

W. S. SPANTON, PHOTOGRAPHER.

MOYSE'S HALL, MUSEUM, BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

MOYSES' HALL.

THE NEW MUSEUM OF BURY ST. EDMUND'S.

BY J. JENNINGS, CURATOR.

Archæologists will rejoice to hear that the ancient house known as Moyses' Hall, in Bury St. Edmund's, will henceforth be devoted to the purposes of a Museum.

The work of restoration has been executed in a most satisfactory manner under the supervision of the Borough Surveyor, Mr. J. Campbell Smith. Three mediæval fire-places which had been blocked up, and also a perpendicular doorway and brick arch connecting the two lower rooms have been re-opened. On the upper floor two Norman doorways, which evidently communicated with an adjacent house (now demolished), were discovered beneath the wall-plaster.

The opening ceremony was performed on the last day of May by Lord John Hervey, who in an able speech congratulated the people of Bury upon the possession of this interesting and unique Norman building, and pointed out the importance of not only preserving this monument of antiquity, but of utilizing it for the purpose of conserving objects of art and antiquity. His Lordship gave a brief account of the chief facts connected with its history, of which, however, we possess few prior to the 15th century. The earliest mention of Moyses' Hall is to be met with in the following incident as given by the speaker :—

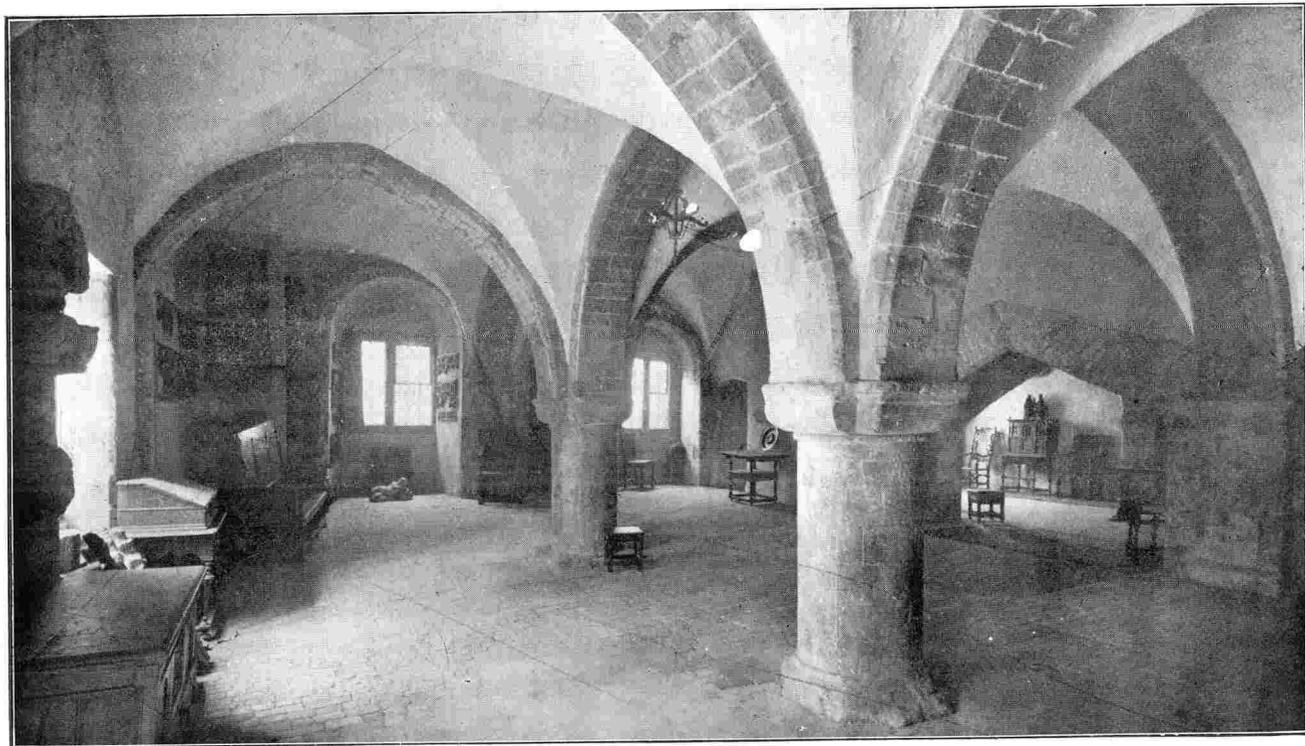
“ After this about midnight on St. Helen's day in that same year (August 18, 1328) came Thomas de Thornham with many fugitives and outlaws into the town of St. Edmund, and by force seized the keys of all the gates of the town, and none of the townsmen saying them nay, hurried off to breakfast at Moyses' Hall, and on their way killed Roger

Peasenhall, a servant of the Abbey. And the men of the town being full of joy at their coming, celebrated this breakfast by the many gifts they made towards it. But one thing happened there which might have struck fear into them. For when a woman out of the Cooks' Street had come to take the price for the meat she had sold them she looked into a cellar close to them, and saw a most horrible devil, as though he were writing. And all of a tremble at his horrible countenance, she drew back the foot which she had put across the threshold, but not without punishment, for instantly that foot was roasted by infernal fire, and fell rotting from her body."

Speaking of the means of support for the institution, Lord John said that he supposed that the rates of the town were the main source by which it was maintained, but he could not help thinking that it was a duty on the part of those ladies and gentlemen who lived in the country, and had it in their power to do so, to assist in establishing a fund which should be applied to the purpose of purchasing specimens for the extension of the collections, and personally he would be glad to contribute £10 now, and an annual subscription of £5. To this appeal many responses have been made. Further subscriptions and donations should be forwarded to the Chairman of the Museum Committee, Alderman J. G. Oliver, J.P., or the Curator of the Museum.

The collections presented by the Suffolk Institute of Archæology which were formerly housed in the Athenæum have already been considerably augmented. To these have been added the interesting collection of ancient keys, coins, medals, prints and books, formed by Mr. J. C. Ford, of Bury St. Edmund's, purchased by the Corporation last year, and still more recently the Museum has been enriched by a donation of Celtic, Roman, and Saxon pottery and antiquities, as well as a large collection of flint implements from the neighbourhood. This last collection comprised a portion of the collection made by the well-known local antiquary, the late Mr. Henry Trigg, to whose daughters the town is indebted for this valuable gift.

The inhabitants of Bury have to thank Mr. W. S. Spanton for the noble efforts he made to collect funds for



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MOYSES'S HALL—CRYPT.

acquiring the building. The sum of £124 was collected through his exertions, the remainder was found by the ratepayers.

A short description of the building cannot fail to interest the reader; the description is made clearer through illustrations lent by the courtesy of the Museum Committee. The views were obtained from photographs by Mr. W. S. Spanton.

The external walls are of flint and rubble, with stone facings. The shape rectangular, being $49\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide, and 39ft. deep.

Viewed from the front, the building is divided into two parts; that on the left has two modern windows on the ground floor, harmonising with the originals in the other part. Above these is a fine Perpendicular window, with stone tracery, having a sub-sill of stone, carved with the wolf guarding St. Edmund's head. A similar window was at one time on the floor above this, but was removed, and in its place two very unsightly pointed windows substituted. It is to be hoped that at some time these may be removed, and the older form restored. A high-pitched gable, capped with stone, completes this side. The right side on the ground floor has a central door, flanked with two windows, all of which are modern, and similar in style to those on the ground floor previously mentioned: above these are two fine Norman windows, with columns and outside carved caps, supporting moulded circular arches; each window is divided into two by rectangular moulded mullions. The interior is divided into two chambers on the ground floor. That upon entering 36ft. long, by 24ft. wide, has two stone pillars, with moulded bases and cushioned capitals and square abaci, supporting pointed arches of chamfered stone, with plastered quadripartite vaulting, which separate the room into six divisions; a modern window and door are on the left or East side, and a recently constructed staircase leads from the North side to the upper-rooms. The divisional wall between this hall and the inner room is 3ft. 9in. thick

and has been pierced by a Tudor arch, constructed in red brick. Traces of a similar arch may be seen in the partition wall between this and the next house on the Northern side. Between the former and the exterior wall, a circular staircase was built in the thickness of the wall about the middle of the 15th century; a double doorway connected the two rooms at this place. The stairs have been destroyed. The well of the staircase is lit by two small windows, one looking into either room.

The inner room is 36ft. long by 16½ft. wide, and has four flat pilasters supporting chamfered round arches; the vaulting is quadripartite and plastered. Opposite the Tudor arch which connects this room with the hall, is a fireplace, with a plain flat-arched opening of the same period.

The large room above the hall is of the same dimensions, and is lit up by a modern window on the north side. At the south end are two circular headed windows with deep mouldings and stone seats. The fireplace has stone jambs with a flat oak bressomer, having a plain moulding of 14th century. The doorway communicating with the next room is late perpendicular, and has a plain moulded dripstone; adjoining this, and in the thickness of the wall, is the upper doorway of the circular staircase. The fireplace in this room is late perpendicular, with plain moulded jambs and spandrels; adjoining it is a moulded circular-headed Norman arch, which was evidently a doorway communicating with another apartment; is now destroyed. An interesting feature of this arch is that another one, perpendicular in style, has been built into it.

During the restoration of the hall it was ascertained that there was little or no foundation to the walls, and that the columns were simply built upon the ground, the levels of the bases of the columns and pilasters being all different.

The date of its erection has not been ascertained, but from architectural evidences we may assume a period early in the 12th century.