

## EXCURSIONS DURING 1923.

### A SAXON VILLAGE, VISITED 12TH JUNE.

The grand Castle in the centre of *Haughley* village is still the most mysterious and ill-known in the county, and its approach over the ramparts and moat caused some difficulty. Here Mr. V. B. Redstone amplified his former lecture of 1903. Nothing was upon record before 1086 when Domesday Book showed the place to have been in the hands at the end of Saxon times of Thegn Guthmund, brother of the Abbot of Ely and lord of Stanstead and other local townships; he was a very great and pious man, holding much of his brother's temporalities. The Conqueror replaced him with Hugh de Montfort, one of his own barons and Constable of England by right of his tenure of this castle or the one at *Dover*. Haughley was the only Suffolk castle ever called upon to resist a foreign foe, the siege by Earl Hugh Bigot of *Framlingham* and the Earl of *Leicester* with their thousands of Flemish mercenaries during 1173 resulted in its fall. Mr. F. S. Stevenson considers that this civil war on the Bigots' part, "if successful, would have made Earl Hugh the independent ruler of East Anglia, bound to the central power of England by the slenderest of ties; possessed of thriving cities, and a formidable array of fortresses; and with Framlingham or Haughley as the Windsor of his dominions." But these earls were decimated at the Battle of *Fornham* near Bury St. Edmunds after Haughley had surrendered to them by its castellan, Ralph de Brock, who with his brother were among the most active instigators of Archbishop Becket's assassination; and the latter's ancestors have recently been discovered to be East Anglians by an East Anglian. Haughley never again felt the stress of war. After the rebellion of De Montfort's son, it came in due course to the De Essex family, of *Rayleigh* on the Thames, descended from the Saxon Wigmearc of *Nayland-Stoke*, and its last scion was disgraced in combat with Robert de Montfort in 1163. Henry II. seized the manor and it long remained in royal demesne; eventually Henry VIII. granted it to the Sulyards of *Wetherden*, by whom it was held till so recently as 1799, when the last Sulyard died still seized.—This fine earth mound and its encircling ramparts were explored. General opinion was in favour of a Danish origin during the first half of the eleventh century; comparisons were drawn with similar clay hills at *Lindsey* and *Eye*,

and chalk ones at *Freckenham* and *Thetford*.—The church's site, immediately within the shadow of the castle-walls though beyond its inner moat, argues close association at an early period. This is corroborated by the presence of a few undoubted Saxon long-and-short quoins in the tower's north-east angle, the sole one that has not been subsequently buttressed. The church's features were well defined by the vicar, who referred to the discovery, during recent restoration, of several burials beneath the actual wall of the nave, and considered them to have taken place at the time of this wall's original erection: the skull of one burial possessed an unusual frontal protuberance. Examination of old houses and trees concluded the day, the success of which owed much to the villagers' courtesy.

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#### TUDOR ARCHITECTURE, VISITED 10TH JULY.

The district round Woodbridge affords many fine and interesting, though no extensive, houses of the Tudor period. The first inspected was *Playford* Hall where the structure claimed less attention than its contents, good as are the fleur-de-lys and rose mouldings of the ceilings and the oak-panelling. For the collection here of arms and brass-work of all periods; oak chests, Carolean chairs and iron bound coffers was no more than matched by the plate-armour and chain-mail, battle-axes, maces, daggers, stirrups, pikes, arblasts, horn-lanterns, halberds and Cromwellian swords. A large room-full of coloured prints, many of them first impressions and all in perfect order, had to be neglected at the call to *Playford* church, where Mr. F. S. Stevenson gave details of the structure and called attention to the excellent Felbrigg brass. The family is descended from Roger le Bigot, Esq., lord of "Tuttington in Suffolk," a cadet of the Bigots of *Framlingham*.—The various additions to *Grundisburgh* Hall were found puzzling, though the carved barge-boarding and king-post, over an early fire-insurance plate, were of interest; a wainscotted bedroom, Renaissance-pillared and oak-doored with original drop-latches, fixed by pegs, was admired; and the early-timbered central hall a refreshing bit of pre-Dissolution England. After an account by Mr. Redstone of the De Tuddenhams, early lords of the manor, and Wall, the local lord mayor of London in the sixteenth century, a visit was paid to the latter's home, "the Wire Farm," so named from its proximity to the weir of the River Lark here. This stands unimpaired and practically unaltered, as in his day, bearing his rebus on the facade and carved corner-post; it has been dated 1490, but the bricks of its basal storey are nearer 1550, as also appears

to be the upper overhang.—*Seckford* Hall, lying low at the head of a Fynn affluent and recently retrieved from that condition of desolation and decay into which present methods of taxation are casting so many fine Suffolk homes, was the next objective. The Seckfords were from Norfolk, and Sir George has been discovered in an 'armoury' of 1450 to be then tilting in a *Bury* tournament: all which seems strange when this house is actually named 'Sekeforda' in our 1086 Domesday. Certainly they married into the De Burgh of *Sotherton* and *Heckford* of Norfolk families, and both Seckford and Heckford arms figure in an ancient grate here. General opinion was that the Hall's bricks, though said to be Tudor, could not have been baked before 1630; and the whole style of the house smacked of the earlier Stuart period, from the loftier chambers to the turning of the musician's gallery rails.—A delightful run across the summer heathland, past tumuli that were not of Tudor date, ended at Newborne Hall, a very great deal of whose Elizabethan timbers have been but recently brought to light and carefully preserved from later neglect. In all it was a Tudor day with something of the intolerant Tudor temper in its sultry temperature, as capable as bluff King Hal of slaying its seventy thousand victims, eventually saved by the soft breeze of eventide.

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#### THE WOOL-STAPLERS' HOME, VISITED 27TH JULY.

Half a day was found all too short for the investigation of *Lavenham* and its many relics of prosperity, during the boom of the wool trade in the fifteenth century. Here one was in a world of a century before Tudor times. Grand half-timber houses abound, plastered and pargetted, enriched with badges and rebuses: all so little changed to-day that it is easy to realise how quickly wealth and progress flew away to leave the town stranded high and dry on the shore of time. A progress of the utmost interest was made through the streets and no lack of detailed information was forthcoming, first from men of local lore, tossed back by visitors of deeper reading and less topographical knowledge. Assembly could not miss the celebrated Market Cross, which needs railing in for better preservation; the elaborate oak-timber of the adjacent Guildhall is well-nigh unique of its kind, recently well renovated by Sir Cuthbert Quilter. From the one remaining good room of the opposite Angel Inn, a very early Tudor, or even Henry VI., door-way with a four-square arch and carved spandrils was examined in Barn Street; and the home of Anne and Jane Taylor inspected in Shilling Street. This old house on a half-timber skeleton had been made a comfortable residence, with good Queen Anne door, lion knocker

and figure medallion, about William III.'s time, but was now become ruinous. Remnants of local art in carved oak and plaster fleur-de-lys were evident all along Water Street, where the recent renovation of the reputed home of the Springs was approved. After a glance at the gabled and projecting front of the Grammar School, where John Constable had his tutelage, attention was given to the superb Wool Hall, a gem among the fifteenth century houses of England and well preserved, with open roof and timbered gallery, and slits in the central beam whence depended the wool-scales. It was not long since so nearly carried away that riders were despatched by the town to keep ward upon the first purloined timbers, but the danger passed and the gem was retained. Several houses have so tempted connoisseurs that they have been transported en bloc: e.g. that now standing in *Walberswick* village. The pargetting art is here seen at its zenith, and St. Blaise the wool-combers' patron saint with the grid-iron plaster of the Blackboy Inn were pointed out by Mr. Cordy S. Wolton of the Hall. This lies low beside the unnamed stream which joins the Bret at *Chelsworth*, and some ruins of old walls may be the last vestiges of the hunting-lodge of the Oxford earls De Vere, who had the manor here for six centuries and, with the Springs, erected the finest Perpendicular church in Suffolk. Here the rector indicated its main features, especially referring to the St. Blaise figure upon the Spring parclose of the north aisle. In that of the De Veres in the south aisle is an ancient tomb, thought by the Gentleman's Magazine of 1823 to be Saxon; but Rev. J. F. Williams and Mr. Claude Morley considered it not much older than 1350. If of a De Vere it would be that of John, the seventh earl, who levied a fine of this manor in 1336 and fought at both Crecy and Poitiers: slain in 1360. The painted font of Purbeck marble and a curious pinnacle above the rood-stairs were discussed.

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#### MEDIAEVAL ECCLESIOLOGY, VISITED 10TH SEPTEMBER.

From Lowestoft the coast road was taken to *Corton* church, where the ruins of the nave were briefly inspected, with many loose moulded stones and carved animal-benchends, which are hoped to be reinserted in its renovation. *Hopton* old church, now used merely as a mortuary chapel since its destruction by fire in Feb., 1865, was described by the rector and offered several points of interest in the base of a way-side cross and the fine tracery of the north aisle's west window; the aisle is of the proportions of the

nave, and said to have been built of the materials taken from *Newton* church when the latter was washed away about 1350. It has belonged to *Norwich* Priory and its successors the dean and chapter since 1100. *Ashby* church was reached by way of Lound Run at the end of *Fritton* Lake ; here is one of the earliest structures of the County and the rector gave an account of it and the renovations already in progress, followed by Rev. H. A. Harris, who indicated the internal window of the circular tower, giving upon a former loft. After admiring the Purback marble font, pointed out by Lord Ullswater, the site of the Fits Osberts' feudal stronghold was visited at *Somerleyton* ; but the earliest vestiges yet remaining are of Sir John Jernegan's internal walls about Elizabeth's time. Fuller eulogised the gardens in 1660, but the present mansion was erected by Sir Morton Peto, after the residence of the royalist Wentworths in the days of the Rebellion. Roger fitzPeter fitzRoger fitzOsbert was lord of both *Uggeshall* and *Combs* in 1292, as well as "Lord-warden of Lothingland." In 1236 the above Peter fitzRoger founded a Priory of Augustinian canons dedicated to St. Olave on the tip of a promontory running north from *Herringfleet* Hills at the entrance to *Fritton* Water, and the ruins of this once famous house formed the main object of the day. Very probably there was a Saxon hermitage beside the bridge over the *Waveney* here, for "we cannot doubt that the name of St. Olave is a survival from some earlier dedication" as Arnold-Forster suggests ; unless the FitzOsberts were themselves Norse. But the oldest thing yet remaining about this Priory is a nether mill-stone of black trachyte, doubtless conveyed from *Burgh Castle* where it was transported from *Saxony* by the Romans ; it is incised with curved lines radiating from the centre and supports one of the central pillars in the undercroft of the refectory. H.M. Office of Works has recently been excavating the place and have amplified the discoveries already detailed here in Dr. Smith Wynne's work published during 1914, in which is an excellent plan of the Priory. Its patronage was granted in 1314 by the FitzOsberts' heir to Peter Jernegan, whose family retained its site upon the 1536 Dissolution. The Saxon triangular-capped windows of *Herringfleet's* circular tower were pointed out on the homeward journey to *Lowestoft*, after a glance at *Fritton* church, and a very comprehensive general notion was obtained of Lothingland.

The Institute has throughout the year met with that generous hospitality, and (with a single nameless exception) courtesy, that is its happy experience.

CLAUDE MORLEY,

November 30th, 1923.

Hon. Excurs. Sec.