

## THE MONASTIC REMAINS OF NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK.

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Monastic remains have inspired the pen of writers whose name is "Legion." Volumes analytical, didactic, massive and multitudinous have been showered upon us until it would seem that there was neither accommodation nor demand for even "one little one more."

Undaunted by this seeming impasse, Mr. Messent has ventured to add this "little one more" to the existing Legion. Reasoning wisely that this excessive production defeats its object and bewilders the public by its embarrassing diffuseness. As there are very few who can find either time or opportunity to wade through this plethora of literature to collect items of information which are often more local than general.

In his estimation there is not only room but a demand for a book in which all this prodigality of scattered information regarding the Monastic Remains of Norfolk and Suffolk is compiled and condensed into nutshell dimensions compatible with lucidity.

A portable vade-mecum of this description certainly would be a boon to members of our excursion parties, travellers interested in archæology and visitors to our county.

With this object in view the book gives an epitomised resume of the historical, literary and material remains of some 280 Monastic establishments in Norfolk and Suffolk, of which some 100 are in Suffolk, and in many cases are accompanied by line-block pen and ink illustrations and plans by the author's own hand.

In Suffolk we have many places and sites fondly believed to be Monastic but in reality are nothing more than the sites of Monastic property.

As for example the mythical Abbey of Wickham Skeith, where the Abbey Farm has had its title abridged and become "The Abbey." Many similar instances could be produced in which the outlying property, land or house of a Monastic Order has been raised by time and talk to the status of a conventual establishment.

This liability to mistake the shadow for the substance renders village gossip and local tradition both confusing and unreliable, especially when "hearsay" is the only guide to a lost and sought-for site.

Local tradition affirms that the site of Gislingham Preceptory of Knights Templars is in the field across the road, opposite the Rectory entrance, but tentative excavations were met with negative results.

Public interest has been aroused lately by a Pilgrimage of Benedictines, to visit Iken near Aldeburgh, as they consider that there is the site of the Monastery built by St. Botulph at Ikanhoe, but about which opinions are divided.

Mr. Messent does not argue the point neither does he associate it with St. Botulph. The only personal comment that he makes respecting the site is: "The site is a most charming spot on the south side of the broadest part of the river Alde." A comment which is adverse to this prerogative, for St. Botulph describes his Monastic site at Ikanhoe as being a "God-forsaken devil-possessed spot." "Charm" However is undefinable and many "devil-possessed" have both charm and charms.

The Monastic Remains of Norfolk, are dealt with in the same "port-manteau" method as described for those in Suffolk, containing information packed up in small space but sufficient for a journey through the county.

H.A.H.