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## EXCURSIONS, 1907.

## TWENTY-FIFTH EXCURSION, June 20th, 1907.

On this excursion the first visit was paid to PONSBOURNE and the site of NEWGATE STREET MANOR HOUSE. Mr. J.W. Carlile furnished an account of both houses. (A pamphlet by Mr. Carlile on the subject was issued last year bound up with our *Transactions*, so that we need add nothing further here.)

The party then drove to LITTLE BERKHAMSTEAD, and, by kind permission of the owner, Colonel Stratton, visited STRATTON'S TOWER, commonly called the Monument, from the top of which there is a fine view. Mr. C. E. Johnston read the following notes on the building:-

"The tower, which forms so conspicuous a landmark at Little Berkhamstead, is a massive circular construction of red brick about 100 feet in height. It was built in 1789 as an observatory by John Stratton, Esq., of The Gage (or Gages Place), the grandfather of the present owner, and stands on the site of a house which was pulled down by Mr. Stratton, and some of the material of which was used for the foundations of the tower. There was formerly a telescope at the top of the tower, but, owing to the damage done by sightseers (the lenses of the telescope were actually stolen) it was removed and the tower was closed. The statement made in Cussans' 'History of Hertfordshire' that the tower was never finished and that the ground floor was used as a cow-stable, is quite incorrect. It is not known what the house was called which formerly stood where the tower now is, but it is conjectured that it may have been occupied at one time by Maurice Hunt, who by will dated 1730 left £600 for the benefit of the poor of Little Berkhamstead, as it is known that he lived in a house belonging to a former owner of The Gage. On a clear day five counties can be seen into, viz, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, and Middlesex."

After this, lunch was partaken of in the garden at the Old Rectory, by permission of Mr. C.E. Johnston, and then a move was made to LITTLE BERKHAMSTEAD CHURCH, which contains little of archaeological interest. The present building is said to date from the time of James I, but the thickness of the walls leads one to suppose that they belong to an earlier period. Amongst the things worthy of note are a pre-Reformation bell, inscribed "Ave Maria gracia plena Dominus tecum benedicta tu in mulieribus"; and a memorial on the floor in the south of the sanctuary to Cromwell Fleetwood, the Protector's grandson, and his wife Elizabeth.

Mr Swinfen Harris, F.R.I.B.A., of Stony Stratford, the architect at the restoration in 1895, made a few remarks on the church. When, he said, he was first invited to look at it, the impression

he took away was that he could not possibly spoil what he found--there was nothing ancient, historical, or beautiful at stake. The total cost of the work carried out was £1145 17s. 7d. The altar was given by the local clergy as a memorial to Bishop Ken, and bore the inscription "In mem." ; below which was a mitre, and below this was the letter K. The mensa on the altar was made of oak at least four hundred years old before they dealt with it. It had been discovered that the new piscina was almost a replica of the ancient piscina found in one of the walls, broken in pieces, and so what had been entirely lost had been unwittingly reproduced. The church was reopened by Bishop Festing, and the late Lord Salisbury was present. Lord Salisbury remarked to him: "I cannot understand how it is you have made the church look so much larger than it used to be without adding anything to it." He explained that though he had added nothing to the fabric he had taken a great deal out of it. When he first inspected the church the gangway was about half what it is now, and the pews were very high; so if the cubic space were calculated, it would be seen that the building was made to appear larger. An ancient church no doubt existed within these thick walls. The Kentish Rag treatment is entirely modern work; he did not think that if the church had had to be built today such a vital departure from its ancient condition would have been indulged in.

The Rector, the Rev. G. Gibson, then read some notes on Bishop Ken, who is said to have been born at Little Berkhamstead in July, 1637. [The parish registers prior to 1647 are missing, and it has hitherto been supposed that they might have contained an entry of the Bishop's baptism; but there are transcripts for 1637 amongst the old Archdeaconry records at Hitchin, and they contain no entry of his baptism.--ED.]

ESSENDON CHURCH was next visited, and an account of it by Mr. H. R. Wilton Hall (see p. 233) was read. The party then drove to BAYFORD CHURCH, where Mr. H. T. Pollard read a paper (see p. 261) on the three churches that have existed there.

It had been intended after this to visit ROXFORD and the moated site of the former Elizabethan manor house by the River Lee; time, however, would not allow of this, but we give an interesting extract from the paper which Mr. W.F. Andrews had prepared for the occasion--

"An old map of the Manor is in the possession of Mr. Henry Clinton Baker, of Bayfordbury; it is about 25 inches long and 10½ inches broad, and is drawn to a scale of about 4½ chains to an inch. It is entitled 'This is a True Copy of

a Draught of the Manor of Roxford in the County of Hartford. Surveyed in the year 1605. By Thomas Pegram. And copied in the year 1698 By Abraham Walter of East Malling in the County of Kent.'

"The most interesting feature shown by the plan of 1605 is the moat within which formerly stood the old Manor House. A small elevation of the house is drawn upon the plan, which shows that the building faced the south-west. It was a large house with three stories covered with a span roof, and had four gables in front with a window in each, also another window without a gable. On the first floor were five windows, and on the ground floor there was a doorway nearly in the centre with porch, and apparently large bay windows on either side. The delineation upon the plan is rather indistinct, and the drawing may simply only give a general view of the front of the building, and show its position upon the ground. The area of the ground enclosed by the moat is given as 2 acres 3 roods and 4 poles. The width of the moat is from 16 to 20 feet and from 6 to 8 feet in depth, and it is now filled with a prolific crop of watercresses. A brick-built bridge of three arches is still the only means of access, and a few portions of brick walls at the sides of the moat are the only remains of former buildings. The form of the moat was nearly square, and towards the lower end its original position can be traced some distance from the river, the course of which seems to have been altered. The site of the old house cannot be now defined, but no doubt the garden and grounds extended some distance around. There are no trees within the area of the moat, but in the adjoining garden may be seen an enormous walnut-tree with large spreading branches.

"The old Manor House, according to this map, was pleasantly placed near the bank of the river, safely protected on three sides by the moat and in front by the river, but we do not know the size of the building or the extent of its accommodation. It evidently was a commodious structure, and a suitable dwelling for the lords of the manor and their families, who occupied it for many generations until the hand of time rendered it undesirable for a residence.

"The old Manor House was probably pulled down about the year 1760, when the mansion of Bayfordbury was erected, and it is not shown in the large map of Andrews and Dury published in 1766. It is said that it was proposed to rebuild it upon or near the original site, but it was not considered to be a suitable position. It was then decided to build upon the opposite hill overlooking the river, where it now stands, and is known as Bayfordbury.

"The present farmhouse was built some time during the past century, and possesses no features of interest. It appears to stand upon the site of a large barn or other such building shown upon the map."

The excursion concluded with a visit to BAYFORDBURY, where tea was kindly provided by Mrs. Clinton Baker and Mr. H. W. Clinton Baker. The Rev. J. J. Baker, of Little Hallingbury, Essex, gave an interesting account of the house and its treasures (see p. 264). The royal command to Mr. William Baker to raise a body of men for the defence of London during the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 was shown, and the famous Kitcat pictures, of course, attracted much attention. On the motion of the Mayor of Hertford a hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mrs. Clinton Baker and Mr. H. W. Clinton Baker for their kind hospitality.