

MELBOURN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

NOTES ON CAMBRIDGESHIRE VILLAGES,

No. I.



Being Papers Read by
W. M. PALMER, M.D., F.S.A.,
AND THE
Rev. H. H. McNEICE, B.A.,
AT A VISIT OF THE
Cambridge Antiquarian Society,
June 4th, 1925.

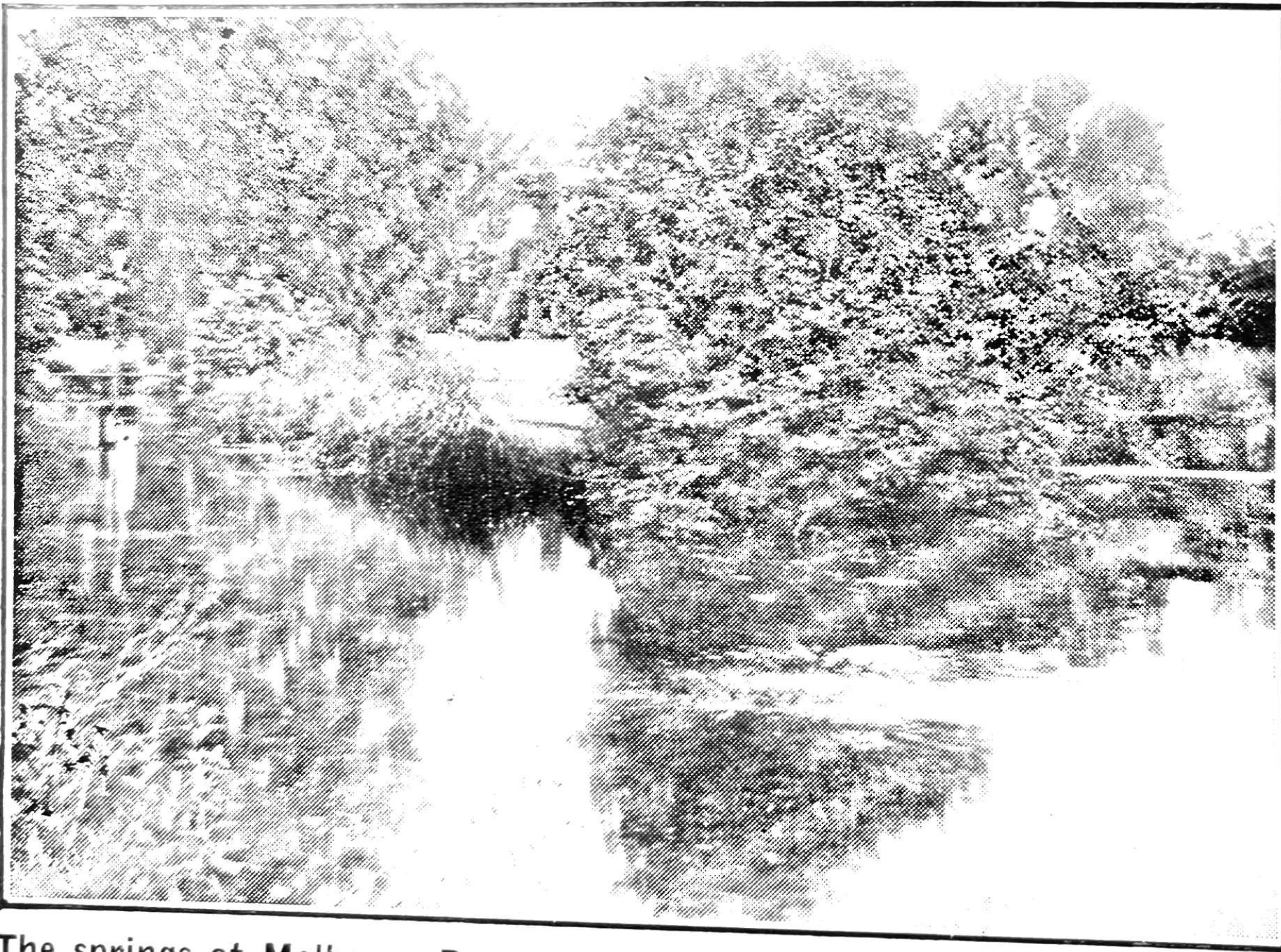


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The springs at Melbourn Bury. To the right runs the stream which used to fill the moat. The house is seen in the distance in the middle of the photograph.

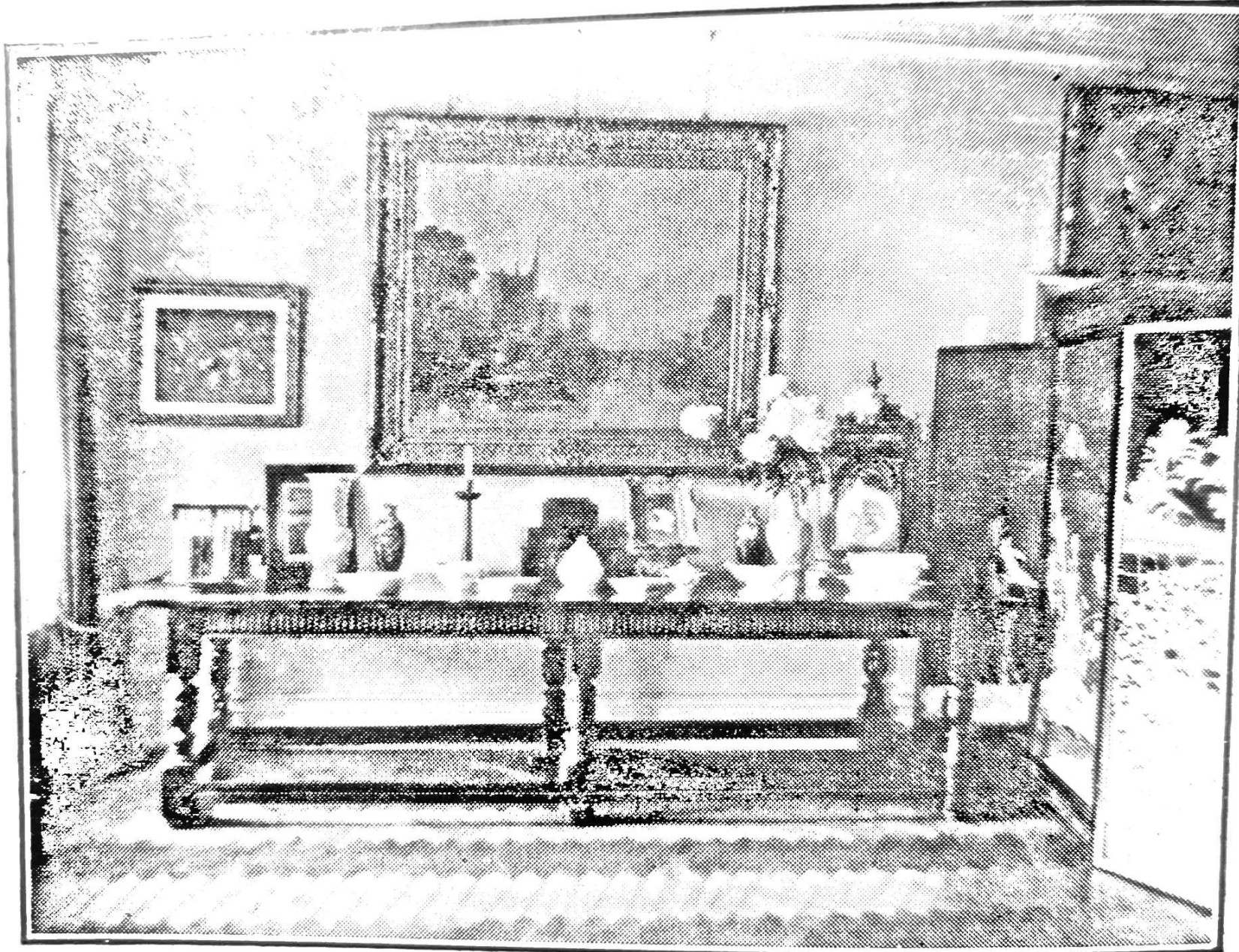
The Neighbourhood of Melbourn.

ON Thursday, June 4th, 1925, in delightful summer weather, the Cambridge Antiquarian Society visited Melbourn, where about 90 members and friends arrived in two brakes and several private cars, at 3 o'clock. The first object examined was a furze bush on the left hand side of the Portway, just before reaching the village. This is the only furze bush between Royston and Ely, and marks the corner of a Roman Camp, which was plain before the enclosure of the common fields, but has been now almost obliterated. The next place to be visited was Melbourn Bury. The entrance at the angle between the Royston Road and Bury Lane is a modern one, the ancient entrance having been down Bury Lane, much nearer the house. The present carriage drive crosses the old course of the Ashwell Street, which was diverted nearly a quarter of a mile to the S.E., at the enclosure of 1839.

MELBOURN BURY.

Mr. A. R. Fordham, the owner, had expressed his regret that he was unable to be at home to receive the visitors, but had given them permission to see whatever they wished for in the house and garden. The following paper was read by Dr. Palmer:—

The word Bury is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning fortified house, and was applied to the chief house in a manor, or the chief manor house in a village. In Anglo-Saxon times this was the largest and most important manor in the village, but in Norman times and later, this distinction passed to the Lordship or Argentine's manor at the other end of the village. The interest of Melbourn Bury lies in its history and situation rather than in its present antiquarian remains. The two parishes of Melbourn and Meldreth were once owned by one man, an Anglo-Saxon named Melda. The names have been explained by Professor Skeat to mean Melda's river and Melda's fold or close; and the shape of the parishes as seen on the



Oak table 12 x 3 x 3 feet, now in the drawing room at Melbourn Bury. It was in use as a kitchen table in Mr. A. R. Fordham's childhood. It may be the "dormant table" of the 1539 inventory, from which John Sterne and the white-haired cup bearer took their dinner.

index sheet to the 1-inch Ordnance Survey, and the fact that the lands of the five manors in these parishes are scattered over both parishes, seem to indicate that they were once united. And here, at Melbourn Bury, perhaps on this very spot, beside an abundant and never failing spring of good water, Melda, the owner of these two villages, had his home.

The first mention of Melbourn Bury in historical records is in the reign of King Athelstan, when it was part of the royal domain. Shortly afterwards, in 970, when the monastery of Ely was refounded after its destruction by the Danes, it formed part of the lands given to that monastery. The estate then included more than half of both parishes, which now contain 7,000 acres. (See Note 1.) When the Bishopric of Ely was founded and the estates of the monastery divided, Melbourn and Meldreth fell to the Prior and convent. To them succeeded the Dean and Chapter, who owned the Bury until about the middle of the last century, when it was sold to the grandfather of the present owner.

There are many ancient records in the muniment room of the Dean and Chapter relating to this site. In 1229 the Prior had a private chapel here. A manorial extent or survey of 1318 gives the most elaborate list of customary services which I have seen. It even specifies when meals were to be taken, and arranges for marriages of maidens, widows and widowers. At that date the corn from the manor and rectory was sent by road to Cambridge, and thence by boat to Ely. The survey sets out the part of each copyholder in this work, how long was to be spent on the journey, and how many herrings and how much beer was to be received from the cellarer at Ely. This, I suppose, was strong beer. In harvest time it is expressly stated that the men were to have as much beer as they liked to drink—probably this was very small beer. (See Note 2.) During the fifteenth century the monks left off farming on their own account and let the manor on lease. The earliest lease I have seen is dated 1539. In this, besides a money rent, the lessee had to deliver to the Dean and Chapter six quarters of good

dressed wheat, a boar on St. Andrew's Day and a calf at Easter. This lease gives an inventory of the goods in the manor house which belonged to the Dean and Chapter. The house contained hall, buttery, kitchen, and chamber, the usual rooms in a fourteenth century house. The hall, in use as a kitchen, existed within the memory of people still living. A picture of one of the windows from within will be shown inside. In 1539 the furniture of the hall included a joined table (*tabula dormante*), which has survived to the present day and is well cared for, as you will be able to see later. (See Note 3.)

The most notable of the lessees of the manor was William Ayloffe, who died in 1691. He had had an adventurous youth, and had been cupbearer to the English Princess Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, "the Queen of Tears." He was a benefactor to Trinity Hall, and forty years after his death, when Dr. Warren visited the village, an old man named Dunham could remember the long white beard of Mr. Ayloffe. Another of his bequests was to augment the Vicarage of Melbourn and to provide a free school. This was kept for many years in the parvise above the south porch of the church. I think his mental outlook must have been wider than that of most tenant farmers of his generation. His altar tomb, erected at the expense of Trinity Hall, could once be seen in Melbourn Church.

It may have been coincidence, or it may have been rivalry, but a later lessee of this manor thought about the education of children. John Trigg, of Melbourn Bury, in 1818 left a large sum of money to provide an undenominational school in Melbourn. The buildings then put up serve as part of the present County Council School, and the income from the legacy is spent in scholarships at Cambridge schools.

The visitors then inspected the panelling in the modern hall, removed from the great hall of the old manor house; the ancient refectory table in the drawing room; and the many valuable pictures and engravings in various rooms, including one of a window and panelling in the old hall, and a photograph of a renaissance archway of

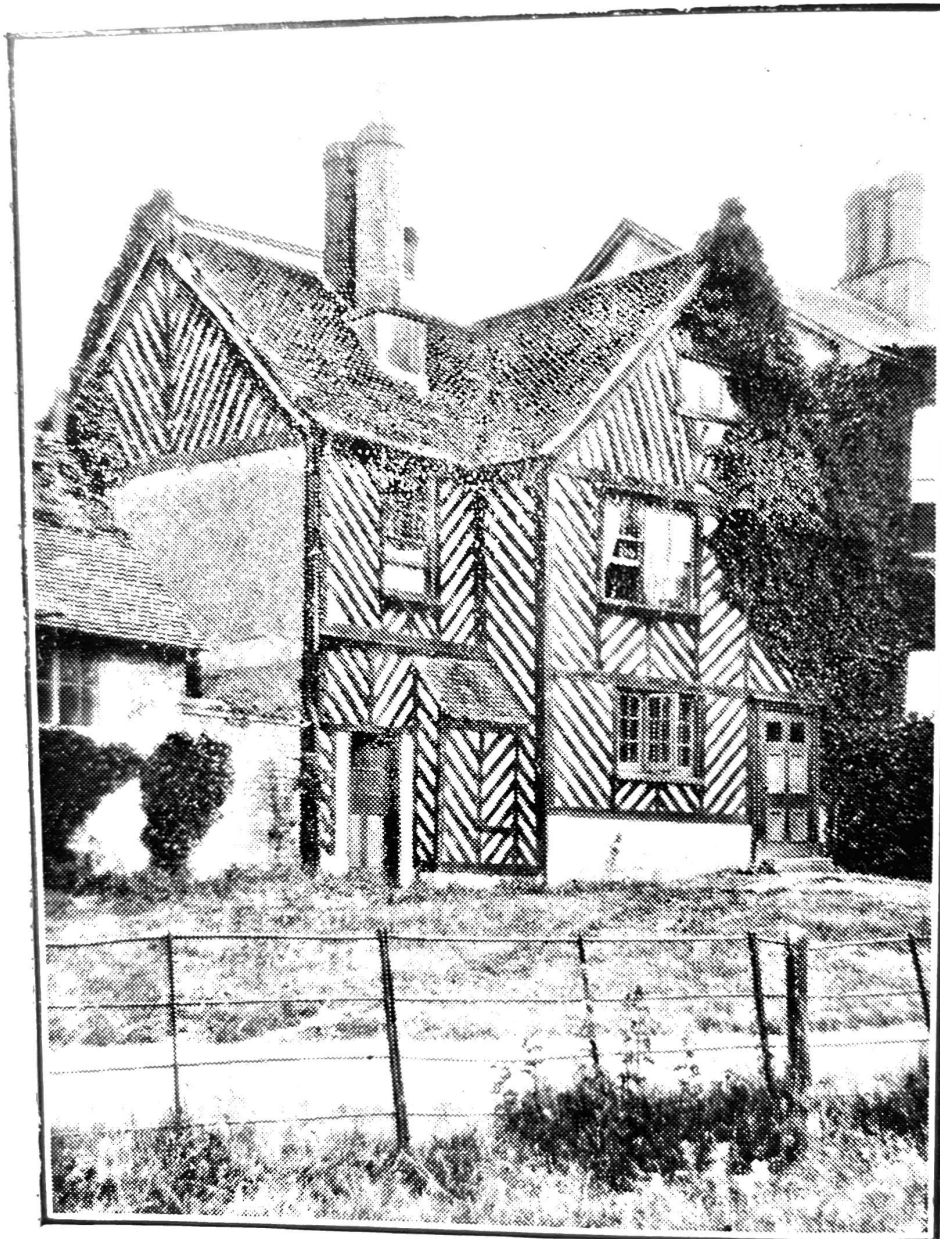
brick, eight feet high, discovered on the south side of the old hall during alterations in 1897. A scullery at the east end of the house, with pointed doorways, is the only part of the old hall left and was probably the buttery.

The seventeenth century gable on the west side was pointed out and the course of the moat on that side; also where the tithe barns stood. These were in the parish of Meldreth, the boundary between the two parishes passing through the house and thence to the middle of the stream, which it follows until it reaches the Sheen demesne. The springs were visited, and the channels through which the moat was fed pointed out. The eastern arm is dry, but the western arm contains water and adds to the beauty of the gardens. These latter proved a great attraction to the town antiquaries, and it was with some difficulty that they were collected and taken to resume the archæological business of the outing.

NOTES FOR SERIOUS ANTIQUARIES.

1. Before the Norman conquest the Abbot of Ely owned 2,823 acres of arable land in the parishes of Melbourn and Meldreth, which was more than half the area of arable land. At the time of Domesday this quantity had been reduced to 1,440, the new owner of the Lordship Manor, Guy de Reinbudcourt, having seized over 1,000 acres and Hardwin Deschalers of Whaddon over 300 acres belonging to the Abbot. The Abbot never regained possession of this land, although the descendant of Hardwin paid a corn rent grudgingly for the Abbey land in his possession. In 1086 there were forty ploughlands, equal to 4,800 acres of arable land, in the combined parishes. The difference between this and the present area, 7,237 acres, can be accounted for by the large amount of heath and moorland existing in 1086.

2. The survey was made in 1318 by two of the Prior's clerks, and on the sworn testimony of the following tenants: Robert le Bonde, William Rumbold, senior and junior, John the Noble, William son of the Reeve, Geoffrey Knout, William Geve, Richard Newlyn, Hugh Margaret, John Wolfed, Guy the Cellarer. The names Rumbold and Newlyn have survived in Melbourn to the present day. The manor house enclosure contained over six acres and was, with the herbage and fruit from three gardens, worth ten shillings a year clear. [Money had at least thirty times its purchasing power. No such property could show anything but a large deficit nowadays.] There was a windmill, a watermill, and a dovecote. There were 50 acres of enclosed meadow on the north



N.W. corner of Melbourn Bury. The part through which the (modern) chimney stack passes may have been the buttery of the old Hall. The gable partially covered with ivy was a 17th century addition.

and east and a hop ground. The arable land measured over 500 acres, in pieces scattered over the two parishes. This was the demesne land only, the lands of the free and copyholders, making up the 1,440 acres of Domesday are not included.

A condensed account of the services due from one man is here given.

William son of the Reeve holds a messuage and 20 acres of land by the perch of sixteen feet, for which he owes the following work: From Michaelmas to Christmas, every Monday and Friday in each week: if thrashing he shall thrash 24 sheaves of wheat, beans, peas or meslin, or 30 sheaves of barley or dredge for a day's work, and shall carry away the straw from such thrashing anywhere within the manor for another day's work; if carting or spreading dung, ditching, helping the thatcher, or driving plough, or harrowing, he shall work from rising to setting sun and it shall count as two works, but if he only works until 3 o'clock (*nones*) it shall only count as one work: but he shall be allowed to go to his dinner at 3 o'clock without prejudice.

He shall plough one acre of land for winter corn without allowance for work, or shall pay 4d.

He shall make one perch of wall five feet high with foundation $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, but not do the cresting; the lord shall supply the clay and hod, but he shall fetch his own water.

For all manual work he shall supply his own tools except when winnowing his lord's corn.

He shall carry a four bushel load of the lord's corn to Cambridge on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays without allowance for work; if he shall be ordered to carry it on Monday, Wednesday or Friday he shall be allowed one work: afterwards William and four other men of the homage shall take the corn in boats to Ely, and on arrival shall receive each time five black loaves and five measures of common beer, and nine herrings or nine eggs, or if on meat days two dishes of meat. William and the four homagers shall give the man who finds the boat four sheaves of meslin and four of dredge; and the lord shall give him in harvest time one acre of the best corn on the demesne, except from the manured land; the boat owner to find one man to go with his vessel and a cloth to cover the corn.

William and the homagers are allowed four days for their journey to Ely whether they take a week or more. If the Prior shall send his own men to Cambridge for the corn, the four homagers shall return and nothing be allowed them. Whether one quarter or 30 or more corn is sent to Ely, four men shall always go with it and always receive the same food at Ely.

William shall every year make three quarters of barley or dredge malt without allowance of work, and the Prior shall send the corn to William when he wants it; and the Prior shall receive from each

quarter of corn seven bushels of screened malt and eight bushels of unscreened; if not William shall pay 2d. a quarter to the Prior.

The services due from Christmas to Lady Day and from thence to August 1st are then set out, the variations chiefly having reference to sowing of the spring corn and haymaking. Easter Monday was a holiday.

The harvest services were most important. From August 1st to Michaelmas he worked on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, except on the four feast days in that period. In mowing, a day's work consisted of mowing half an acre of any kind of corn, binding and putting in shocks. Once during the harvest he was to cart the Prior's corn with his own cart from sunrise to 3 o'clock without allowance of work, the Prior providing breakfast and lunch. Amongst many other harvest services he had to find two men to work for the Prior for four days mowing, and the Prior was to give them three loaves of bread, each to contain 11 ounces of wheat, six herrings, and a ha'p'orth of cheese. No beer, so these services were called "water bederepes." He had two other men for four days mowing, who were to have the same quantity of bread and cheese, a plate of meat, and as much ale as they liked to drink. These services were called "ale bederepes."

If he has a stallion or bull for sale, the Prior, if he wishes, shall be able to buy at a fair market price. He shall not grind his corn at any other mill than the Prior's without licence. He shall pay lairwite for his daughter at the Prior's will. He can marry his daughter to any of the homage without licence, but not to a freeman without licence. His eldest son shall inherit, the other sons shall not live out of the town nor marry without licence. If he has only daughters, the eldest shall inherit. After his death the Prior shall take his best beast as heriot, and the widow or next heir shall be quit of all services for 40 days after. The widow to have his holding for life, paying a fine to the lord. If she marries again, to pay a fine to the lord; if she dies before her second husband he is to have dowry of the estate for life, at appointment of the homage, viz., two perches breadth of the whole length of the close and one perch of the croft and $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of arable land. William can marry a second time without licence. He owes suits at each court, and pays a cock at Christmas, and 10 eggs at Easter, and 1d. on each quarter day. If he shall be elected reeve he shall serve, and be quit of all service for his land for the time being.

This survey is now carefully preserved in the muniment room of the Dean and Chapter at Ely.

3. On April 28th, 1564, the Bury manor, the manorial rights, the great tithes, and the advowson of the vicarage were let to Thomas Sterne for sixty-one years at the following rent: £46 6s.; eight quarters of best dressed wheat, a boar on St. Andrew's

day and a calf at Easter; he was to keep the two hundred sheep belonging to the Dean and Chapter in his sheepfold in the summer and in his sheepyard in winter; he was to do all repairs, including those of the chancel. He received the following dead stock which he was to deliver up when the lease was up:—

Money—Five pounds.

In the kitchen—One leaden strainer, a 3-gallon brass pot with a handle, another 1½ gallons, a 4-gallon pan of latén, a latén candlestick, six beating dishes, a dressing board.

In the Hall—A joined table, a form, a trestle table.

In the Chamber—Two boarded beds.

Buttery—One ale stall.

Stable—A collar with two iron gudgeons, one pair of posts, two iron chains for stable door, three horse racks, three horse “mamoures.”

In fields—40 acres in the tilth land, fallowed, twice ploughed and dunged; two acres in Great Beton, do.; seven acres in Caudel Field, do.

In an earlier lease granted by the Prior and convent to Nicholas Harvey in 1539, it was stipulated that he should live at the Bury and not let the house; that he should plant 60 sapling willows and 60 sapling ashes each year at his own cost; that whenever the Prior gave a general livery, Nicholas was to have a coat like the Prior's valets. The inventory of goods is the same.

In 1596 Thomas Sterne's lease was surrendered, and in the new lease there was a covenant to pay five marks yearly to the vicar. The Ayloffe family first appear in this lease. In 1650, when the lands of Deans and Chapters had become confiscated by the Parliamentary Government, a survey of the Bury was made preparatory to a sale. The house contained “a Hall and two parlours, etc.,” in the parish of Melbourn and two great timber barns, thatched, in the parish of Meldreth. On the N.E. of the mansion house was a hop ground. The house and lands were sold for £815. About the same time the manorial rights were sold for £765. These rights were subject to a yearly payment of £20 for maintenance of the Grammar School at Ely. At the Restoration the Dean and Chapter resumed their estates, and the purchasers of 1650 lost all their money.

The next visit was made to the manor house of the Sheen, so called because it belonged to the Priory of Sheen, in Surrey, before the dissolution of the monasteries. Here the owner, Mr. George Palmer, received the party, and Dr. Palmer read the following paper:—
The Sheen Manor, Meldreth.

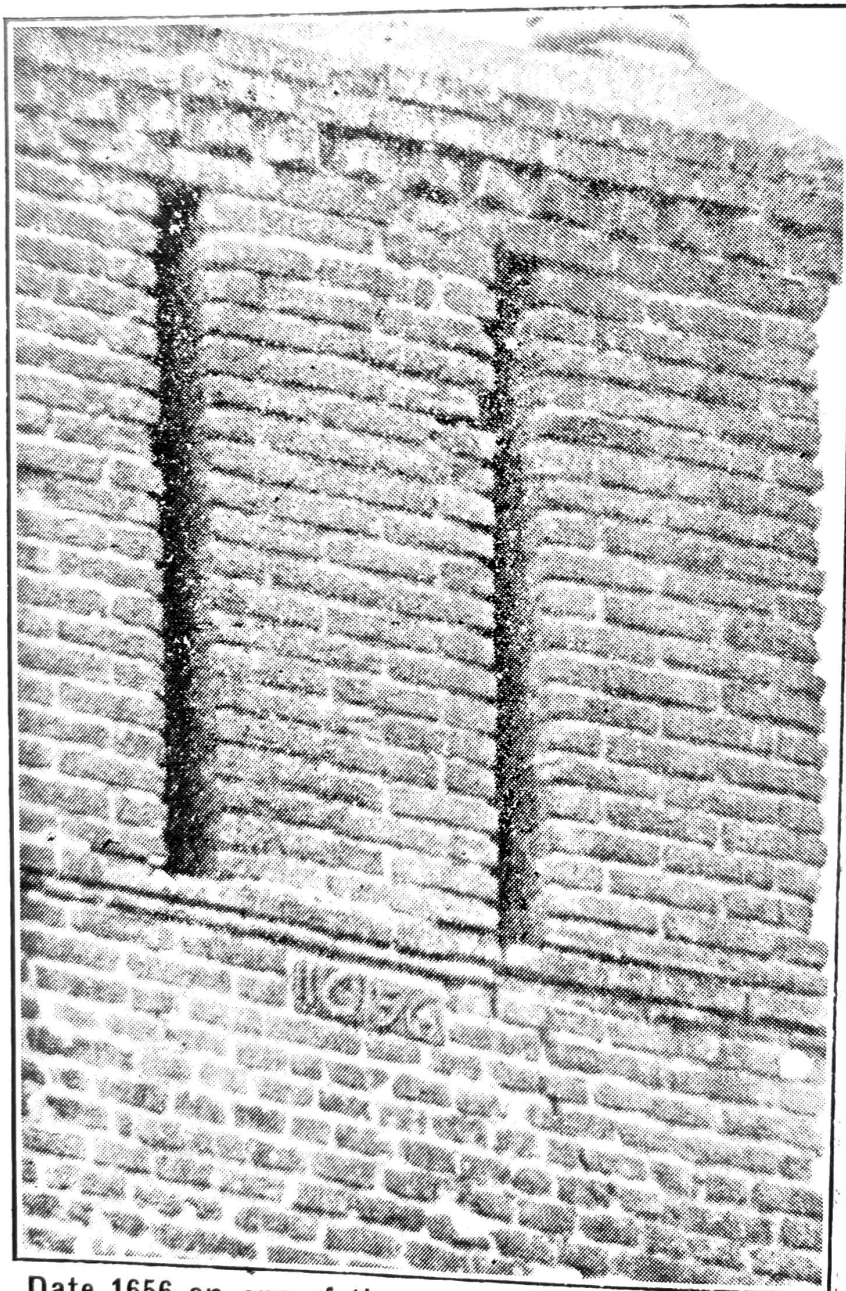
When we first hear of this manor, it was twice the size it is now, and belonged to a Saxon Thane named Goda, who held under the Earl of



Main entrance to the Sheen Manor in the time of George Pyke. The date 1656 is under the middle shaft of the left hand chimney stack. On the extreme right the gable of the oldest portions of the house is seen, underneath which is a slated nineteenth century addition.

Mercia. After the Norman conquest Goda lost it, and it was given to the well-known Norman soldier, Roger of Montgomery, who before the year 1086 had passed it to the monastery of St. Evroul in Normandy. This manor was only about a quarter of the size of the Bury, but it contained the two best watermills in the village, and the only two of the Domesday mills which are still in use. At the end of the thirteenth century the original manor had become divided into two equal parts, one of which was held by the Priory of Ware, an English cell of St. Evroul; the other half by a layman for the fifth part of a knight's fee, that is 8s., which he owed to the Priory of Ware. (*See Note 1.*) It was the half held by the Prior of Ware which is now known as the Sheen. The other half is more than a mile away, at the far end of the village. It is now known as Topcliff's, and belongs to St. Thomas's Hospital. When my brother bought the Sheen manor the steward of Topcliff's made a demand for 8s. "customary free rent," due from the whole of his land. But if there had been any such rent due at all it would have been from Topcliff's to Sheen. And we find that when the King was lord of the manor after the Dissolution he demanded 8s. rent from Topcliff's. (*See Note 2.*) But all such payments were abolished at the Stuart Restoration.

There have been three different sites for this manor, of different ages, and all moated. This is the latest site, and is surrounded by running water. The other sites will be seen later. On the suppression of the Priory of Ware in 1414, its possessions were given to the newly founded monastery at Sheen. Like most monastic property this manor was held on lease, and Sir Robert Chester, who held the last lease before the Dissolution, bought it about 1540. He also bought Royston Priory. The manor was sold to John Sterne, of Malton, in 1575, and he perhaps built part of the present house. (*See Note 3.*) From him it came by marriage to William Ayloffe, grandfather of the cupbearer. This was the first introduction of that family to the neighbourhood. As they hired the Bury manor



Date 1656 on one of the eastern chimney stacks of Sheen Manor House.

and the great tithes of Melbourn, they should have been wealthy, but they took the King's side in the Civil War, and were heavily fined by Parliament. So they sold this manor and went to live at the Bury. The purchaser of the manor in 1647 was George Pyke. He bought Baythorne, in Essex, at the same time, so he could not have been a Royalist. As his taste in heraldry was curious and credulous, I think he must have been a new man who had made money out of the troubles. Pyke certainly lived here, because he built the chimney stacks; you can see the date 1656 under the central shaft of the N.E. stack. He died in 1658, and was buried in a specially built mortuary chapel in Meldreth Church. His monumental inscription contains much genealogical detail, and the coat of arms has nine quarterings, including such early coats as Argentine, Delapole, and Mortimer. Although he has left the lions of England alone, it is a heraldic curiosity. George Pyke the second also lived here, and held the post of gamekeeper attached to the King's palace at Royston. His only daughter married James Crouch, of Buntingford, and took the name of Pyke. You can see the arms of Crouch impaling Pyke in the staircase window. Various other owners and tenants lived here, until my eldest brother bought it some years ago. He bought the manorial rights as well as the land, including a fine series of Court Rolls and rentals going back to monastic times. (*See Note 4.*)

The oldest part of the house is the scullery wing towards the west, which can be seen best from the walled garden. The main entrance to Pyke's house seems to have been between the chimneys on the north: the middle shaft of all three stacks are dummies. Pyke's house was larger than the present house, because there are only seven fireplaces, all modern, in the old part of the house, whereas Pyke in 1665 in his return for the Hearth Tax owned to having eleven fireplaces, and probably had more. Inside the house there is ~~now~~ not much of antiquarian interest, one room only, a bedroom, containing panelling, and this is painted. It used to be in the hall until



S.W. view of the Sheen Manor House, Meldreth, showing the old wing to the left and the outside of the walled garden.

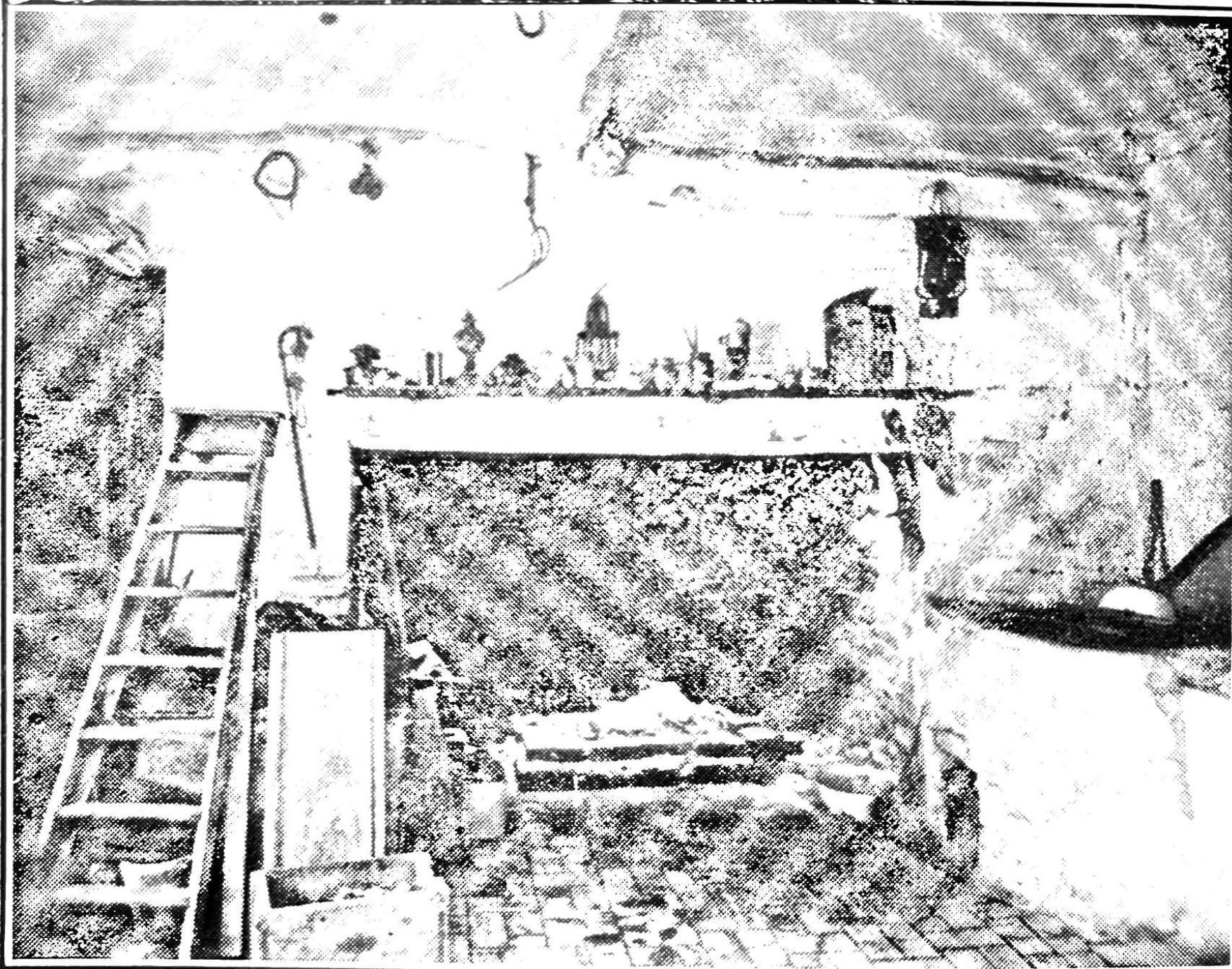
about 50 years ago. As you walk round the house you will find it a quaint mixture of styles, extending from the 16th to 19th century. On the south-west a 17th century wall of mellowed red brick forms with the two wings of the house an enclosure which was once Elizabeth Pyke's garden of simples. The west side of the south wing of the house shows columns of quoins as if there had been corners where none are now. Part of the west wing has been lowered by one story, exposing a tapering chimney stack. You can enter a lumber room in this portion and see a large faggot hearth, with a modern pulley wheel for a roasting jack still in position. In this and in an adjoining room are massive chamfered beams in the roof and curved wall supports. Traces of primitive staircases and windows can be seen. This part of the house existed when a Prior of Sheen was lord of the manor.

The second site of the manor adjoins the farmyard of the present house. It had a dove house on it until recently, and is surrounded by running water. Perhaps this dates from the 13th century, when the manor of Goda was divided into two. In a terrier of 1664 (*See Note 5*) this dove house with the pightle of ground on which it stood was valued at £3 a year.

The earliest site of the manor is further away across the road, on the right of the footpath leading to Meldreth. The area of the moated enclosure is 5 roods, and is much larger than the second site. This is the site of the undivided manor and may go back to Goda's time. Here the Abbot of St. Evroul had a private chapel, for the privilege of which he used to pay 2 lbs. of wax to Meldreth Church on Trinity Sunday. (*See Note 7.*) This enclosure is called "Coulsother's Orchard, moated round," in the 1665 terrier. Of this orchard a russet apple and cooking pear survived until 50 years ago.

NOTES FOR SERIOUS ANTIQUARIES.

1. In the year 1086 there were 240 acres in this manor demesne, and 480 acres in villenage and two mills. In the year 1272 there were 212 acres in demesne and 492 in villenage. Rents of assize and perquisites of Court £8 5s. 6d. In the year 1324 the Prior of Ware held 160 acres of



Faggot hearth in the oldest portion of Sheen Manor House. It is $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet across and the beam over the hearth is 16 inches deep. By the side of the central beam in the roof can be seen the wheel round which the pulley of the roasting jack turned.

arable land in demesne and a water mill, with rents and perquisites £5 12s., 4 acres of meadow and 4 of pasture. In 1340 John de Brumpton held of the Prior of Ware 160 acres of land, 7 acres of meadow, and 6 of pasture, a mill, and rents of 44s. 6d. for homage service and 8s. rent.

2. In the year 1544, the Sheen Manor then being in the hands of the Crown, the steward issued an order to distrain the Master of the Savoy Hospital, owner of the Manor of Topcliff, for a rent of 8s., in arrears for 10 years.

3. Thomas Sterne, gent., bought the Manor of Sheen, with 20 messuages, 20 gardens, 20 orchards, a watermill, 280 acres of arable land, 100 of meadow, 100 of pasture, 20 of wood, a sheep walk over 300 acres of furze, heath and moor, and £10 rent, for £540.

4. The earliest Court Roll is dated Friday, April 8th, 1512. The homagers who attended the Court were Nicholas Hyche, John Sutton, William Ingrey, Thomas Hervy, Richard Sparowe, Thomas Gateward, Richard Goodchild, and William Prytchard. The chief business was the repairs of copyhold tenements which had been ordered in previous courts. A house called Grene's had not been put in habitable repair, and in a tenement called Lylles a barn had no thatch, and a building 60 feet long was ruinous in timber work and thatch, and on the south side had fallen down. Sixty feet seems a good length for a barn or malting, but that is the length given. They both belonged to Thomas Hervy, who, the bailiff said, had paid no rent for them for 2½ years. The Court ordered both tenements to be forfeited and "let Thomas try the usual remedies for recovery." Apparently Thomas sat by with his tongue in his cheek. He did not want tumbled down copyhold property. John Sutton, another homager, was also an offender. He had partly repaired the chamber of his tenement in Chesewyk, but the hall, which he had pulled down and carted away, he had not rebuilt. His property was also forfeited.

5. From a terrier of the manors of Sheen and Streets drawn up in 1664 we get the following particulars of the premises. The mansion house with two great barns, two stables, with granary and woodhouse adjoining to a hay barn compasseth the inward yard, which contain with the farm and other yard about two acres, and are worth nothing beyond expenses. The gardens, with cherry orchard and great orchard containing two acres worth yearly £9. A dove house worth yearly with the pightle of ground £6.

The meadows are particularly described. The Sheen meade of 17 acres; Coulsouter's Orchard, moated round, of 5 roods, worth 30s. a year. The square meade of 5 acres on this side Coulsouter's. The meade lying next the river on the far side of Coulsouter's of 8 acres. The last two items are marked as belonging to Streetes; the last item of 8 acres lies high and dry



Niches in Chapel of St. Mary, Melbourn Church. Probably the statues (Virgin and Child, left, and Our Saviour, right) were destroyed by order of Bishop Goodrich.

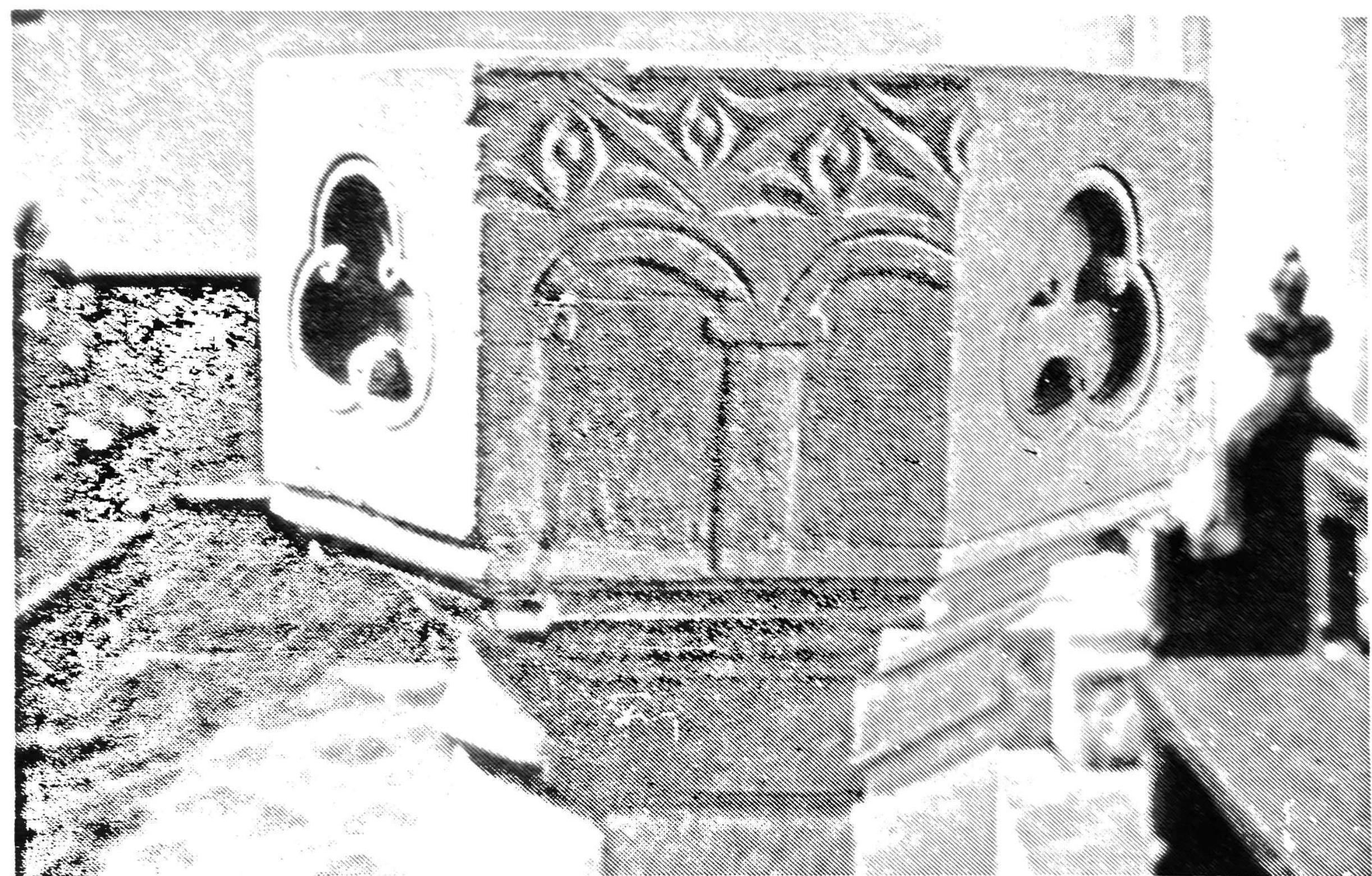
between the river and the marsh, separated from Coulsouter's only by the moat. Other items in the terrier are:—A foldcourse for 400 sheep worth £10 a year; a watermill abutting on Peterhouse Close, with a willow yard belonging, £15 a year; the Court Barn of Sheen and Streets and the Royalty of the High River, £15 a year. There were 239 acres of arable land and 65½ of meadow, and 2 orchards of 5 acres. The annual value is put at £257 10s. One hundred and ten acres were tithe free, and 7½ acres paid tithe to the lord of the Manor of Sheen.

In 1342 Henry Strete, miller of the Prior of Ware, was fined at the Court Leet of the Honour of Clare for taking unjust toll. But he flourished in his wickedness, for in 1442 his descendant was receiver of the county taxes. He got together a good estate, which went by the name of Strete's Manor. When he died his only daughter married William Alington. She died without heirs, and the manor came to the Sterne family. Parts of the Sheen meads once belonged to Henry Strete. Mr. Jebb now owns the Manor House of Strete's.

6. In 1716 the free and customary rents amounted to £7 17s. 4d., besides 18 hens, 2 cocks, and 3 capons. There were also 39½ bederepes. In 1578 an attempt had been made to change these into a payment of 3½d. a year for each bederepe, but John Hytche would not agree.

7. About the year 1222 the Prior of Ely and the Abbot of St. Elrulf came to an agreement about tithe. All the demesne lands of the Abbot in Meldreth were to be tithe free, with this exception. At the time of reaping each should select an acre of wheat alternately, the Abbot having first choice, until the Prior had selected three acres. The rest of the demesne was to be tithe free. When the parish of Meldreth was enclosed in 1813, the allotting of land in lieu of rectorial tithe caused some difficulty, and application was made to Mr. Caley, Keeper of the Records. But he did not find the above agreement, which lay hidden in the muniment room at Ely. About the same time (1222) the Abbot got leave to have a private chapel in his manor house here, but only he and his monks were to use it.

8. In June, 1647, Francis Westrope, yeoman, of Melbourn, complained to the Court of Chancery of his treatment by James Ayloff, gent. He said that about July, 1645, he hired half the Manor of Sheen, including half the manor house, and other buildings, at a yearly rent of £135. He was at great cost repairing the buildings fit for his habitation, in fallowing and manuring the land with marl and dung, and he paid the Parliamentary taxes of over £78. In the autumn of 1647 corn made high prices; this spring Ayloff refused to accept his half year's rent, saying that his elder brother had the right of letting. This looks as if the landlord wanted a share of the high prices or wanted possession because of the sale to Pyke.



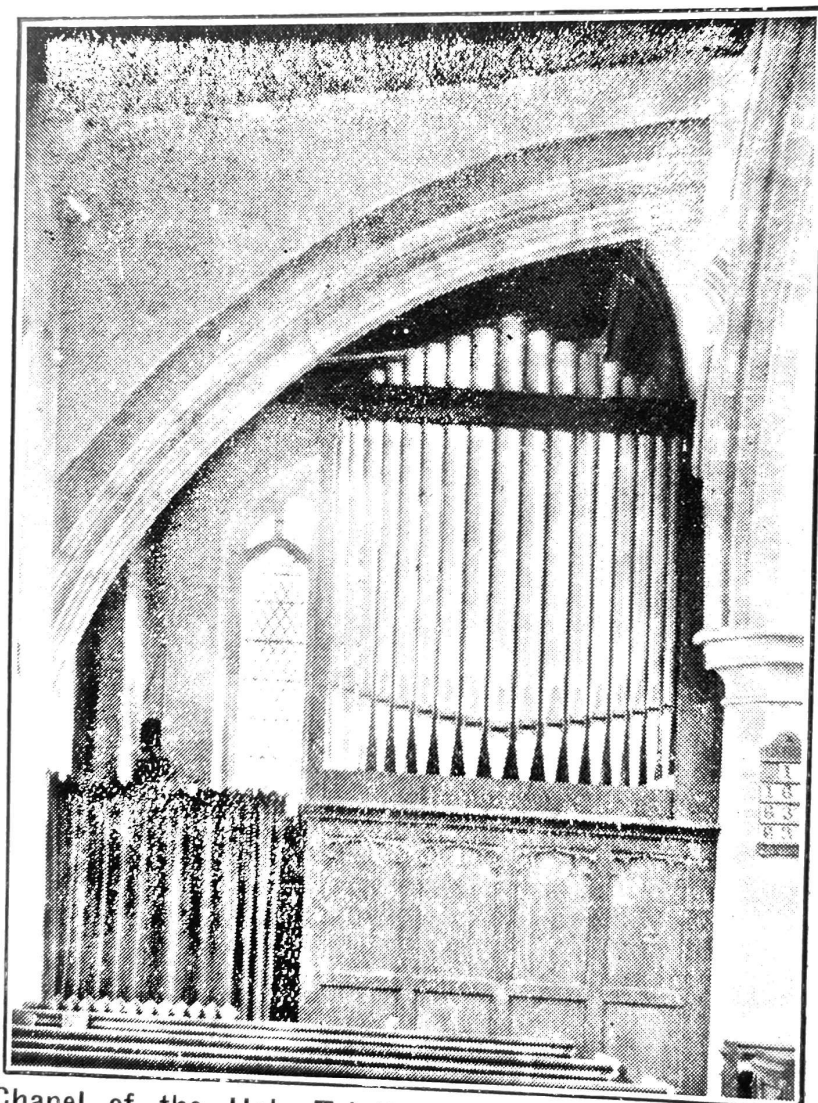
The next item on the programme was the parish church, where the Vicar, the Rev. H. H. McNeice, read the following paper : —

MELBOURN PARISH CHURCH.

The present building bears distinctive marks of the Early English, the Decorated, and the Perpendicular styles of architecture. It is not known when the first church was built here, but there was undoubtedly a church on the same site previous to the Conquest. The Norman nobles may have built a stone church some time in the 11th century, as it is most unlikely that the Saxon church lasted until the building of the present structure. In the chancel will be seen three Early English windows, an Easter sepulchre (?) on the north side, and two aumbries dating from the time of Dom Jeorgius, Vicar of Melbourn, 1285. This gives us the date of the present chancel, as the *Vetus Liber* tells us that he, at his own cost, put these and other things into the church, probably then in the course of building. The Decorated window on the south side of the chancel probably dates one hundred or one hundred and fifty years later, while the east window, bearing as it did the well-known coat of arms of Bishop Alcock, may owe its existence to his interest. Probably at this time the chancel roof was raised to allow for the east window and to match the alterations in the nave and aisles. The screen dates from 1504, being the gift of one of the Hitch family. It is in a good state of preservation and the carving is unusual in design.

At the east end of the south aisle there is the mutilated remains of a very beautiful Lady Chapel. The Tabernacle niches suggest the figures of the Virgin and Child on the left and that of our Saviour on the right of the altar.

The stained glass windows were destroyed by the well-known enthusiast Dowsing, while the damage to the statues and carvings go back (probably) to the days of Bishop Goodrich. The font is Norman. One Norman panel remains, showing the arcaded work so general of the period, and the other decorated panels suggest a fifteenth



Chapel of the Holy Trinity, Melbourn Church, now occupied by the organ. Very little is left to show what the chapel was like.

century mason improving the big square Norman font by sawing the square into an octagon. The Norman panel escaped by being placed against a pillar. The tower is a very fine example of the Perpendicular period, although somewhat spoiled at the last restoration by the alteration of the crockets.

The bells are six in number, bearing the following inscriptions:—

1. "Jesus be Our Spede," 1615, R.O.
2. God Save the King, 1615, R.O.
3. Praise the Lord, 1616 (generally ascribed to James Keene).
4. John Briant, Hartford, fecit, 1789.
5. Richard Chandler made me, 1688.
6. Cast by Bowell, 1912.

Over the south porch is a parvise or priest's room, which was used for many years as a village school. In the tower arch the marks of the beams which supported the old ringers' gallery can still be seen, and the descendants of the players in the church band are still amongst us.

The registers date from 1558, and contain, among other interesting records, entries relating to the Marvell family. The church plate consists of a chalice and cover given to the "Towne of Melbourne" in 1569 in place of a large number of silver vessels taken by the King's commissioner in 1553. There is also a Georgian paten and some Victorian silver. Where the organ now stands in the east end of the north aisle there was a small chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity, but there is nothing left to remind us of its purpose. The rood door was closed during one of the many restorations, but the stone staircase is still intact. Two west windows in the north and south aisles were built up, without even the excuse of a restoration. The coats of arms of the following, among others, were to be found in the windows or carved on the walls: Argentines (cup bearer to the King), Alington, Mortimer, Ayloffe, Whalley, Pawson, Winchester College, Bishop of Ely, Prior of Ely, etc. Much that was



North side of Lordship Farm, Melbourn. The slated portion contains

done, well-intentioned but ill-advised, one would like to see undone; but we are very thankful so much has been left unrestored.

The next place to be visited was the Lordship, where the thirsty multitude was received by the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Collis Palmer, and given tea. Thirst being assuaged, Dr. Palmer read the following paper:—

THE LORDSHIP FARM, MELBOURN.

This has been owned by only four families since Anglo-Saxon times. The Argentine family were in possession in 1166, and probably 80 years earlier. From them it passed to the Alingtons by marriage, who sold it to the Hitch family about 1700. From them it passed on to my own family and now belongs to my youngest brother.

The Argentines were a family celebrated in history and romance. It has not been proved that they came over with the Conqueror, but they were certainly possessed of large estates within a century afterwards. The first member of the family who has left any record of a connection with Melbourn was Richard de Argentine, born about 1200. He held several public offices, and went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and was killed near Antioch in 1246. In 1227 he got the papal licence to build a chapel in this manor, which he settled as dowry on his wife. His youngest grandson was that Sir Giles de Argentine, a Knight Hospitaller, who was killed at the Battle of Bannockburn. The nephew of this knight was lord of this manor in 1318, for which year there is a bailiff's account in the British Museum, from which many items of personal expenses are obtained. Sir John de Argentine was then head of the family, and he sometimes had living with him here his wife and infant son and maid, his two daughters by his first marriage and the young men to whom they were betrothed.

As regard the buildings in 1318, we only know for certain that there were hall, chamber, with outside staircase, both thatched, chapel and offices. The buildings were surrounded by a moat on which swans were kept, and over



A view of the attic at Lordship Farm, showing a blocked up window. This was probably glazed when the roof was thatched and the room could be used as a cheese room. The end wall is made of clay laid on reeds.

which were two bridges, one of them probably a drawbridge. It is possible that the present farm buildings, as far as they are within the circuit of the moat, are on the line of the original buildings, and the hall and chapel were where the house now stands. There is a well in the cellar still.

In the bailiff's account mentioned, there are several items charged for feeding men who brought timber from Wymondly, another manor belonging to the family, for building the "New Chamber." It is possible that this new chamber may be included in the present farm house, for in the attic there are the remains of an ancient timbered roof, massive cambered main truss beams, principal rafters and collar, all of oak. Carved brackets join the main truss to the wall post, which can be traced down to the ground level. All these show signs of having been injured by fire. Whether the timber work is part of the hall of Sir John de Argentine or of the chamber he built in 1318, I cannot say. Sir John died the same year, and his widow lived till 1375, having outlived two well-to-do husbands. So she had no need of her dowry house, which was ruinous in 1381. Soon afterwards the Alingtons came into possession, and they let the Melbourn estate on lease. So I can see no cause for such massive timber construction after 1318.

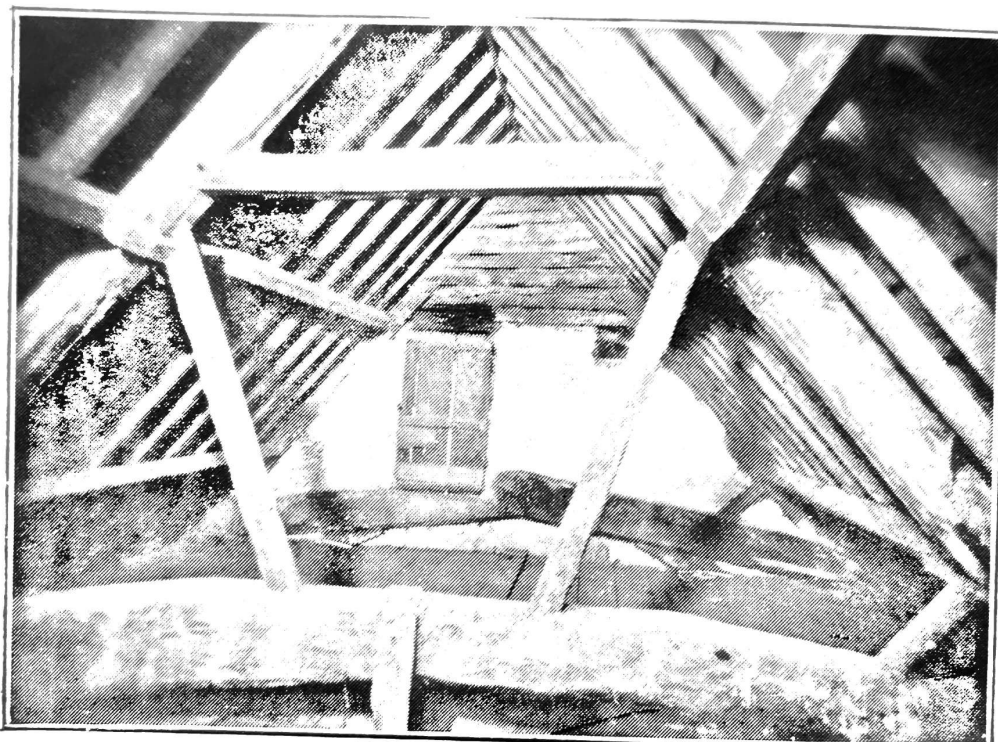
The attic was then inspected, also the moats and the means for holding up water for the mill, which has left no other trace. A wooden thrashing floor, with a bushel and strike, was also shown.

Before leaving Sir William Ridgeway thanked Mr. and Mrs. Collis Palmer for their hospitality.

A NOTE FOR SERIOUS ANTIQUARIES.

Pope Gregory, in a letter dated at the Lateran, March 8th, 1227, gave permission for Richard de Argentine to build a chapel in his Manor of Meldeburn and keep a chaplain. The following rules to be observed were drawn up by the Bishop of Ely and John de Foxton, Rector of Meldeburn, and dated March 7th, 1229.

The chapel was to be for the use only of the Lord, his family and guests. Churchings and weddings were always to take place in the Mother Church. No Mass or canonical hours to be said when the Lord was not resident.



Another view of the Lordship attic, showing two cambered main truss beams, measuring 10 x 14 inches. The near beam shows: the principal rafters with a mortise for a purlin on the right, the collar beam above, the place where the ring post has been chopped off in the centre, marks of injury by fire on the under surface on the right. Under the further main truss can be seen the tops of the brackets which joined it to the wall post.

The Chaplain was to owe obedience to the Rector.

He was to hand over to the Rector all gifts, except books, vestments, and ornaments.

He was to hear no confessions except in cases of dire necessity.

He was to undertake no week's, month's, or year's days services.

These services and confessions might be done with the Rector's licence, who had power to suspend the chaplain for disobedience.

The Lord and his family were to come to the Mother Church on all great feast days.

The Lord had to give to the church $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of his demesne land.

The next place on the programme was Heydon Church, where the fifteenth century door key was inspected. On the return, a short walk down a lane reached the southern end of the Branditch. From this point the whole length of the work can be seen, down to Black Peak springs. Also from this point the lynchets on Chishill Down could be seen to the left, other balks of the same kind having been seen on St. Anthony's Hill on the way up. It now being about 7 o'clock, this part of the day's work could not receive the attention it deserved.

