

---

Note on a Monumental Slab in the Church of S. Mary,  
Baldock.

BY THE REV. H. FOWLER.

A marble slab lying in front of the Chancel arch is of considerable interest, as bearing upon the date of a portion at least of the Church. It has, in the centre, the indent for a brass cross *fleury*: at the head the cavities for two shields. Round the margin are the matrices of the Lombardic or Gothic letters of an Early French inscription, which is still legible, with the exception of two words. I have completed my copy (which I made on a visit to the church last year) from Clutterbuck's description.

The legend, which is in rhyme, is as follows:—

Reynand de Argenthem ci gist.  
Si ceste chapele fe(re) fist.  
Fu chyvaler Saynt Marie  
Checun prodom par s'alme prie.

(TRANSLATION).

Reginald de Argentem lies here,  
 Who caused this chapel to be made.  
 He was a Knight of S. Mary,  
 Let every good man pray for his soul.

Weever gives the interpretation "Knight of S. Mary," which is doubtless correct. The expression probably implies that he was a Knight Templar, for the Templars adopted the Rule of the Cistercians, whose patron Saint was the Blessed Virgin; and the Templars' Churches were dedicated to S. Mary.

This Templar then, built a chapel here. The question is, can we identify this Knight, and find a date. Clutterbuck gives a complete pedigree of this family. It appears that there were three Reginalds de Argentine. The earliest held lands at Ickleford, in the reign of Henry I. A second was Governor of Hertford Castle, in the time of King John. These are too early to be commemorated by this monument. A third Renaud de Argentheim was Lord of the Manor of Great Wymondley (about four miles from Baldock), which he held by the tenure of *Grand Sergeantry*. His duty was to serve the King on the day of his Coronation with a silver cup. He married Lora de Vere (daughter of Hugh de Vere, fourth Earl of Oxford), in 1265; was summoned to Parliament by King Edward I., in 1296, and died in the first year of Edward II. I believe this date, 1307, suits the character of this monument. We thus get an approximate date for the "Chapel" which this knight erected—as he died at the age of 75, this might be assigned to the middle of Edward I.'s reign, about the period when the Nave of the Church was re-built, according to the account which we have heard from Canon Davys. It is an interesting question whether this slab is in its original position, or has been removed from another site. If it has not been disturbed, I would venture to suggest that Reginald de Argentine was the benefactor at whose cost the Church was re-built. Although the structure was, without doubt, the Parish Church of the town (*burgum*), of Baldock, of which the Templars were the patrons, it might have been termed 'a *Chapel* of the Templars.' If the slab has been removed, it may have been brought from the Chapel of the Leper's Hospital, which would have been attached to the Hospital, and a structure quite distinct from the Parish

Church. The inscription would then import, that this knight was the founder or re-builder of the Lepers' Chapel. The Chapels on the north and south of the Chancel appear to be of a later date. The former conjecture seems the more probable—that we have here the tomb of the re-builder of this Church.

The Argentines were a Norman family, and came over with William the Conqueror; they were Cup-bearers to the kings till Henry VI.'s reign. Their armorial bearings were — *gules, 3 covered cups Argent.* The manor of Argenteim was in the Parish of Melbourne, Cambs. A member of the family was founder of the Hospital of S.S. John and James, at Royston, 1276.