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THE
HISTORY OF THE PRIORY

OF

MONKTON FARLEY,

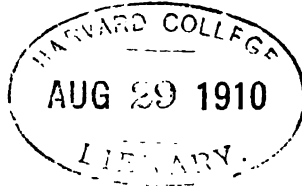
COUNTY OF WILTS.

BY THE
REV. J. E. JACKSON, M.A., F.S.A.,

Rector of Leigh Delamere, and Hon. Canon of Bristol.

DEVIZES:
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The History of the Priory of Monkton Farley.

By the REV. J. E. JACKSON, F.S.A.,

Hon. Canon of Bristol.

THIS place is about four miles east of the city of Bath on the way to Bradford, and lies at the back of the high ground called Farley Down, celebrated for its freestone quarries. The geological position is curious, and the view on all sides extensive and beautiful.

Of the village and principal estate nothing of much importance is known, until, about fifty years after the Conquest, it appears among the possessions of the great Norman Family of BOHUN. Humphrey Bohun came over to England with the best introduction for a share of plunder, being kinsman to the head plunderer, King William I., and was soon provided with a pleasant perch whereon to rest his foot, after his flight across the water. He was the founder of the English family (at first Barons Bohun, but in 1199 created Earls of Hereford,) which continued till 1372, when it ended in two daughters, one of whom, Mary, married Henry Earl of Derby, afterwards King Henry IV.

It appears to have been the second Humphrey Bohun who first became a landowner in North Wilts. At the desire of William Rufus he married Maud, daughter of the greatest landlord in the county, Edward of Salisbury, who, at the marriage, endowed his daughter with several estates belonging to the Honour of Trowbridge. Farley is not named among them, so that he obtained it in some other way. His wife's family were, at various periods, founders of the Abbeys of Bradenstoke, Lacock, and Hinton. Maud of Salisbury, the wife of Humphrey Bohun the Second, was certainly the person who designed the Priory of Monkton Farley. The land which she gave for the purpose was an estate called the Buries, at Bishopstrow, near Warminster, in later times the pro-

perty of the Gifford and Buckler families, and now Sir Francis Astley's. Whether Maud Bohun actually began the building I cannot say. It was founded about the year 1125,¹ but the dates of her husband's and her own death are not known. It was certainly finished and principally endowed by her son Humphrey de Bohun the Third, who married Margaret, daughter of Milo of Gloucester, then Earl of Hereford.

Monkton Farley Priory was a house of Clugniac monks of the Order of St. Benedict, and was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. It was what was called a "cell," or house subordinate, to the great Priory of Lewes in Sussex.

The Order of Monks called Clugniac derived their name from a place called Clugni, in Burgundy, a little north of Lyons, where a celebrated Benedictine house had been founded in A.D. 890. The Order of St. Benedict had become through the disturbances of those times, so disorderly as almost to have lost all discipline, when it was revived in fresh vigour at Clugni. That new monastery had enjoyed for 200 years an European fame, when about the year 1070, William Earl of Warren, and his wife Gundreda (the Conqueror's daughter), went on a pilgrimage to Rome. They visited various monasteries (the only inns in those days), and being unable to proceed, owing to some disturbances in the country, they turned aside from their road and took up their abode at St. Peter's of Clugni. Very hospitable entertainment and the good things of Burgundy left an agreeable impression upon the palates of William de Warren and the Lady Gundreda; so, upon their return to England, being minded to found a religious house at Lewes, they sent for some of the brethren of Clugni, and in that way Clugniac monks were introduced into this country. The house at Lewes was the greatest of the Order, and was called one of the first "five daughters of Clugni." It was built in 1072, and though to a certain extent subordinate to its parent monastery in France, it enjoyed its own revenues, paying to its Superior only a small annual acknowledgment, and submitting to his appointment of a Prior. Clugniac monks were very precise in their ceremonies. They wore a black

¹ Register of Lewes Priory.

dress, in which, at their death, they were shrouded. There were twenty-seven houses of the Order in England; generally filled with foreigners rather than with Englishmen.

Now, as William de Warren and his wife had taken a liking to the parent house at Clugni, so did Humphrey de Bohun and his wife Maud of Salisbury, to the same system at St. Pancras, Lewes; and, being in their turn also resolved to be founders, in or about the year 1125 they gave to the house at Lewes the land (already mentioned), at Bishopstrow, called the Buries; on condition that if, by and by, they should found a Priory, and should convey to the House at Lewes the further gift of the manor and tithes of Farley in Wilts, and should further allow the Prior of Lewes to place some of his monks at Farley, then those monks so established here in a house of their own, should enjoy wholly and to themselves, the profits and tithes of the lands so given.¹

The third Bohun (as just stated) completed and further endowed this Priory, both by lands of his own, and by obtaining contributions of the same kind both from greater folks on whom he depended and from smaller folks who depended upon him. He was Steward in the Household of King Henry I., the times being yet peaceful; but when they were no longer peaceful (as very soon came to pass after King Henry's death), he very properly joined that side to which he was officially attached; and when Henry's daughter, Maud, the Empress—now, by her second marriage, Countess of Anjou—landed in England, Bohun declared for her. It was in this part of the country, and especially in Wiltshire, that many of the early fights between Matilda and Stephen took place; one reason being that her natural brother, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, an influential nobleman near the Severn, had built Bristol Castle, and rendered it impregnable. Several other castles in the West were under his influence, and were garrisoned on the side of the Empress. There is a very interesting fragment of history, called "The Acts of Stephen," written by a contemporary but anonymous author, which gives a detailed account (not found in any other work), of the military proceedings in this neighbourhood, amongst which a very important part is performed

¹ Dugdale's *Baronage*.—"Bohun."

by the castles of Devizes, Malmesbury, Marlborough, and Trowbridge. The castle of Trowbridge belonged to Humphrey Bohun, and he made it so strong that when, in 1135, King Stephen came before it, the men of Trowbridge baffled him.¹ The place was fortified, and prepared for all extremities. Stephen constructed engines and pressed the siege, but all in vain. Some of his barons became weary, some treacherous; so he abandoned it, leaving however in Devizes Castle a body of soldiers, with special orders to annoy Trowbridge as much as they possibly could. Those orders they executed faithfully, till at length, what with plundering excursions, first from the one garrison and then from the other, all the quiet people of the neighbourhood presently cried out, "A plague on both your garrisons."

Trowbridge Castle stood in the centre of the town, on a rising ground that still bears the name of Court Hill. Not a trace of it is left, but the principal street, which forms a curve, is said to owe that shape to its having followed the course of the Castle moat. An old painting was found, some years ago, concealed in the walls of a house, which is said to be a representation of the building when entire, but how much of it is authentic, and how much imaginary, I cannot say. The Castle, however, was the stronghold of the founders of Farley Priory, and their acts and deeds, both military and religious, were such as have been recited. It is only fitting that both kinds should now be duly noticed, as this is one of many similar cases showing that the disturbances by which the kingdom was convulsed were apparently no hindrance to the piety and charity of the nobles who were involved in them. Stephen himself was a great Founder. During the eighteen years and nine months of his reign, no less than 148 religious houses of various kinds were established in England, being a larger number in proportion than in the reign of any of his predecessors. How, amidst the passions of war, men found leisure for works of peace and devotion it would be strange to conceive, did we not remember that the devotion of those days maintained such works to be, in a peculiar sense, meritorious to men's souls.

¹ Acts of Stephen, p. 370.

Humphrey Bohun the Third was taken prisoner at Winchester, but afterwards released. He died in 1187, and was buried (as all his family from his time appear to have been,)¹ at Lanthony Priory, on the south side of the city of Gloucester, founded about 50 years before by his wife's father.

Before his death he settled the possessions of Farley by a confirmation charter, an important document which fortunately happens to be one of the few relating to this Priory that have been preserved. Some additions of property were made afterwards, and their principal estates (omitting many minor items) were as follows:—

The Bohuns themselves gave the site of the Priory, the manor and park of Farley, with everything belonging to the estate, except a certain portion of land then held by William de Lisle. The land called the Buries, at Bishopstrow; the tithes of Oaksey, near Malmesbury; of Wilsford and Manningford (still called Bohun), near Pewsey; and of Heddington, near Calne; also an eel-fishery. The Empress Maude, not ungrateful for the gallant defence of Trowbridge, was a very liberal donor of the manor of Monkton at Chippenham (now Mr. Esmeade's); the rectorial tithes of the whole of that parish, with the advowson and chapelries; an estate at Marston, near Highworth; and another at Foxhanger, near Devizes. Among Humphrey Bohun's "knights" (meaning those who held lands under the Barony of Bohun), the principal contributor was a gentleman of French family (whose monument found at this place we shall have to notice presently), Ilbert de Chat. He gave rather more than one-third of the whole property of the Priory, consisting of Monkton Manor in the parish of Broughton Gifford, some rents at Echilhampton, tithes at Trowbridge, and at Farmborough, and Clutton, in the county of Somerset.

Besides these, the monks had the tithes and advowson of Box, and a mill there, the gift of another knight, Bartholomew Bigot; Broom Farm, near Swindon (now Mr. Goddard's); Thornhill, near Christian Malford, the gift of Robert Adeline; the manors of

¹ Coll. Top. et Gen., 1, 168.

Allington and Slaughterford; and lands at Westbury, Westbury Leigh, Penley, Bratton, and South Wraxhall. At Sopworth,¹ near Badminton, an estate and the advowson, the gift of the Tropenell family of Chalfield; and a salmon fishery at Arlingham near Fretherne on the banks of the Severn, afterwards rented of the Priory by the Berkeleys.

The heads of the Bohun family continued to be looked upon as the patrons and protectors of the Priory in secular matters. They also claimed the advowson of the house, *i.e.*, the right of nominating the Prior. But this right (a very frequent bone of contention in those times) was also claimed by the Prior of Lewes, of which house Farley was a daughter, just as the house of Lewes was itself a daughter of Clugni. These daughters were sometimes undutiful, very jealous of parental dictation, and very anxious to escape from it. Consequently, when in this case the rival claims came, as they very soon did, into collision, Farley Priory took part with the family of its founder. A process-at-law followed, as a matter of course, between Henry Bohun Earl of Hereford, on the one part, and Lewes Priory on the other, to settle the power of appointing and depriving the Prior here, and the degree of allegiance due to Lewes according to the statutes of St. Benedict. An amicable adjustment was at length arrived at, October 10th, 1208, upon this footing:—Whenever there should be a vacancy at Farley, Bohun the patron, his heirs or his agents, accompanied by two of the monks of Farley, should take a journey to Lewes, and make a formal request to the Superior of that house to give them a new Prior. Whereupon the Superior of Lewes should faithfully and honestly nominate two persons fit for the situation, either out of the house of Lewes, or of the house of Farley, or of any other house of the Clugniac order. Of these two, Bohun and his companions were to choose one, which ever they could guess to be, or by any other means could be persuaded to consider the most promising of

¹ By a Deed of the year, 1323, the Prior of Lewes gives license to the house of Farley to *lease out for three lives*, the offices of Sower (*sementis*) of Sopworth, Reaper (*messoris*) of Farley, and Clerk of the Priory Church of Farley. (Lewes Chartulary.)

the two to be, the right man in the right place. The new Prior of Farley was to be, according to the rules of St. Benedict, ecclesiastically subordinate, first to the house of Lewes, and so upwards to the house of Clugni; subject, therefore, to the vexatious jurisdiction not only of a mother, but also of a grandmother. The Prior of Lewes was to have the power of removing the Prior of Farley (but not without just and reasonable cause), and also of punishing any of the brethren whose correction might be desirable. This house was to pay to Lewes one mark (13s. 6d.) per annum, by way of acknowledgement, in lieu of all claims; and the Prior was to do the further pleasant fealty of dining at St. Pancras, Lewes, every founder's day. Such was the arrangement. Nevertheless, the Bohuns never ceased to claim the patronage, and it always appears in the lists of their property to the last. The names of some of the Priors of Farley are preserved, but are not associated with any distinction, literary or otherwise. Some of them are French, as Lawrence Archenbaud and John de Fescamp. Such names, perhaps, indicate that the wishes of the Bohun family were sometimes attended to in the nomination; whereas, on the other hand, the Prior of Lewes occasionally secured the appointment to favourites of his own, for among the accounts of Sir John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, there is a casual memorandum that he had received some trifling favour from "the Chamberlain of Lewes, that shall be Prior of Farley."¹

The system under which religious houses in England came to be in any way dependent on others in France commenced at the time when certain provinces of France were held by the Kings of England. Foreign monasteries were frequently endowed with lands in this country, the revenues being duly forwarded abroad. "For though," as Fuller says, "the foreigners affected to despise our island, they nevertheless licked their lips at the good fare it afforded." English monasteries so situated were called Alien Priories. In some cases, as at Lewes, only an annual acknowledgment was paid to the French house; in others, it received all or part of the

¹ Accounts of Sir John Howard, by B. Botfield, Esq.

rents. The danger attending this foreign connection was great, and often fatal; for whenever war broke out between France and England, the King of England instantly seized upon the English estates, and stopped the supplies; that is, in fact, suppressed the houses by confiscation for the time. On peace being restored, they were sometimes given back. Several of our Kings dealt thus with the Alien Priories, and Henry V. dissolved them altogether, at least those whose revenues had gone entirely to France. No wonder, therefore, that English monasteries were always discontented with this foreign yoke, and were anxious to shake it off; that both Lewes and Farley were eager to be quit of their Clugniac superior in Burgundy, for it was a bond that continually threatened to put an end to themselves altogether. Farley was often in peril. Edward I., being in search of money for his wars, caused inquiry to be made into the actual degree of connection of this house with Clugni (through the intermediate step of Lewes). A commission was appointed to ascertain whether the monks here were English or under the power of the King of France. It was found that they paid no actual tax or pension to any subject of the French King, except so far as this: that, whenever the Abbot of Clugni happened to come to England to make a formal visitation here, his expenses were paid, and the monks professed to him. This was not considered to amount to so close an affinity as to bring them within the rule, and so they escaped. This was in 1296, and the King's deed is dated 25th January, at Castelacre, a Clugniac Priory in Norfolk. But the Crown officers kept their eye upon them, and, two years afterwards, in 1298 (26 E. I.) found another excuse for further inquiry. The monks of Farley had lately become possessed of the manors of Allington and Slaughterford, near Chippenham. Those estates had been originally given by King Stephen to the foreign Abbey of Martigny, in the valley of the Rhone, above the Lake of Geneva, and that Abbey had exchanged them for other lands with the house at Farley. The Crown pronounced that by this exchange the intentions of its predecessors had been defeated, and it seized the two estates; but, upon re-consideration, and after some pacific

process, effectual in such cases, it restored them; and so those two estates continued to belong to Farley to the last.¹

Sometimes the Alien Priories obtained permission to break off all connection with their foreign superiors. This was called an act of naturalization, and such Alien Priory was then said to be made "denizen" or "native." In 1373 Lewes Priory was permitted to become thus independent, and, further, at the request of Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, the enfranchisement was extended to all the cells or houses subordinate to Lewes.² According to this statement, Farley ought to have been from that time free from the controul of the French house; free also from the danger of being confiscated on account of such connection. Yet some other excuses must have been ready for laying hands upon it, for, a few years afterwards, in 1397, we find some of its property in lay hands. Sir Thomas Hungerford, of Heytesbury, appears in that year as holding, for the monks, their manor of Monkton Farley, and certain lands at Bradford. His son, Sir Walter Hungerford, and William Lord Stourton, of Stourton, also had under their joint care the Priory itself. This appears from a petition (preserved in the Rolls of Parliament, 1409, 11 Henry IV.) by which Sir Walter prays the Commons that, whereas certain commissioners sent into Wilts had reported that he and Stourton had suffered the Priory of Farley to fall into dilapidation whilst it was in their care, he denies the accusation, and prays that the matter may be tried by a jury composed of men of position in life suitable to his own; which petition was granted. For what reason the Black Monks had been displaced is not stated. But it is certain that their property was restored to them; and they would probably be only too glad in those times to be allowed to recover them, without urging very

¹ It would seem as if upon restoration, the Crown claimed to consider itself a New Founder. For at the end of the Lewes Chartulary in the British Museum, [Vesp. F. xv. p. 318,] there is a long Deed dated Edw. IV., in which Farley Priory, unquestionably founded by Bohun in Hen. I., is nevertheless described as of the foundation of King Edw. III., for thirteen monks to sing daily service for the King's welfare: and that they once incurred forfeiture, for having maintained only ten brethren instead of thirteen for nine years.

² Horsfield's Hist. of Lewes, 1, 237.

closely the claim for dilapidations against Hungerford and Stourton.

Though emancipated from the jurisdiction of Clugni, Farley was still dependent upon Lewes Priory. Almost the latest act in its history is an attempt to shake off this dominion also. A process was commenced, but the result does not appear. A change was now impending, about to put an end to both establishments, and to consign mother and daughter to one common grave. The last Prior of Farley was Lodowick Millen, *alias* Brecknock. In his time the storm of dissolution fell, and Farley ceased to be a Priory.

The visitor employed in King Henry the Eighth's reign, by Thomas Lord Cromwell, to inspect and report upon the state of this house, was Richard Layton.¹ He came here in 1537, visiting on the same journey the neighbouring monasteries of Maiden Bradley, Glastonbury, and others. But his report contains no reflection on the discipline of Farley Priory. On reaching Bristol, at the end of his tour, he wrote a curious letter to Lord Cromwell, and sent up by the bearer, at the same time, a bag full of reliques, "in which" he says "ye shall see strange things. Amongst them, Mary Magdalene's girdle, wrapped and covered with white" (sent with great reverence from house to house upon certain interesting occasions), "which girdle Matilda, the Empress, one of the founders of Farley, gave unto them, as saith the Holy Father of Farley."

The Priory, with all its estates, equal in modern money to probably three or four thousand pounds a year, was granted to the Earl of Hertford, afterwards the Protector Somerset; a small payment of £36 a year being reserved to Eton College.

The estate in Farley parish appears to have been about 850 acres, of which 772 were under the plough; at South Wraxhall 212 more. This seems to have been their home-farm in hand, judging from an inventory of stock, goods, and chattels taken at the time. Valuations were also taken of their stock upon all their other estates, from which it seems that they farmed the whole of them on their own account. They had several bailiffs, and Sir Henry Long, of South Wraxhall, was their steward-in-chief.

¹ Hoare's History of Mere, p. 103.

AFTER THE DISSOLUTION.

About the year 1550 Farley was transferred, in an exchange by the Earl of Hertford, to the See of Salisbury, under which, from that time, it has been held by various owners. The first name that appears is that of Henry Breton, gentleman, of Monkton Farley, whose pedigree and arms are to be found in the Wilts Visitation of 1565. This family had been settled for a long time at Layer-Breton, in Essex, where (according to the pedigree alluded to), they were still living at the time of their removal hither. How long they remained here does not appear; probably not later than 1606. They had the right of presentation to the living. The next name of gentry connected with Farley (whether as owners or only occupiers is uncertain), is that of Tropenell, of the neighbouring parish of Chalfield, a well-known name in old Wiltshire family history. But the only authority for placing them here, at present forthcoming, is a brass plate in the church of Great Durnford,¹ which mentions Mary, wife of John Young,² Esq., of that place, one of the four daughters and coheirs of Thomas Tropenell of Monkton Farley. The way in which this family ended in heiresses was remarkable. The only son, on coming to man's estate, met with an unlucky accident. He had put a pair of dog couples over his head, and, leaping over a hedge, a loop in the strap hanging at his back caught a bough, and kept him from the ground till he was strangled. These minutiae of old owners, or residents here, may not be very interesting; but the motive for preciseness in date and person about this period has been to ascertain, if possible, under what circumstances, and under whose roof, a very eminent prelate was staying when he ended his days here—John Jewell, Bishop of Salisbury. The property at Farley had, at this time, belonged to the see for about twenty years; but the family of Breton were then owners under the see, and it is, therefore, likely that the Bishop was on a visit to them.

¹ Hoare's "Amesbury," page 123.

² Probably of a Monkton Farley family, two of this name appearing amongst the jury who, many years before, had valued the effects of the monks at the dissolution.

On this champion of the Reformation thus connected with the present subject a few words must be bestowed. Bishop Jewell was of a Devonshire family, a very learned and accomplished Oxford scholar, and one of the refugees at Zurich during the reign of Queen Mary. Soon after his return he was appointed Bishop of this diocese, and held the see about twelve years. He was lame (from an accident), of a thin and spare body, and had a wonderful memory, which he greatly assisted by artificial contrivances of his own invention. His friends would try him by giving him thirty or forty strange words in Welsh or Irish. These he would read over once or twice, and then repeat them backwards or forwards in the order in which they were written. A further auxiliary (more common in those days than now), was the system of common-place books, filled with notes and references for argument and illustration of various subjects. These, by the use of his *memoria technica*, he could summon to his aid in a moment, as his opponents in theological controversy found to their cost, when crushed under a mass of learned authorities. If he had to preach he had only to read a sermon over while the bell was ringing, and he could carry it all in his head. His life was most laborious. The day's work began at four in the morning, and seldom finished before twelve at night. With such continual work, added to the labour of travelling and preaching about his diocese, it is not surprising that his life was shortened. He had engaged to preach at Lacock on Sunday, 16th September, 1571, and on his way thither met a gentleman, who, observing him by his looks to be very ill, advised him to go back, telling him that it was better the people should lose one sermon than the preacher altogether. He would not be dissuaded, but went on and finished his task with much difficulty. On the Saturday following he died here, and was removed for burial to Salisbury Cathedral.

By Order of the Long Parliament for Confiscation of Episcopal Estates, Farley was sold, in February, 1648, for £2439 11s. 6d., to William and Nathaniel Brooke and Francis Bridges.¹ It was in due time restored to the Bishop. The next owners under him

¹ Coll., Top., and Gen., 1,—126.

were the family of Webb, clothiers at Melksham, in 1650. In 1677 a Daniel Webb, of that town, married one of the Selfes, a family of Beanacre near Melksham; and, from certain private documents, it is to be inferred that the Daniel Webb who appears as sheriff of Wilts in 1711, was of Monkton Farley.

A fragment of an old manuscript diary of 1721, lately lent to me, happens to contain a few references to this place. The writer was a Mr. Thomas Smith, of Shaw House, near Melksham, a gentleman of property. The journal chiefly records how, in the year 1721, the families in the neighbourhood ate, drank, and were merry; that Mr. Webb, of Monkton Farley, shared in those convivialities, and that, being in want of a little money, he borrowed it from his friend Mr. Smith of Shaw House, and mortgaged this estate to him. With the money so borrowed, certain improvements in the house and grounds were made. Many rare trees and plants are mentioned as being brought from Woolhampton, near Newbury. Mr. Webb appears to have had no son. He had a spendthrift nephew. The journalist reports that, being in London on some business, "he was called up early one morning, about two o'clock, and, at his coming downstairs, he found Mr. Webb, nephew to him of Farley, in an extreme necessitous condition, having spent his whole substance, and perfectly in want of the necessaries of life, though not above twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age; a great example of a base profligate temper. He came in a begging manner, but I could have little time with him, the coach being ready." On returning to Wiltshire, he goes over to Farley to speak with the uncle upon the subject.

Under June 22nd, 1721, is the following entry:—"I went to Mr. Webb, of Farley, the report being that his house had been searched for arms. At my coming there, I found one Mr. Gibbs, that is Mayor of Westbury, and a farmer that had taken part of Mr. Webb's estate; and Mr. Webb told me that the day before, Mr. Duckett (of Hartham), a Colonel of Militia, had been there with a warrant to search, signed by himself, Mr. Montague (of Lackham), and Mr. Long (of Rowdon), three Justices and Deputy-Lieutenants. Mr. Duckett had come in a very civil manner, and so behaved himself

whilst there. The ground of the matter was, that one John Taylor, a woolcomber, of Melksham, made oath before Mr. Montague, that he heard another person, viz., one Ealy, that is a clothworker also at Melksham, say that he saw arms enough for five hundred men in Mr. Webb's house. We had some talk with pleasure of the matter. It is to be noted that the Government has had some notice of plots and conspiracies now on foot, and so has ordered all the forces to encamp in several places, as in Hyde Park, by Salisbury, Hounslow Heath, near Hungerford, and in our neighbourhood by Chippenham, in several small encampments. The Duke of Norfolk has been seized, and Habeas Corpus suspended." This was one of the alarms to which George I. was periodically subject from the favourers of the Pretender; so that the search for arms at Monkton Farley may fairly be taken to indicate that the politics of Mr. Webb's family were Jacobite.¹

Monkton Farley now returned into the same family to whom it had been first granted after the dissolution of monasteries. Mary, sole daughter and heiress of Mr. Daniel Webb (being also niece and heir to Edward Somner, of Seend) married, in 1717, Sir Edward Seymour, of Maiden Bradley, who, in 1749, succeeded to the title of Duke of Somerset, and died in 1757.

The second son of the marriage was Webb Seymour, Esq. (afterwards Lord Webb Seymour), on whom this property was settled, and who resided here in 1744. He succeeded to the title as 10th Duke of Somerset in 1792, and died in December, 1793; being grandfather of the present Duke.

Monkton Farley was next purchased by John Long, Esq., of the Rood Ashton family, uncle to the present member for North Wilts. About the year 1840 it was again sold, and became the property of the late Mr. Wade Browne.

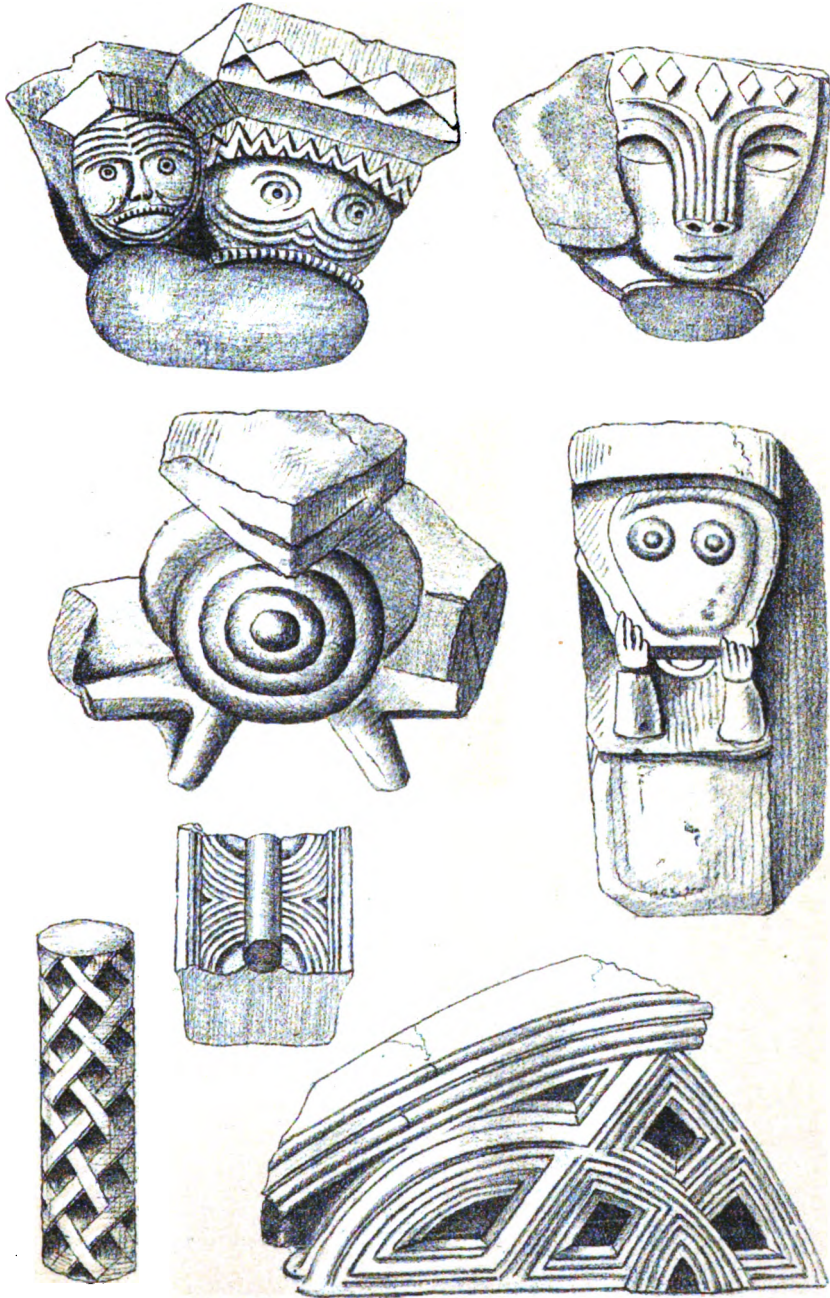
REMAINS OF THE PRIORY.

Of the buildings of the Priory very little is left, and of the Conventual Church nothing but the site. In its original condition, having been completed about the middle of the 12th century, the

¹ The name of Mr. Daniel Webb is on one of the bells of Monkton Farley Church.

Monkton Farley Priory, Co. Wilts.

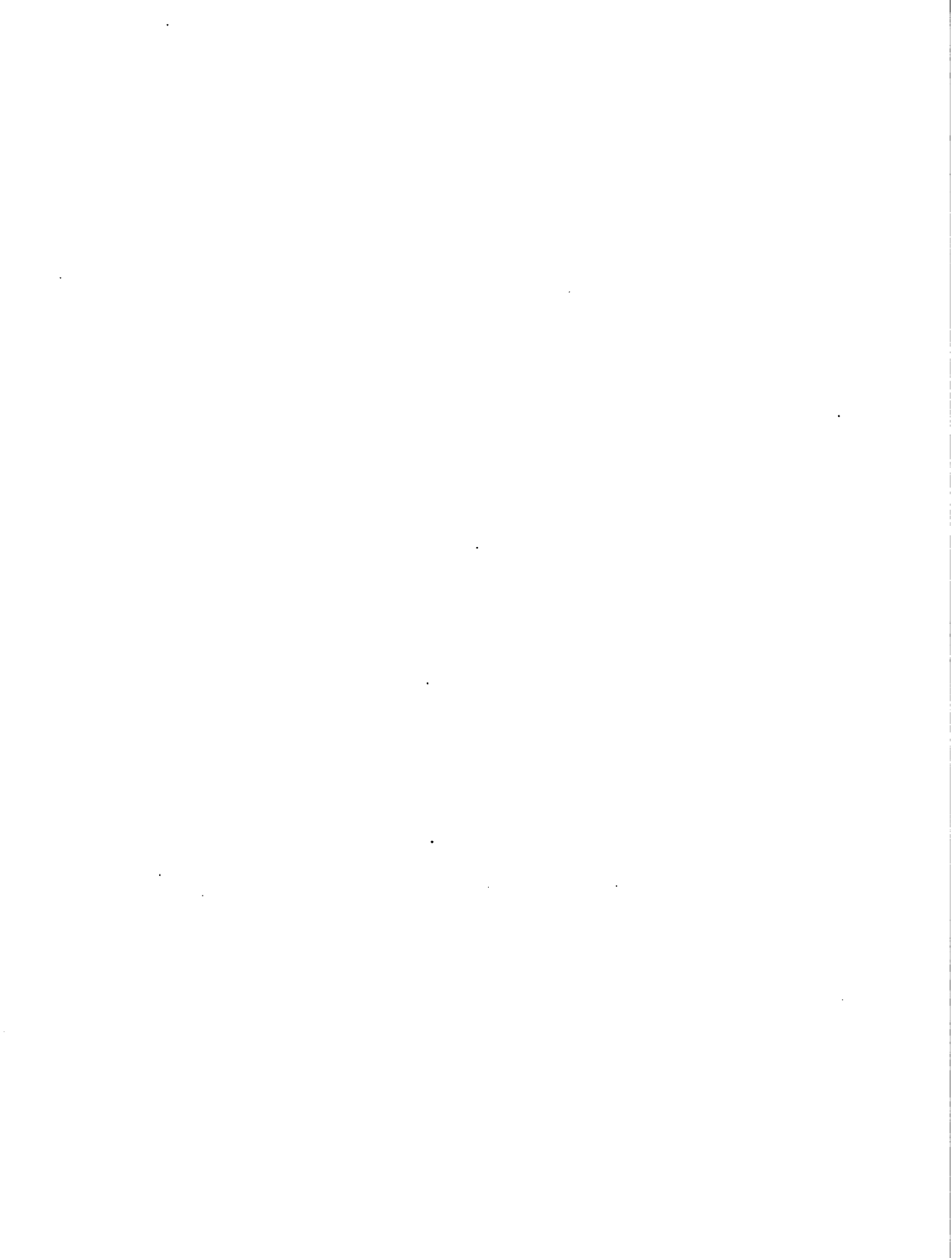
Wilts. Arch. Mag. 1858.



W. W. Whistley, del.

Architectural Fragments, discovered 1841.

Edw. Kite, lith.



architectural style would probably be partly Norman, partly Early English; and with this transitional character the few fragments that have been found perfectly correspond. In a small building at the back of the house (now used as a carpenter's workshop), are two very good lancet windows, with bold mouldings. The cellars under the house are believed to have been part of the original Priory, but the house itself has undergone so many changes, that it is difficult to recognize anything thoroughly ecclesiastical.

There is no account of what took place when the Clugniac monks were finally dismissed. The church fell, or was taken down. The ground on which it stood (now forming the bank on the north side of the lawn), being covered with heaps of rubbish, and overgrown with grass, became a rabbit warren; and some curiosity was excited by the partial disinterment of its foundations and floor in the year 1744. A description of this discovery, but containing some errors, was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year, on which Dr. Ducarel (of the London Society of Antiquaries), requested a friend, Dr. Wm. Evetts (a physician then living at Chippenham), to visit Monkton Farley, and send him a correct account. Dr. Evetts's letters are printed in *Nichols's Literary History*.¹ From these it appears that some of Mr. Webb Seymour's labourers being employed in levelling the rabbit warren, came first upon the pillar of a church, and about four feet under the rubbish, to the floor of the chancel, of chequered tiles, chiefly red, some with "flying griffins," and other emblems. Four gravestones were found, one having the figure of a monk kneeling, the name "Lawrence," and a legend, in old French, "Ici gist, &c.," "Whoever shall pray for him shall have so many days of pardon." This was a common one about 1360; and as a Prior Lawrence Archenbaud was here about that period, it was probably his monument. On the other three stones, which were grooved round the edges, the inscription was obliterated. The grooves being an inch or more in breadth, had probably been the sockets of strips of brass, on which the inscription had been written.

¹ iii., 586.

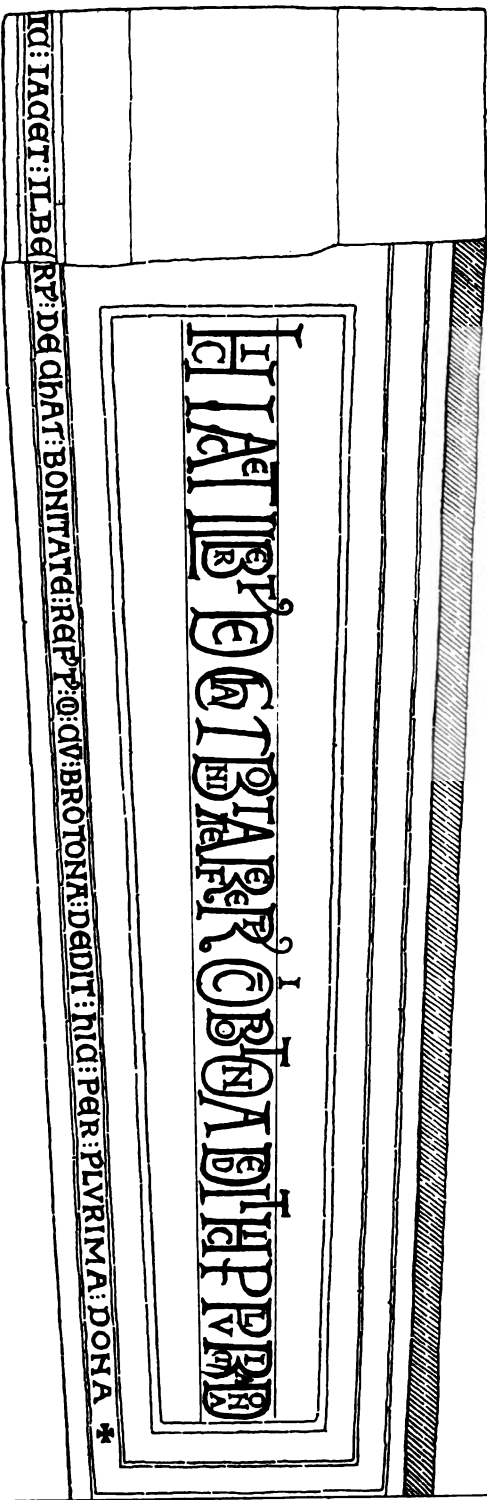
The chancel floor was about 24 feet square, lying east and west. At about two-thirds of it eastwards were steps. Here a sepulchre was opened, containing the skeleton of a stout man, upwards of six feet high. On a gravestone his bust, in bas relief, and at his feet a lion. This, of course, was pronounced to be the founder; but the principal founder, Humphrey Bohun III., was, with all after him, buried (as has been stated,) at Lanthony Priory. North-west of the altar, and some yards off, was found another floor, as of a small side chapel, rather deeper in the ground. It contained a basin for holy water, and its walls were perfect about a yard high all round it; in one part as high as the sill of a window. South of the altar, about four feet under the rubbish, was found another floor of tiles, about ten feet square, but no remains. On this side, also, apparently beyond the church, were signs of a burial ground, with a large yew tree; several stone pillars were discovered, having figures carved upon them perfect and fresh. Some of these are known to be still buried.

At various times, in 1720, and even now, stone coffins have been dug up at a considerable distance from the Priory in various directions. One of these was suited to the size of a child, and is still preserved.

The most curious monument, found in 1744 (given away by Lord Webb Seymour, and now preserved at Lacock,) is that of Ilbert de Chat, already mentioned as one of the chief benefactors to Farley Priory. Ilbert de Chat (so called from a place of that name on the coast of Normandy, near Carentan, half way between Cherbourg and Caen) was a landholder, under the Bohuns, in Normandy as well as in England.¹ His estates seems to have passed to sisters or

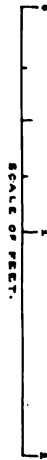
¹ St. George's and St. André de Bohon are parishes in the Canton of Carentan. The following document from the Cartulary of the neighbouring Abbey of Montbourg was communicated by Mr. Stapleton to Mr. J. G. Nichols (*Hist. of Lacock*, 373.) "Be it known, &c., that I, Ilbert de Caz, give and grant, &c., to the Abbey of St. Mary, of Montburg, the Church of Caz, &c., for the health of my soul, &c.; with leave of my Lord Humphrey de Bohun, and my nephews, William de Greinville, and Bartholomew le Bigot, &c., Signed, Ilbert \bowtie , Humphrey de Bohun, Bartholomew le Bigot, and others." Greinville and Bigot succeeded to the inheritance of Ilbert de Caz, in Normandy, and probably also in Wiltshire, as the name of Adam de Greinville is found at Southwick, near Trowbridge, c.

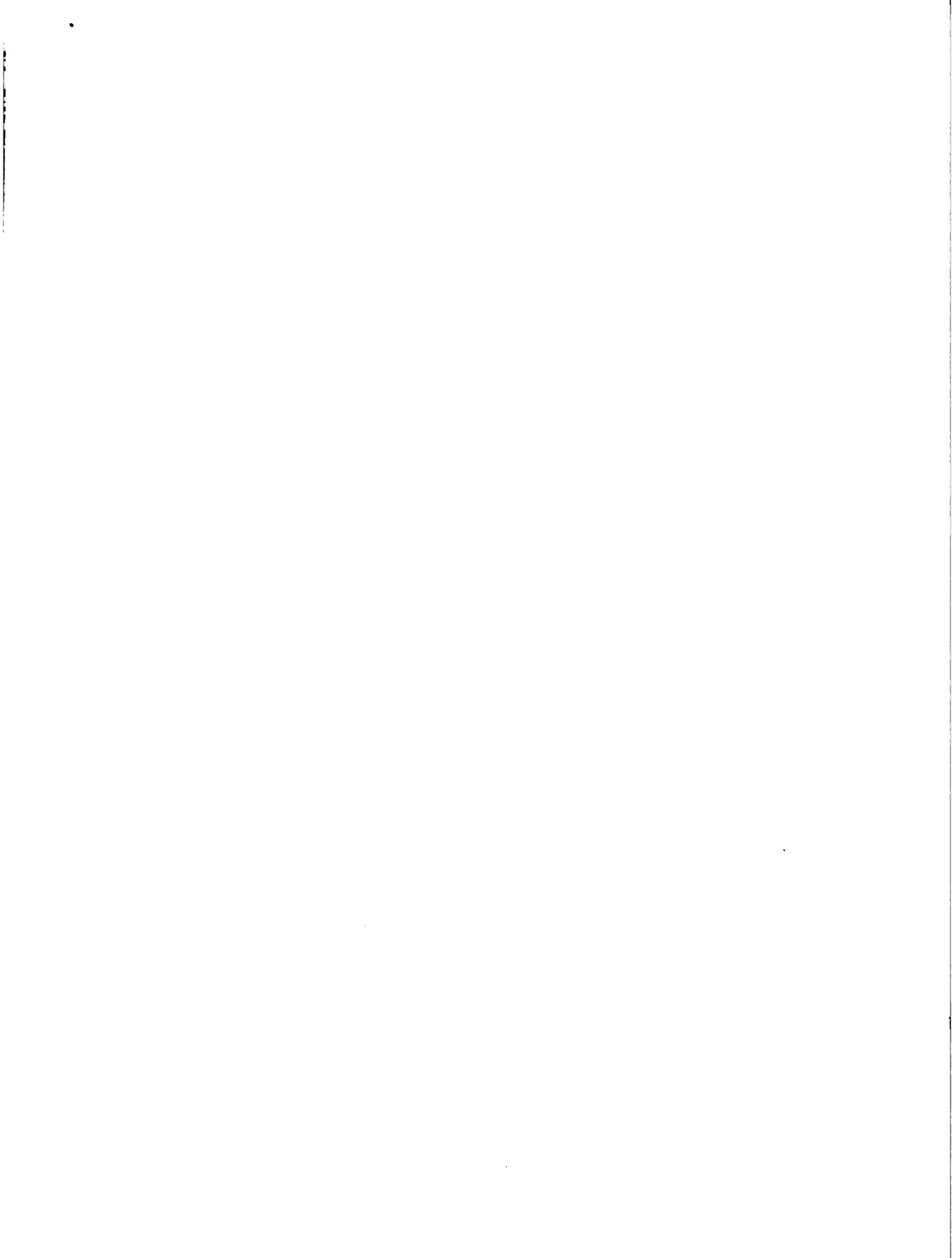
CRAVESTONE OF ILBERT DE CHAT, c. A. D. 1187.
FOUND AT MONKTON FARLEY PRIORY, 1744; AND NOW AT LACOCK ABBEY, WILTS:



INSCRIPTION:

"HIC IACET ILBERTUS DE CHAT, BONITATE REFERTUS, QUI CUM BROTONA DEDIT HIC PERPLURIMA DONA."
[HERE LIETH ILBERT DE CHAT WHO OF HIS EXCEEDING BOUNTY BESTOWED ON THIS PRIORY, BROUGHTON AND MANY OTHER GIFTS.]





daughters married to Greinville and Bigot. The original inscription on his altar-shaped tomb is written in large capital letters, the first six inches, the last three and a half inches in height (the inscription evidently tapering to a narrower end like the stone itself), in a very involved and enigmatical fashion used by the later Romans; a specimen of which Leland saw on a Roman tablet inserted in the walls of Bath.¹ The larger letters are made to contain the smaller ones. The present inscription would have been almost as unintelligible to the ordinary archæologist as the cuneiform writing of Nineveh, had not the monks themselves provided the explanation by repeating it in characters somewhat later, round the margin. The words are:—

“Hic jacet Ilbertus de Chat bonitate refertus,
Qui cum Brotona dedit hic perplurima dona.”

“Here lieth Ilbert de Chat, who, of his exceeding bounty, bestowed on this house, Broughton and very many other gifts.”

The age of this monument is certain, as Ilbert is witness to one of the charters of Farley Priory about A.D. 1187. The monument has been repaired, and is taken care of at Lacock; but it ought to be here. It was found northwest of the chancel, and, from the way in which the marginal inscription is cut, evidently stood against the church wall; perhaps was built into the wall under an arch. When found, it looked “like a seat” in the north angle.

These were the results of excavations in 1744. In 1841, during some further alteration of the ground by the late Mr. Wade Browne, a large slab, once the covering of a stone coffin, was found. On it is the effigy of a cross-legged knight, in chain armour, sculptured in low relief. On the shield, which lies, not by his side, but over the whole body, occupying the full width of the stone, are the arms of Dunstanville: *Fretty on a canton a lion passant; surmounted by a label* (the mark of an elder son). The Dunstanvilles were, in the 12th century when this Priory was founded, Lords of the large

1297, and Barth: Bigot was a donor to Farley Priory of a mill at Box. An Ismena de Chauz held land at Easton, Co. Wilts, Edward I. (Test. de Nev.) and a Robert de Chauz witnesses a deed of Lenton Priory, Co. Notts, (see Dugdale). For several examples of the peculiar style of inscription on Ilbert's Tomb, see note to Nichols's Hist. of Lacock, p. 353.

¹ Leland Itin. 11, 67.

Barony of Castle Combe, where some of them resided and were buried. They are not mentioned by name as benefactors to this Priory, but they were so to that of Lewes, to which this was subordinate. They were landlords in chief of Comerwell, close to this place, which, in 1547,¹ the Prior of Farley held under the Barony of Castle Combe. As they were supporters, like the Bohuns, of the Empress Maud, it is not unlikely that they may have been contributors to the establishment of the monks here. Mr. Poulett Scrope considers this effigy to represent some young man of the Dunstanville family, who died in his father's lifetime, and of whom, consequently, there is no record remaining.² There are also fragments of a second figure in chain armour, beautifully sculptured, and once coloured, but there are no arms, or other token by which it may be identified. Another stone has an incised cross very perfect.

No conventual seal of this Priory has been met with; nor is even any impression of it attached to any document known to exist. But a small round silver seal (now in Mrs. Wade Browne's possession) was found in 1841 on the spot, bearing a well-engraved head and legend of St. Mary Magdalene, to whom the House was dedicated. It was probably a private one of the Prior; but is not large enough for the more important instrument generally used in the name of Prior and Convent.³

The spring which supplied the Convent is sheltered by a little stone building, with very pointed stone roof, called "The Monk's Conduit," about a quarter of a mile north-west of the house. It resembles one on Bowden Hill, built with the like purpose for Lacock Abbey.

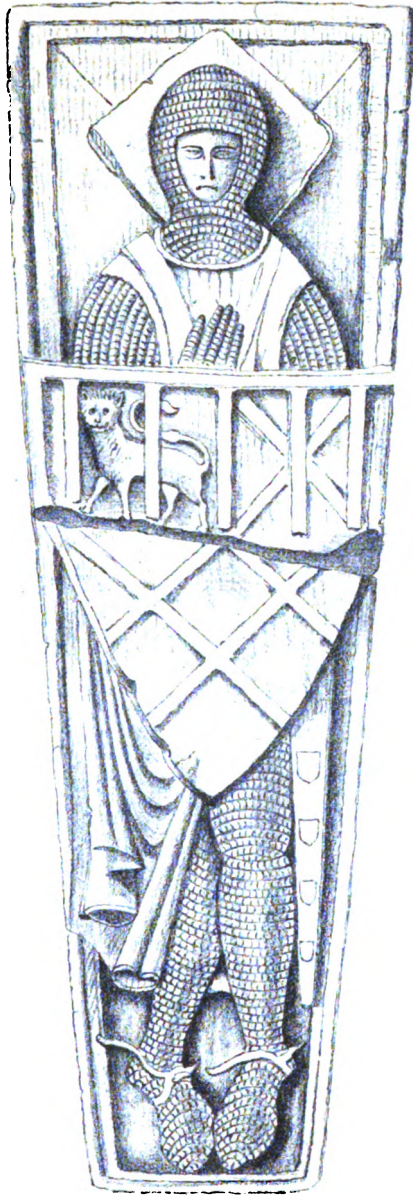
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¹ History of Castle Combe, p. 317. ² Ditto p. 39.

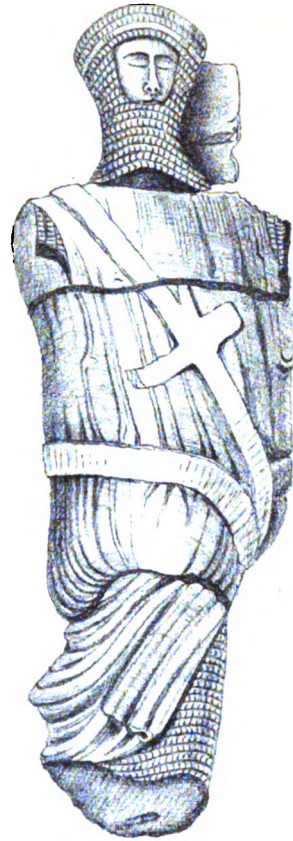
³ See Wilts Magazine, vol. ii., p. 387., fig. 2.

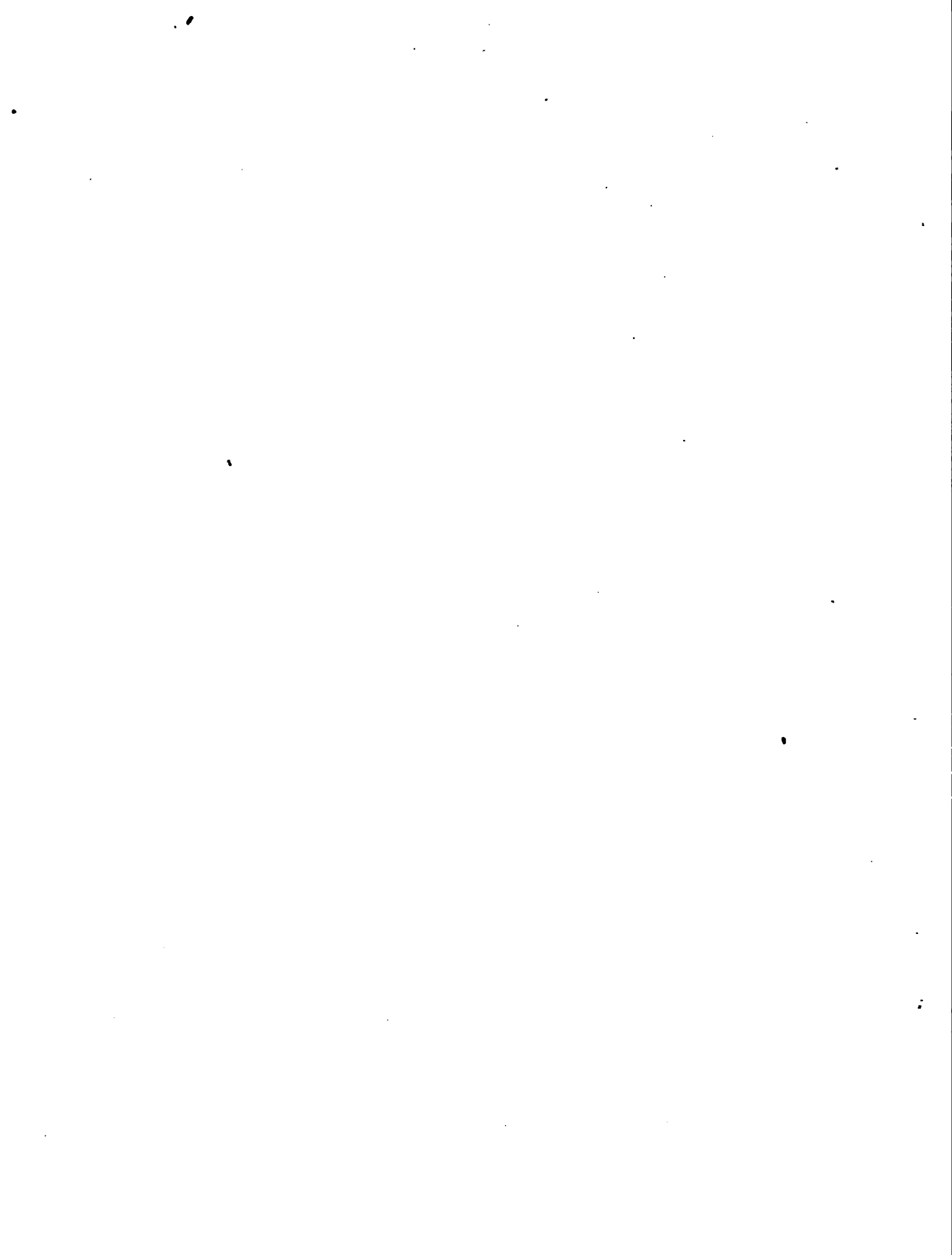
Monkton Farley Priory, Co. Wilts.

Wilts. Arch. Mag. 1858.

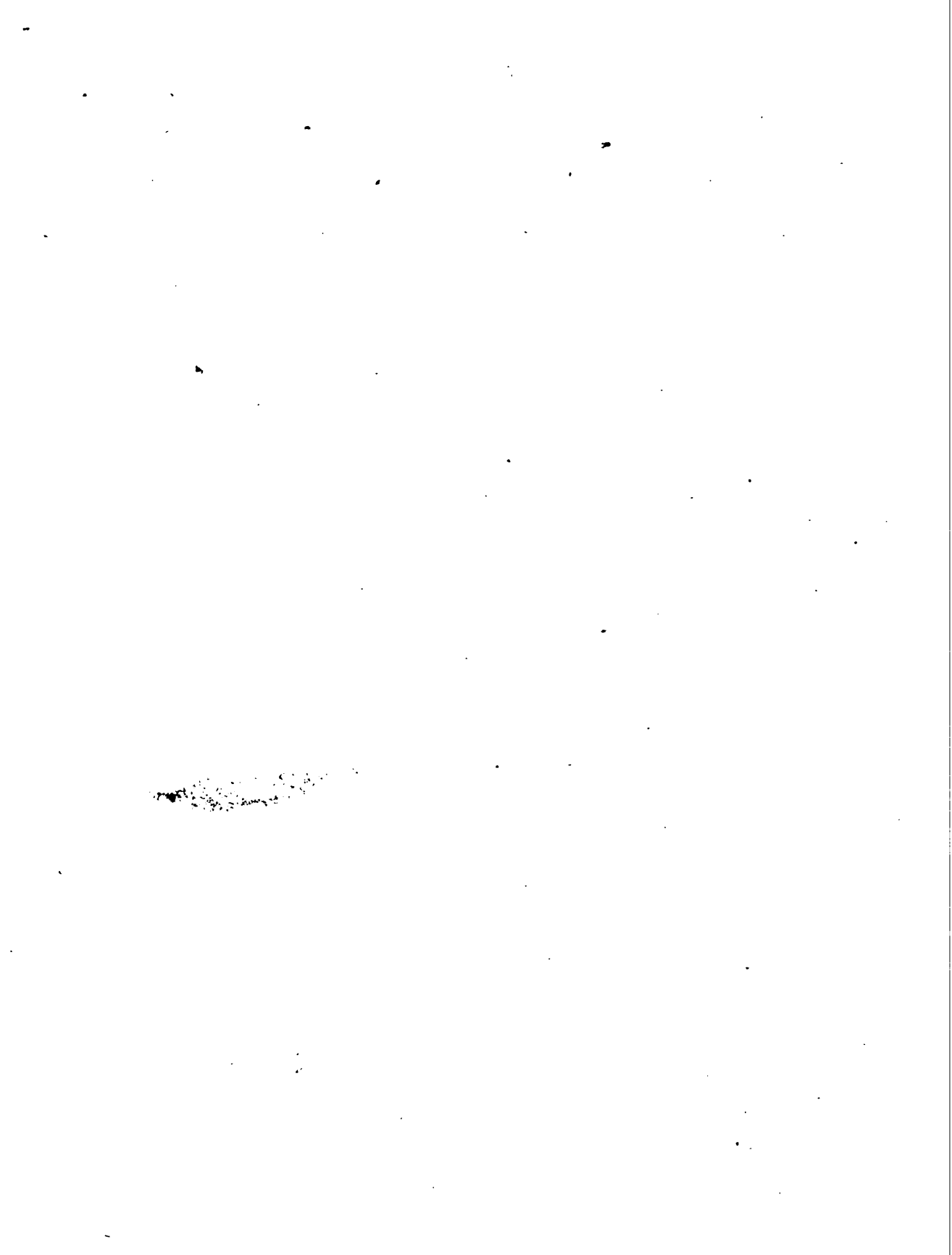


... de Dunstanville.

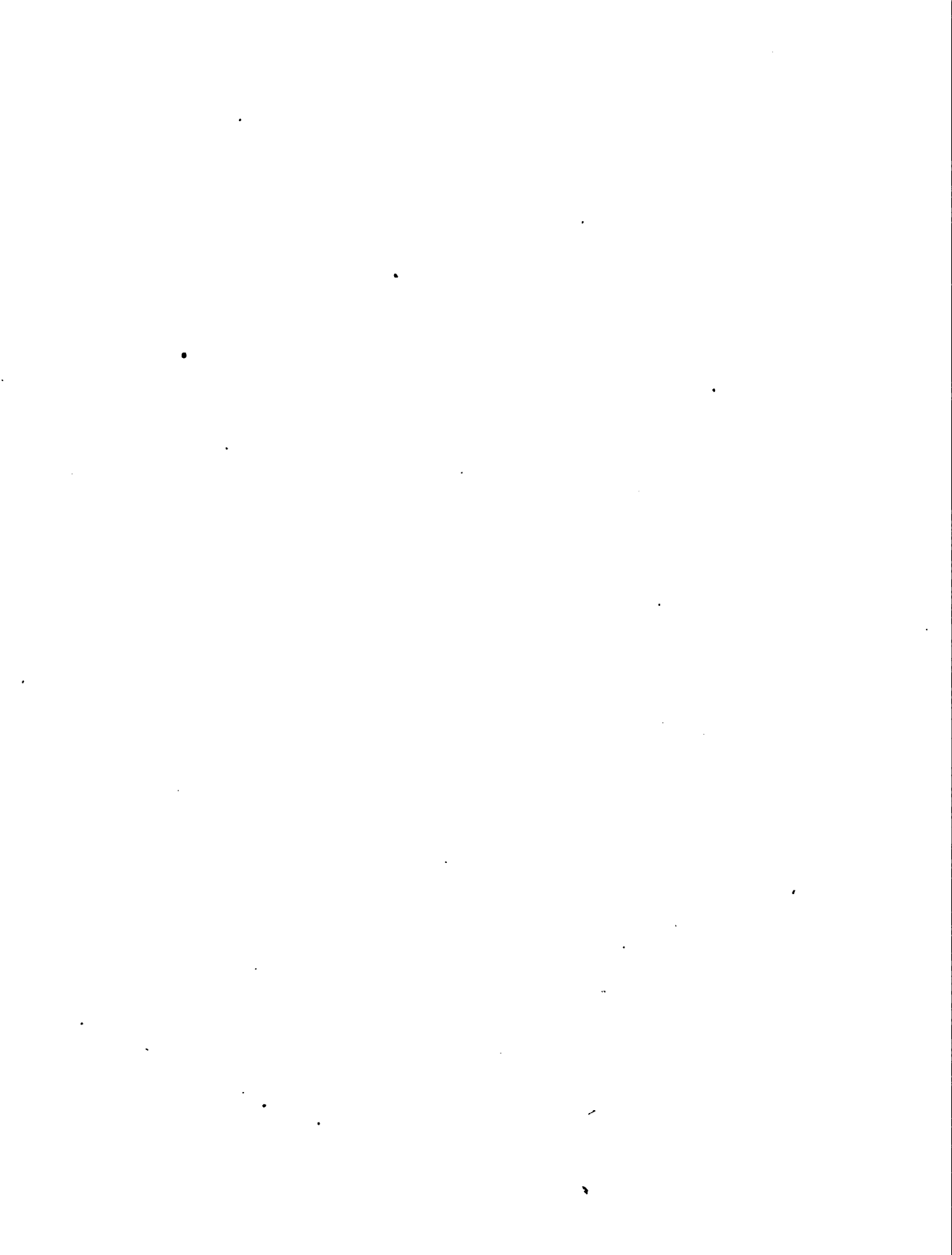


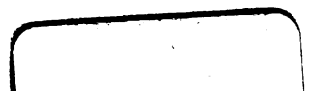












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