

EXCURSIONS TO THE OLD MINSTER AND DUNWICH.

The members of the Institute visited the ruins of the Old Minster at South Elmham and other places of interest in its neighbourhood on Thursday, August 1st, 1912, under the guidance of the Hon. Excursion Secretary. The party drove from Halesworth to the Church of Wissett St. Andrew. The notable features of the building are the north and south doors, which contain some late Norman work. The latter is especially noteworthy for the leopards' heads above the archway. The party also remarked upon the round tower and the fifteenth-century font, upon which there appears the "wildman" of Suffolk. They then proceeded to Rumburgh Church, noting on the way the half-timbered house of Seymour Lucas, R.A. At Rumburgh Church the visitors were met by the Rector and the Churchwarden, Mr. J. O. Green, and inspected the plate and registers, remarking especially upon the chalice, dated 1569. Mr. V. B. Redstone gave a short account of the building, and the Benedictine Priory, to which it was attached. He pointed out the quaint form of the unfinished steeple, and quoted various wills to prove the date of its building, and to show that the work continued from day to day, as the necessary funds came in. The church itself formed part of the Priory buildings, and is of rather remarkable form, consisting of chancel and nave in one. In the Sixteenth Century, and earlier, the inhabitants of Rumburgh laid claim to this building as their parish church; but in this they erred, as the church was always of a purely conventual character. The Priory was founded by Ethelmar, Bishop of Elmham, as a daughter-house to the monastery of

Hulme, county Norfolk. It was afterwards a cell of St. Mary, York. The first Prior, Brother Blakere, was of a literary turn of mind, and borrowed a "winter reading book" from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's. A plan of the conventual buildings, which had been carefully staked out by the Rector, the Rev. W. L. Wilson, was taken from a survey at the time of the suppression of the Priory.

To the north of the church the cloisters formed a rough square, each side of which was about 46 feet. The east side was occupied by the buttery, two "low chambers" and a little chapel adjoining the church. The Priory hall lay on the opposite side of the cloisters, facing the church. On the west side of the square was a slated building, which was evidently the oldest part of the monastery. Quoting from a survey dating about 1525, Mr. Redstone showed that a saint in the church received offerings of money and cheeses at Michaelmas. This saint was called "Saint Bay," but it might be suggested that the reading of Dugdale "St. Bory" was a clue to his identity, and that the word was a corruption of Eboracum, the Latin form of York. The reading of the word may be St. Brice, being written Bricij. The Rev. H. A. Harris suggested that the name might be "St. Baiae," or "Bega," of which St. Bees is a corruption. A discussion, opened by the Rev. A. J. Bedell, followed upon the origin of the name, Rumburgh, and its probable identity with the "Riseburg" of Domesday Book. The pulpit is Jacobean, and the bottle-glass in the windows has replaced old stained glass, fragments of which had been found upon the rood-stairs.

After luncheon at The Buck, Rumburgh, an inn in the possession of the parishioners, business was transacted, and the following new members were elected:—Mrs. A. B. Wade, of Elmsley, Yoxford;

Mr. Ernest Read Cooper, Town Clerk of Southwold ; Mr. John H. Humble-Crofts, of Athelington House, Eye ; and also the John Rylands Library, Manchester.

On the way from Rumburgh to the Old Minster, the wide, open commons of Elmham were traversed. By permission of Sir Frederick Adair, the owner of South Elmham Hall, and Mr. J. Sanderson, its occupier, the party examined the remains of the ancient Bishop's Palace, the seat of the Saxon bishops of Elmham. Here, according to the wardrobe keeper's accounts, King Edward II. stayed, 9th January, 1325, and a few days following. The Rev. E. C. Hopper here acted as guide, pointing out the chief features of interest notably the ruins of what is known as the Bishop's chapel. The visitors then passed through farmyard and fields towards the Minster itself. On the way they remarked upon the defensive works, which are fosses enclosing a square space of rather more than four acres.

At the ruins, Mr. Hopper read a paper on the Minster. The division of the first Anglian bishopric was mentioned by Bede, and the seat of the bishopric placed at Elmham. Camden stated that it was at North Elmham, in Norfolk, but the existence of the Minster ruins and the long tenure of surrounding lands by the Bishops of Norfolk pointed to South Elmham, perhaps, as another seat of the Bishops. The Minster had been dated 670-74 by the expert, Mr. Micklethwaite, Surveyor to Westminster Abbey. Mr. Hopper further quoted a paper by Canon Manning, describing the three-fold plan of the existing ruins, maintaining that the seat of the bishopric must have been at South Elmham, and describing the walls which remained standing. The nave was rectangular; there was a rounded apse, and in the far part of the building was the "Galilee," for unbaptised catechu-

mens. The walls were formed of local flints, imbedded in exceptionally hard mortar, and the triangular puttock-holes, used for scaffold-poles, could easily be seen. The angles of wrought stone had been taken away, but so much of the stonework remained that it would be well for archæologists to do their best to obtain its preservation. After votes of thanks had been passed to Mr. Hopper, the party discussed the form of the puttock-holes (which proved upon inspection to be, not triangular, as generally believed, but square, with diagonals vertical and horizontal), and examined a medieval spear-head found on the spot.

Considerable interest was aroused in the detailed examination of these ruins, which form almost overpowering proof that the seat of the Saxon diocese of Elmham, established about 673, lay within the county of Suffolk, and not across the Norfolk borders, as is sometimes maintained. The old manor-house on the site of the palace had many features of interest, and the visitors examined the attics, notably the "Bishop's study," and the "haunted room." The stairs are of fine black oak, and the beams and rafters are also of oak.

The members next drove to the church of St. Cross, sometimes known as "Sancroft," or as St. George's, South Elmham. The name St. Cross is modern, and is evidently a corruption of "Sandcroft." The chief features of interest were the clerestory, the late Fourteenth Century font, dated by the arms of Bishop Bateman (consecrated 23rd May, 1344) and the door of the south porch.

At Sancroft Rectory the party was hospitably entertained to tea by the Dean of the Peculiar, the Rev. W. J. Wilby, and Mrs. Wilby. The Excursion Secretary gave a short account of the peculiar ecclesiastical and manorial jurisdiction which the Bishops of

Norwich had within the "seven parishes of Elmham." The Bishop's commissary generally held his courts in the churches of Homersfield or St. Margaret's, South Elmham, and there enjoined many notable penances. For defamation, William Burgess was to kneel before the High Altar during the celebration of Mass with feet and legs bare, and holding a lighted candle in his hands. Another culprit, John Woodward, was to head the procession in church on two consecutive Sundays, clad only in his tunic and a sheet. A single woman, Margaret Hood, was also to kneel in the chancel wearing a sheet. She was to repeat the "Salutation of the Angels" five times before retiring to her customary place. Another cause brought before this court was a dispute between the Rector of St. James, and his parishioners as to the strewing of rushes in the church and their removal. The volume to be found in the Ipswich Probate Office, marked Book VI.A, is a most interesting book, not of wills, but of transactions of the Spiritual Courts held at South Elmham early in the Sixteenth Century (*See Extracts, page 319*).

The host and hostess were cordially thanked for their hospitality, and the party then drove to Metfield Church, where they were welcomed by the Rev. E. J. Stuart, the vicar. Sergt.-Major Pleasant here read a brief but interesting paper upon the building. Metfield was in the time of Edward the Confessor, and of Aylmer, the last Bishop of Elmham, a part of the parish of Mendham. The manor was anciently of the fee of the Abbot of St. Benet-at-Holm, in Norfolk, of whom it was held in the time of Richard I., after which it was escheat to the Crown, and was granted to Thomas Plantagenet, surnamed de Brotherton, son of Edward I. Sir John Jermy, of Metfield, married the sister-in-law of Thomas de Brotherton, and became owner of the manor. Sir

William Jermy, of Metfield, who died in 1385, bequeathed his body to be buried in the church, and gave 100 shillings towards building the church tower. Sir John Jermy, who died in 1487, rebuilt the church, placing his arms in the windows, on the font, and on parts of the roof. He deposited in the hands of the Abbot of St. Benet-at-Holm, whom he appointed one of his executors, 200 marks, to maintain a chantry priest. Francis Jermy, of Metfield and Brightwell, was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1587. Francis Sancroft, a nephew of the Archbishop, was Lord of the manor of Metfield in 1682. There are three bells, one dating from the Fifteenth Century. Will. Dowsing visited the church on August 30th, 1643. Some pre-Reformation painted panelling is still in the east end of the roof of the nave, and also the original pulley for raising and lowering the curtain during certain ceremonies. Several cottages in the village were built out of the materials of Mendham Priory. The vicarage and glebe were purchased out of the bequest of the Rev. Samuel Chapman, a native of the parish, who died in 1700. Miss Constance Hopper, daughter of a former Archdeacon of Norwich, in 1902 bequeathed £1,000 towards the augmentation of the benefice. Till the reign of Henry VIII. the Bishops of Norwich owned land in the parish. The writer added that objects of interest placed in the porch would be found to include carved woodwork from the old gild house of St. John the Baptist.

An evening meeting was held in the Constitutional Hall, Southwold, Mr. Eaton W. Moore, formerly Mayor of the town, was in the chair, supported by the Vice-President, Sir Ernest Clarke. Mr. V. B. Redstone read a paper on "Old Suffolk," illustrated with lantern slides. On August 2nd the members assembled at Southwold Church. Mr. Eaton W. Moore described his efforts to preserve and restore.

the building, the restoration of the stalls, and the discovery of L-shaped cavities for acoustic purposes. The Excursion Secretary also mentioned a few wills relating to the building. There was a chapel of St. Margaret, and in the church were tabernacles of St. Mary and St. John the Baptist. A Fifteenth Century will (*Will of John Lokler, 1459*) showed that it was then customary for certain men to offer palms at the churchyard cross. Special attention was paid to the "jack," and the font and pulpit, both of late Fifteenth Century workmanship.

At Blithburgh a visit was paid to the White Hart, an old inn containing fine beams of the late Fifteenth Century. At the church the members were met by the Rev. J. Wing, who acted as guide to the interesting details of the building, especially pointing out the seven deadly sins depicted on the poppy-heads of the old pews. Mr. V. B. Redstone here noted numerous bequests to the building of the chancel, which seems to have occupied nearly twenty years of the Fifteenth Century. Among the testators was a certain John Wolsey—no relation of the great Cardinal. The church was bereft of the remains of St. Jermyn by the monks of Bury, who also robbed Grundisburgh of the relics of St. Botolph. The altar of Our Lady was in the south side of the church. There were also images of St. Catherine and St. Sigismund.

The party then visited the site of the Priory, where they were welcomed by the owner, Mr. J. Seymour Lucas, R.A., who has laid bare the foundations, so that the plan of the building can be traced. The host pointed out piers faced with Caen stone, the remains of a building sometimes styled "The Rood Chapel," and the buttresses where a lean-to existed outside the walls of the Priory church. His own house on the site contains treasures gathered from

all parts of East Anglia, including a cast of a Ninth Century tabella found here, the pommel of a two-handed sword, and much fine carved work. At Dunwich, Captain Miles Barne and Mrs. Barne welcomed the party, and hospitably entertained them to Luncheon at the Barne Arms. By permission of Captain Barne, the ruins of the Hospital of St. James, the church of All Saints, and the Franciscan Friary were examined. Mr. E. T. Lingwood pointed out the fine Norman arcading in the apse of the hospital chapel, now used as the Barne vault. He described his own knowledge of the gradual destruction of All Saints' Church by the sea. A notable point in the building was its dual character of Norman and Sixteenth Century work; a fresco had recently been exposed above a Norman archway, but had fallen over the cliff shortly afterwards. By the kindness of Captain and Mrs. Barne the old Temple Mount was visited, and the Friary ruins were closely examined from the interior. Mr. Lingwood pointed out the local coralline crag built into the walls.

The party then proceeded to Westleton to examine Mr. Lingwood's collection of "finds" from the Dunwich beach. These included numerous coins from William I. onwards, notably a rare coin from the mint of King Stephen, and a few Roman coins. Many miscellaneous objects were of great interest, especially early British enamelled work, the top of a crucifix bearing the eagle of St. John, pilgrims' tear-bottles, the top of a pilgrim's pouch, and a pilgrim's badge, possibly from Walsingham. In this collection were also large spurs, many large and elaborate shoe buckles, cope-hooks and eyes, book clasps, one large gold ring (Thirteenth Century) and two bronze rings set with glass. In the garden were mouldings, also found at Dunwich, and bearing evidence of various dates, from the Roman to the Early English period. Of many

mill-stones, the most interesting were probably pre-historic, and some were made of conglomerate, quarried in Derbyshire. Mr. Lingwood has long made the fast-disappearing town his study, and his studio was lined with sketches and paintings, showing the coast erosion and the gradual disappearance of All Saints' Church within his own time. The party drove next to Bramfield Church, where they were met by the Rector, the Rev. W. Boycè. He drew their attention to the fine Fifteenth-century screen and rood loft in their original position, and in remarkably good preservation, and to a fresco which had evidently been painted about a wooden crucifix on the north wall. The round tower stands at some distance from the main body of the building. The church contains some remarkable monuments, including those of Arthur, third son of Sir Edward Coke, and several members of the Nelson family.

At Bramfield House tea was hospitably provided by Miss Tatlock, who allowed her visitors to view her remarkable collection of pictures, including many originals by her grandfather, Peter de Wint, water colours and sketches from frescoes at Pompeii, now destroyed. And at Wenhaston Church the well-known "Doom Picture" was examined.