

*OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE LATE RICHARD ALMACK,
ESQ., F.S.A.*

On January 1st, 1875, the Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History was deprived by death of one of its oldest, most active, and most eminent members, Richard Almack, Esq., F.S.A., and a Vice-President of the Institute, whose annual excursion meetings he constantly enlivened by his presence, and to whose *Proceedings* he contributed several of its most valuable papers. In the following sketch of his life, regarded principally from a literary point of view, the writer desires to express his thanks for various materials obligingly supplied by his son, H. H. Almack, Esq., E. M. Dewing, Esq., H. W. King, Esq., and Colonel Chester.

Mr. Almack was born on May 4th, 1799, at Chetriburton, in Yorkshire, and came to Melford in 1822, where he lived in the same house for no less than fifty-two years. He married in 1832 Frances, daughter of Lieut. Colonel Horn, formerly of the King's Dragoon Guards, to whose memory, after her death in 1840, he erected a mural tablet in Melford Church. By this lady he had four daughters and one son, who survive him. In addition to a large practice as a solicitor, he fulfilled for many years the duties of Clerk to the Magistrates at Melford, and Clerk to the Commissioners of Taxes for the Hundred of Babergh. He was also appointed, at a later period, Chief Clerk of the Essex Courts. After he had resigned these offices a few years ago, the Lord Chancellor placed him in the Commission of the Peace for the county of Suffolk (Western Division). As a Magistrate he sat usually on the Bench at Melford, more rarely at Boxford, discharging his duties with the greatest care and fidelity.

As an antiquary he was well known both in this country and abroad. "I can bear testimony," writes Mr. H. W. King, "to his unwearied industry in archæological pursuits even at an advanced period of life. I have met him at the Literary Department of the Court of Probate working assiduously and laboriously in making excerpts from ancient wills for six hours at a time, with a but slight interval. He was always ready to impart any information that he possessed, and has frequently sent me notes and references, quite unsolicited, which he believed would be of use or interest to me." In 1831 he was elected a Fellow of the Society

of Antiquaries of London, of which he was one of the oldest members at the time of his death. In America he was well known to many, and became a member of several learned Societies there. Of the Massachusetts Historical Society he was, on the nomination of Mr. Savage, elected a corresponding member in 1842, and at the time of his death was the oldest English corresponding member. In 1863 he was made an honorary member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,* and in 1871 a corresponding member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society. A warm eulogium upon his memory is contained in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, February, 1875, page 447, by his great friend and admirer, the Hon. R. C. Winthrop, President of the Society, in a letter to the Recording Secretary, Mr. Deane, in which he says :—"Both Mr. Savage and myself have been indebted to him for valuable information, as well as for personal hospitality. I do not know where we shall look for any one who will be interested and able to help us in matters connected with old Suffolk, as Mr. Almack has helped us. My excellent friend, the late Hon. Nathan Appleton, was always glad to acknowledge Mr. Almack's kindness and his thoroughly antiquarian spirit, as his son, our accomplished and vigilant Cabinet-keeper, I am sure, will also do. Both of them, I believe, had partaken of the hospitality of Long Melford, and had seen, as I have done, something of the rich collection of antiquities which were accumulated there." He was one of the original members of the Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History, and read a paper at the second Quarterly General Meeting, in 1848, as well as at more than one subsequent meeting. He was likewise a member of the original Council of the Essex Archæological Society, in the formation of which he assisted.

As an antiquary, his tastes were more especially genealogical and heraldic ; and there is probably no one now living who would have been so competent to write the history of Suffolk families as he.† This taste led him to form an extensive collection of engraved portraits, and among his pictures was a portrait of the last Earl Dudley, by Vandyke, which is considered to be one of the finest works of that master which this country contains. He was also fond of ancient documents and autographs of all kinds, of which he possessed a considerable collection, and which he was very fond of showing to

* "Mr. Almack was kind enough," writes Colonel Chester, "some years ago, to allow me to make a verbatim copy of his celebrated Penn Charter, with facsimiles of the signatures and seal, which I deposited with the Pennsylvania Historical Society, and at my instance he was then made an honorary member of that body."

† Mr. Dewing informs the writer that he knows that the historian of Thingoe

Hundred (Mr. Gage) was very desirous that Mr. Almack should undertake a portion of the History of Suffolk, more especially of the Hundred with which he (Mr. Almack) was connected. The *Visitation of Suffolk*, edited by J. Jackson Howard, LL.D., and W. H. Hart, Esq., F.S.A., was considerably indebted to Mr. Almack for its illustrations, both literary and pictorial, particularly in that part relating to the Cloptons of Suffolk.

those interested in such things, as the writer can testify by his own experience, and as others also have recorded. "Once travelling in the train with him," says a writer in the *Suffolk and Essex Free Press*, January 6, 1875, "the writer of this article recollects with what pride Mr. Almack showed him an original grant of land made to the grandfather of Oliver Cromwell, in the reign of King Henry VIII., and how his keen eyes glistened as he pointed to its fine preservation and the beauty of the calligraphy." The Hon. R. C. Winthrop mentions that he brought up to London, in the summer of 1874, the original of William Penn's Charter of Liberties to show to him, about the same time that he was exhibiting to the Society of Antiquaries a number of the original letters of Lady Rachel Russell. Indeed he frequently seems to have had relics of this kind about with him when travelling, and the writer remembers him showing to himself and others in a railway carriage a receipt signed by the last Abbot of Bury St. Edmund's.* He took great interest in church architecture, and was a member of the Committee of the Ely Diocesan Church Building Society; and it is to his great skill and patient exertions that the fragments of ancient painted glass,† full of heraldic and family interest, have been arranged as they now appear in the noble parish church at Long Melford. It will be in the recollection of many with what enthusiasm he expounded their history to the members of the Royal Archæological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, on July 21, 1869, when they visited Melford Church in the course of their excursions in the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmund's. He also formed a small collection of coins found in the neighbourhood, which included more than one of Cunobeline (gold and copper); one of these is of excessive rarity and is probably the finest known example. †

With regard to Mr. Almack's literary remains, they appear to be confined to communications and papers in the Transactions of various learned Societies; for (as his son observes) he could never be persuaded to write a book on any subject. The following brief enumeration of his papers, though probably imperfect, may not be unacceptable:—

(1.) Papers relating to Proceedings in the county of Kent, A.D. 1642—A.D. 1646. Edited from original MSS. in the possession of J. G. Weller Poley, Esq. Printed for the Camden Society, 1854. 4^{to}

(2.) Letters in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for January, 1828, June, 1835, and June, 1840. (The last also in *Brit. Mag.* for December.)

(3.) Communications to the Society of Antiquaries. Papers in the *Archæologia*, Vols. xxiii., xxviii., xxx., xxxi. (two), xxxviii., and xli.

* See Vol. IV. p. 401, of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute* for a facsimile.

† Sir W. Parker (*History of Long Melford*, p. 47), acknowledges the "debt of gratitude" which "all here owe to Mr. Almack" for his labours in the restoration

of the glass, "involving such archæological knowledge as few but himself could bring to bear upon it."

‡ It is the same as that figured in Evans, *Coins of Anc. Brit.*, pl. xii., No. 8, but much finer.

Those on some Roman remains at Melford (Vol. xxviii., 461 *seq.*), and on the authenticity of the Paston Letters (Vol. xli., 33 *seq.*) are perhaps the most important. Also several communications from him in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, one, his latest literary work (it is believed) being dated June 11, 1874, on some letters of Lady Rachel Russell.

(4.) Paper in the *Miscellanea Genealogica* for July, 1870, edited by J. J. Howard, LL.D. (On the Skippon Family).

(5.) Papers in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, Vol. i., 50 *seq.* (White Swan Inn, Clare), Vol. ii., 73 *seq.* (Melford Church), Vol. iv., 123 *seq.* (Ketton and the Barnardiston Family).

(6.) Paper in the *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, Vol. i. (Notes on the Family of De Vere).

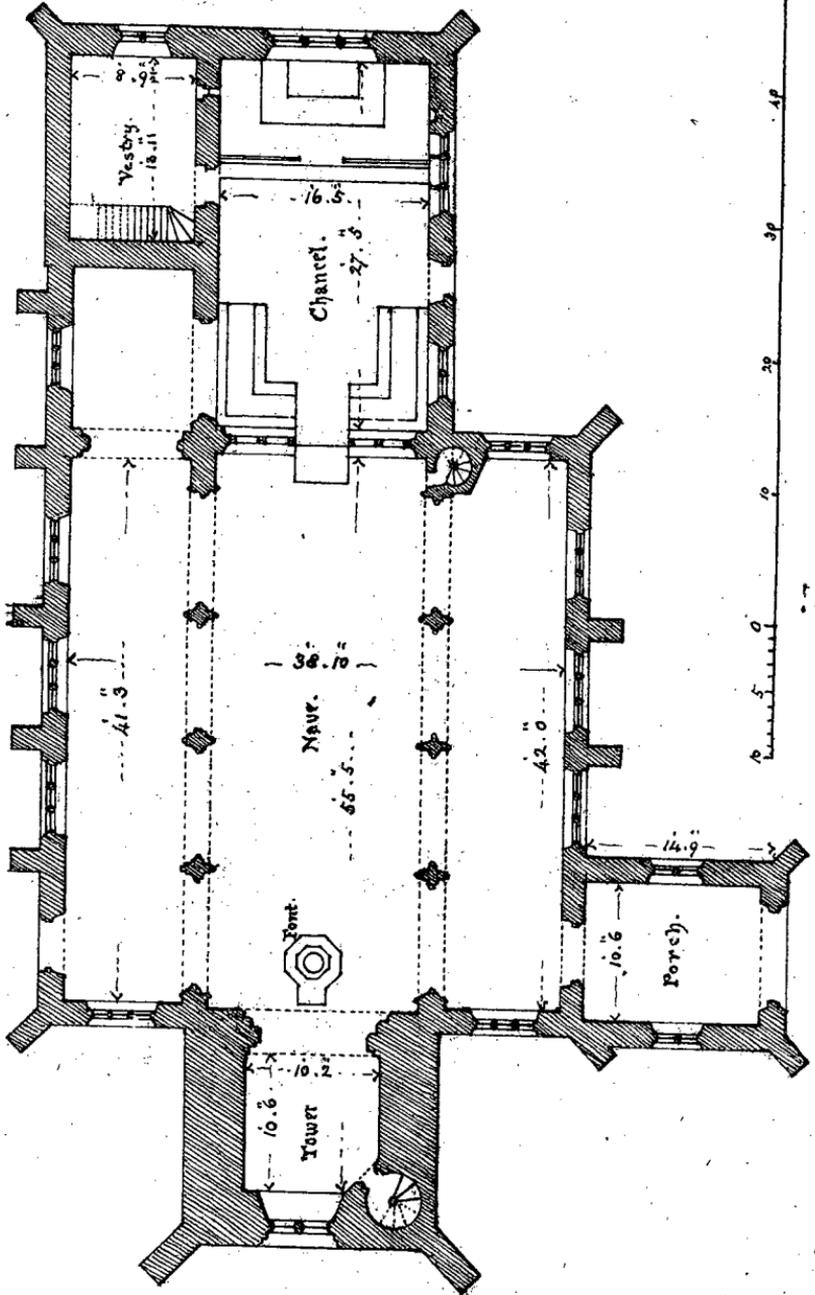
(7.) Copies of ancient Wills of the Almaek Family, for Mr. Turner's paper in the *Archæological Journal* for 1843 (Vol. v., pp. 316-17).

It is almost needless to add that in private life he was deservedly beloved by all. His remains were interred in a vault in the Lady Chapel of Melford Church, on January 7, 1875.

CHURCHILL BABINGTON.

+ S. Ethelbert, K. & M., Heggatt.

GROUND PLAN.



Scale
1" = 10'

