to Mr. Pocock, who built the modern residence, and by his will it was left to his niece, Mrs. Wright, in trust for her children; the present tenant being Mr. Joseph Trumper, to whom, for his kindness in allowing the investigation of his premises and for the traditionary names of the buildings, the writer desires to record his obligations.

It may be interesting to mention here the views that are to be found of the Abbey. The oldest is a coarse engraving in the series of views of Castles and Abbeys by the brothers S. and N. Buck. This view of "*Burnham Priory*" (as it is called), taken in 1730, is from the west, and shows the building forming the L described by Willis; the north wing, of which so little now remains, is still roofed, and probably presents the appearance it derived from Paul Wentworth in 1574; the other wing terminates as it does to-day, but the barn is not built against it, the niche and sedile being indistinctly traced on the gable wall. Much accuracy does not appear to be the characteristic of this picture, which, nevertheless, as the oldest we have is valuable. Eton College and Windsor Castle embellish the distance, to signify, perhaps, that the Royal edifices are not far off; they could not, however, have been visible as represented, although from a different position the Castle may be seen.

In Grose's *Antiquities* there are two pictures of the northern portion drawn in 1786, fifty-six years later than Buck's view; the building is quite roofless and ruined, though more of the walls are standing than to-day; remaining are two tall chimneys, one surmounted by a weather vane. Another view is that before referred to in the 1830 *Monasticon Anglicanum*, unfortunately it bears no date, but may be judged later than Grose's; it is taken from the same point as Buck's, showing again both wings of the L, and the gable end still without the barn attached to it; the engraving is very nicely executed.

Representing the ruins as we see them to-day, it will doubtless afford much satisfaction to the Society, to bind with this paper, if thought worthy of a place in its RECORDS, two sketches taken by Mr. Burgess, his copy

of the view in the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, and his sketches of details before referred to.

It remains but to refer, and that very briefly, to those who in old times, now more than three centuries past, lived and worshipped within these walls, and whose dust is now mingled with the earth around. Very slight is the record we have of them, nor of the secluded inmates of a small monastery as was this of Burnham, could we expect a more ample record than has come down to us.

At the time of the dissolution of the House its community consisted of an Abbess and nine nuns of the Augustine order, their dependants numbering thirty-seven, of whom were two priests, twenty-one hinds, and fourteen women. During the long period of two hundred and seventy-four years that the House existed, there were from time to time transactions in relation to its property, records of which yet survive; but beyond this and the names of the Abbesses who ruled the religious household we have no further information. Margery de Eston was the first Abbess, and succeeding her were Maud de Dorkcester, Joan de Bedeware, Idonea de Audeley, Joan de Somerville, Joan de Louthe, Joan de Dorney, Margery de Louthe; the Norman prefix is then discontinued, and the names consequently have a more homely aspect, they are Joan Turner, Agnes Franklyn, Elizabeth Ward, Alice Golafre, Agnes Gower, Agnes Sturdy, Joan Radcliffe, Margaret Gibson, and the last Abbess, Alice Baldwin.

Of the repute which the House bore, and of its pious and charitable deeds, there is no evidence, except, indeed, that the King's Commissioners in their report testify curtly and coarsely to the unsullied lives of the sisters. We, learning no ill of them, may surely follow the Christian dictate, and believe that they lived rightly according to their light. Whatever may in this age be thought of Monasticism, and however nobler it may seem to us that the battle of life should be fought rather than fled from to the cloister, it must yet be conceded that in ruder times, now happily long passed away, there was need of these refuges throughout the land, and that as institutions they were necessary before the advent of others which, in the development of civilization, have taken the place of the Religious Houses. So here we would think "of the dead nought but what is good." We would

think of the peaceful lives and earnest worship of those who dwelt here, as nourishing not only the purity, self-denial, and piety of themselves, but as shedding a salutary and benign influence among those who served them within their House, and on others beyond it. We would think that the little community was prudently and kindly governed, that the Abbesses were motherly and patient in their rule over their sisters; that they were just and considerate to their tenants and dependants; that the young were taught and disciplined, the old cared for and comforted, the sick tended and their ailments relieved by the herbal medicines of the "still garden," and that the burthens of the poor were lightened by the charity of the Abbey. Thus thinking of the good sisters of Burnham, we will, on quitting the ruins of their former home, say "requiescant," and believe that, their work done, they have passed away to a world of clearer light.

Burnham Abbey was dissolved in 1539; the blow had impended over the House during three years, for its suppression had been insured by the Act of 1536. Margaret Gibson, the last but one of the Abbesses, had subscribed to the King's supremacy in 1534; resistance to the will of the royal despot under whose eye the convent lay would have been useless, and a letter of the Commissioners accompanying the surrender of their property recommends the nuns to the King's favour on account of their readiness to yield to the King's measures; they prayed only to be allowed to enter other Religious Houses which were yet spared. In September, 1539, Alice Baldwin, the last Abbess, and her nine sisters were compelled to leave their home; they were apportioned small pensions in the name of compensation, and from an account of 1553, in which is noted the payment of four of these pensions, we learn that so many of the sisters had survived fourteen years after their expulsion from the Abbey.

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Extract from "History of the Abbeyes," by Browne Willis, vol. ii., pp. 15, 16:—

"The instrument of surrender is dated Sept., 1539, and signed by the Abbess and nine nuns, the four last of which were surviving an. 1553, and enjoyed their pensions, which were appropriated as follows: Alyce Bald-

win, Abbess, £13 6s. 8d.; Anne Benfield, £4; Alyce Cells, £2 6s. 8d.; Margaret Browne, £3; Elizabeth Woodforth, £2; Elizabeth Loo, £2; Anne Norys, Margaret Mosse, Bridget Woodward, Luce Pachett, £2 each. In the Augmentation Office is the original surrender, too long to be inserted here, and a letter from the visitors recommending the Religious to the King's favour, on account of their readiness to yield to the King's measures; and the following survey of this House, taken among the returns of the lesser Houses: The Monastery of the Order of St. Austin, value £51 2s. 4d. Nuns, 9; incontinent, none; all desire to go unto Religious Houses. Servants, 37: whereof priests 2; hinds, 21; women, 14. Bells and lead worth £40 16s. 8d. The House in good estate. The value of the moveable goods, £45 17s. 9d. Stocks and debts, none. Woods, 160 acres: whereof in woods under twenty years age, 80 acres; old woods, 80 acres."

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In the Register at Lincoln, under the year 1265, the first entry relating to Burnham is that of the election, confirmation, and admission of Sister Margery de Estou, formerly Sub-prioress of Garinges, as Abbess of the House of the Blessed Mary of Burnham—"Serenissimo principe domino Ricardo dei gratia Romanorum rege semper Augusto fundatore ejusdem domus in ipsam electam in quantum ad ipsum pertinuit consentiente," with her oath of obedience to the Bishop, and closing with the letter of the King of the Romans to the Bishop: "*Tenor literæ prædicti regis Alemanorum domino episcopo in hoc negotio directæ. Ricardus dei gratia Romanorum rex semper Augustus venerabili in X<sup>o</sup> patri.*" Stating that the notice of the election had been officially presented to him as patron, and requesting the Bishop's confirmation, the King's letter being written at Wallingford, June 18, *regni nostri anno decimo.*

The second entry is a return of the value of the church of Burnham—"cujus jus patronatus dominus rex Aleman fundator domus suæ caritatis in testimonium eis contulerat," containing many interesting local names as Boveney, Huntercombe, etc., but nothing more relating to the founder.



BURNHAMENSE CŒNOBIUM, IN  
AGRO BUCKINGHAMENSI.

CARTA FUNDATIONIS.

Rex archiepiscopis, etc. Salutem. Richardus Dei gratia Romanorum rex, semper Augustus, omnibus Christi fidelibus, tam præsentibus quam futuris, ad quos præsens scriptum pervenerit, salutem in Domino sempiternam. Noverit universitas vestra nos, pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, dedisse, concessisse, et hac præsentis carta nostra confirmasse Deo, et beatæ Mariæ et monasterio de Burnham, quod fundari fecimus, ac monialibus ibidem Deo servientibus, et earum successoribus, in liberam, puram, et perpetuam elemosinam, intuitu Dei, et pro salute animæ nostræ, et animarum prædecessorum nostrorum regum Angliæ, manerium de Burnham, cum omnibus suis pertinentiis, ut in dominicis, homagiis liberorum villenagiis, visu franci plegii, redditibus, escaetis, wardis, releviis, maritagiiis, et omnibus aliis quæ ad nos, vel hæredes nostros, ratione dicti manerii de Burnham, quocunque modo, vel casu accidere possint, una cum advocacione ecclesiæ de Burnham, quæ fuit de patronatu nostro, ratione manerii nostri antedicti de Burnham, tempore istius donationis nostræ. Concessimus etiam pro nobis, et hæredibus nostris, eisdem monialibus, et successoribus suis, totano terrano cum per-

BURNHAM MONASTERY IN  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

FOUNDATION CHARTER.

The King to the Archbishops, etc., greeting. Richard, by the grace of God, King of the Romans, ever Augustus, to all the faithful of Christ, present or future, to whom the present writing shall come, eternal health in the Lord. Know all of ye, that we, for ourselves and our heirs, have given, granted, and by this our present charter have confirmed to God, and to the blessed Mary, and to the monastery of Burnham, which we have caused to be founded, and to the nuns there serving God, and to their successors, in free, pure, and perpetual alms, in the sight of God, and for the health of our soul, and of the souls of our predecessors Kings of England, the manor of Burnham, with all its appurtenances, as in domains, homages of free men, villenages, view of franc pledge, rents, escheats, wards, aids, marital rights, and all else which to us, or our heirs, by reason of the said manor of Burnham, by any manner, or chance may fall, together with the advowson of the church of Burnham, which was in our patronage, by reason of our aforesaid manor of Burnham, at the time of this our grant. We have granted also for ourselves, and our heirs, to the same nuns, and to their suc-

tinentiis, quæ fuit Johannis de Boveneye, cum molendino, piscaria, et visu franci plegii, qui pertinere solebat ad manerium nostrum de Cippeham, et quicquid nobis, vel hæredibus nostris, ratione prædictæ terræ, quocunque modo, val casu accidere potuisset; salva nobis et hæredibus nostris, tota terra cum pertinentiis, quæ fuit ejus Johannis in Stoukes, quam nobis et hæredibus nostris retinimus cum suis pertinentiis. Concessimus etiam pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, dictis monialibus, et earum successoribus, totam terram de Morforlong, et Brockforlong, cum toto prato de Dillepol, quæ fuerunt de manerio nostro de Cippeham, tempore istius donationis nostræ, et totum boscum quem emimus de Johanne de Everengee, qui vocatur la Strete, et unam partem bosci nostri de Hertlegh, sicut fossata proportionant, de bosco de la Strete, usque ad boscum Johannis de la Penne.

Volumus etiam, et concedimus, pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quod omnia prædicta dictis monialibus, et earum successoribus à nobis concessa, adeo liberè, quietè, pacificè, et integrè habeant et teneant in pratis, pascuis, planis, boscis, pasturis, viis, aquis, et semitis, infra villam et extra, sicuti ea nos liberiùs, et quietius unquam tenuimus, vel tenere potuimus, sine aliquo retene-

cessors, all the land with appurtenances, which belonged to John of Boveneye, with the milling, fishing, and view of franc pledge, which was wont to belong to our manor of Cippeham, and whatever to us, or to our heirs, by reason of the aforesaid land, by any manner or chance might have fallen, saving to us and our heirs, all the land and appurtenances which belonged to that John in Stoukes, which to us and to our heirs we have retained with their appurtenances. We have granted also for us and for our heirs, to the said nuns, and to their successors, all the land of Morforlong, and Brockforlong, with all the meadow land of Dillepol, which belonged to our manor of Cippeham, at the time of this our grant, and all the wood which we bought of John of Everengee, which is called la Strete, and a portion of our wood of Hertlegh, as divided by ditch, from the wood of la Strete, even to the wood of John de la Penne.

We will also, and grant, for us and for our heirs, all that the aforesaid to the said nuns and their successors by us granted, so that they may freely, quietly, peacefully, and entirely have and hold in meadows, pastures, plains, woods, forage, ways water-courses, and footpaths, within and without the township, like as we have ever very freely and quietly held them, or have had the power to hold

mento, nobis vel hæredibus nostris, habenda et tenenda omnia prædicta, cum omnibus suis pertinentiis dictis monialibus, et earum successoribus, de nobis et hæredibus nostris, cum omnibus libertatibus, et liberis consuetudinibus ad prædicta terras, redditus, et tenementa spectantibus, unâ cum advocacione ecclesiæ supradictæ, ut prædictum est, in liberam, puram, et perpetuam elemosinam imperpetuum possidenda. Et nos et hæredes nostri istam nostram donationem dictis monialibus et earum successoribus, contra omnes homines Judæos et Christianos warantizare, defendere, et acquietare tene-mur, videlicet, de omnimodis curiarum sectis, regali servicio, et aliis secularibus demandis omnibus, et singulis, quæ ab eisdem monialibus, ratione prædictæ donationis nostræ, exigere poterant aliqua occasione, exceptâ wardâ castri de Wyndelsore, debita, et consueta. In cujus rei testimonium præsentem cartam nostram sigillo regis majestatis nostræ duximus reborandum. Hiis testibus: Henrico illustri rege Angliæ, fratre nostro, domino Edwardo ejusdem regis primogenito; nepote nostro, dominis W. Bathon, cancellaria Angliæ; R. Lincoln, et R. Coventren, et Lichfelden, episcopis; Henrico, et Edmundo filiis nostris, Philippo Basset, Willielmo de Huntercumbe, Willielmo

them, without any reserve to us or to our heirs, all the aforesaid to be had and held, with all their appurtenances, by the said nuns, and their successors, from us and our heirs, with all the liberties, and free customs to the said lands, rents, and tenements belonging, together with the advowson of the above mentioned church, as aforesaid, in free, pure, and perpetual alms, to be possessed in perpetuity. And we and our heirs are held to warrant, defend, and acquit this our gift to the said nuns and to their successors, against all men, Jews, and Christians; that is to say from all classes of courts, from royal service, and from other secular demands all and singular, which on any occasion might have been required from the same nuns by reason of our aforesaid gift, due and customary ward of the Castle of Wyndelsore being excepted. In testimony of which we have given force to our present charter with the seal of our Royal Majesty. Witnesses: Henry, the illustrious King of England; our brother, the lord Edward; the first born of the same king, our nephew; the lords W. Bathon, Chancellor of England; R. Lincoln, and R. Coventry, and Lichfield, bishops; Henry and Edmund, our sons; Philip Basset, William de Huntercumbe, William de Wyndelsore, Richard de Oxeye, Philip de Covele, and others. Given

de Wyndlesore, Richardo de Oxeye, Philippo de Covele, et aliis. Dat apud Cippeham decimo octavo die Aprilis, indictione nona, anno Domini millesimo ducentesimo sexagesimo sexto, regni verò nostri anno nono.

at Cippeham, the eighteenth day of April, ninth indiction, in the year of the Lord, one thousand two hundred sixty-six, in the ninth year of our reign.

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