

Minutes of General Meeting, held at King's Walden,  
AUGUST 2ND, 1888.

Present—G. Upton Robins, Esq., in the chair, the Rev. Canon Davys and Rev. H. Fowler, Hon. Secretaries, the Rev. J. Griffith, LL.D., Mr. S. Flint Clarkson, and others.

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed.

On the motion of the Rev. Dr. Griffith, the Officers of the Society were re-elected.

The following were elected Ordinary Members :—Miss Ormerod, S. Albans, and Mrs. Rind, S. Albans, proposed by the Rev. H. Fowler. The Rev. D. W. Barrett, Barnet Rectory, the Rev. Edward J. Edwards, Hatfield, and F. W. Kinneir Tarte, Esq., Architect, S. Albans, proposed by the Rev. Dr. Griffith. The Rev. Lionel Stevens, Kimpton Vicarage, F. Trevor Davys, Esq., Wheathampstead, and W. P. Boileau, Esq., Wheathampstead, proposed by the Rev. Canon Davys.

G. UPTON ROBINS,

Aug. 1st, 1889.

Chairman.

---

Wheathampstead.

*Notes on some recent discoveries in the Church, also on the history of the Brocket Family in connection with the South Transept, and their ancient Seat at Wheathampstead Place.*

BY THE REV. CANON DAVYS, M.A.

In welcoming once more, as it has been my privilege on some previous occasions to do, the members of the St. Albans Architectural and Archæological Society to the ancient parish of Wheathampstead, it has occurred to me that I shall best economise the half-hour at their disposal here if I put upon paper the few notes which will best enable me to tell of and to show the most of our archæological treasures in the shortest time. The remarkably interesting church in which we are now assembled has been so often visited and described that I should hardly have invited you to spend time in it to-day, except that I wish to call especial attention to a particular monument, which has much to do with the history of one of the most remarkable of the ancient domestic buildings of the parish, to which I shall very

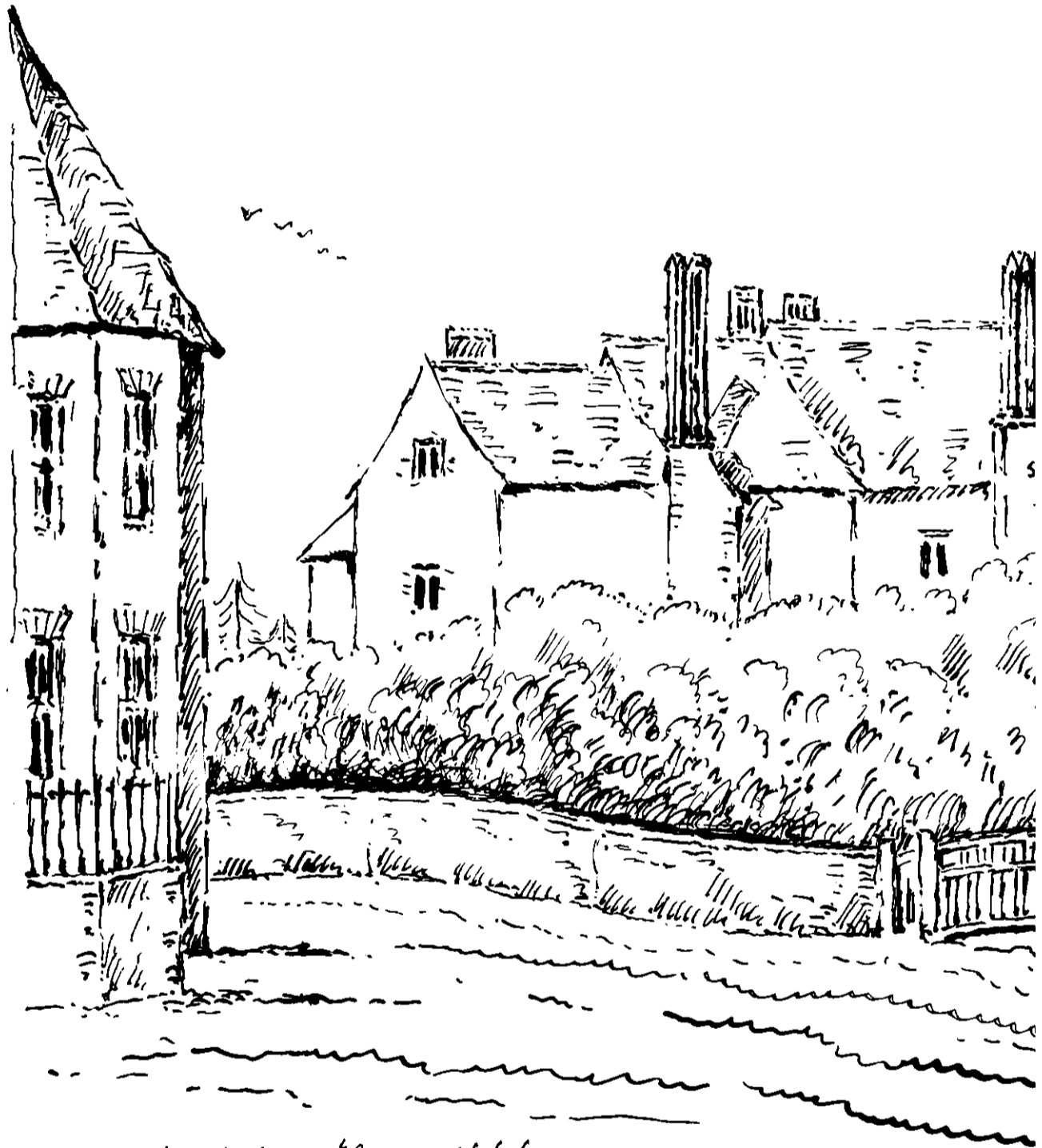
shortly conduct you. But before we look at the monument of the first Sir John Brocket I should like to avail myself of the opportunity, now that we are in the church, of picking up a few threads of information which have been gained since a short article upon, and a drawing of the Macri reredos in the north transept, appeared in a late number of our Transactions. On the reredos I have no further information to offer, but when a short time ago a skilful architectural draughtman, Mr. Paul, then of Mr. John Scott's office, was employing his pencil upon the exquisite canopy of the piscina at the high altar, he discovered that the Macri leopard's head was used as the boss of the vaulting within it, thus showing that to this family we are also indebted for the Decorated work of our chancel as well as that of our north transept. To go back also to the earliest period of the structure, I may mention that, I think since any visit of this Society has been paid here, we have discovered, in constructing a tunnel for the connexion of the apparatus of our two organ blocks, the foundation of the original apse of the pre-Norman Church. I have a portion of this apse at hand to show you now. It was constructed, as you will see, of the roughest rubble, but consolidated by mortar such as we now seldom get. This discovery, which was alluded to in a note to the Macri reredos article, proved not only valuable in itself, but it explained a somewhat remarkable arrangement in my predecessor's, John de Leycester's campanile of 1290. John de Leycester is considered by Mr. Cussans to have been what the late Bishop Samuel Wilberforce called a "Squarson," that is to say, a squire and parson combined, for he was the master of the Lea Castle, and derived his names from thence, and not from the flourishing home of the stocking trade in the midlands. The castle stood where the Castle Farm still stands, hard by the road to Luton, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Wheathampstead. He was also an energetic Rector of this parish, successfully sustaining the right, against it would appear the opposition of the Abbot of Westminster, of the Rectors of Wheathampstead to the lordship of the Rectory Manor, which we still enjoy. This Rev. John of the Lea Castle was also a great builder, for on his petition, and that of his churchwardens and parishioners, that indulgence from Bishop Oliver

Sutton was obtained, the history of which has been discovered among the Lincoln records, by the aid of which, obtained in May, 1290, it is very probable that the tower of this church we now see was completed before the death of this energetic man of business. Now on the examination of this tower from the inside of the chancel, we shall see that a very wide splay connects the south pier of the chancel arch with its south wall, and on examination of the foundations of the apse it was seen that the north wall of the chancel still rests on the older foundations, while the southern wall is built more to the south in order to give a greater width to the new and enlarged Early English structure. The only other pre-Norman evidence which we can see is the rough doorway at the end of the south transept, but these boundaries show that the transepts were originally of the present length, while the chancel terminated apsidally near the present chancel door. So much for architectural discoveries since we last met here.

Let us now concentrate our attention on the south transept, and the very interesting memorials which it contains. This has always been called the Brocket Transept, and was no doubt for many generations a chapel of that ancient family when resident at Wheat-hampstead Place. I have been most anxious to obtain an accurate pedigree of the family. The best I can find, but it seems very imperfect, is that in "Clutterbuck's History of Hertfordshire," under the parish of Hatfield. That begins with an Edward Brocket in the time of Edward IV., but the transept is far earlier, even in its later work, than the reign of that king. The rough stones carefully left as they were discovered in the eastern wall on the removal of the modern plaster (a recent visitor, not an antiquarian, as I need hardly suggest, expressed wonder that where so much money had been spent a little plaster could not have been afforded to make the wall look more tidy), these rough stones, rough only though through the pick of the destroyer, mark the eastern termination of a magnificent shrine, vieing in size and beauty with those beside the High Altar at St. Albans; and the character of the splendid double-cusped eastern window and the site of its destroyed reredos below, with the remarkable piscina beside it are plain indications that here, soon after the

building of the central tower, was arranged a chapel, glorious in its richness. Of the history of the chapel, however, as it was adorned probably in the times of the 2nd and 3rd Edwards, we know nothing, alas, from documents, neither do we know much of the history of the family connected with it till 1507 and 1508, when we find in the pedigree I have alluded to, one John Brocket, who was sheriff in those years for the counties of Herts and Essex. He had a son, also John Brocket, who is described as of Brocket Hall, from which it may be gathered that at this date, 1531, both the Manor House at Brocket and the residence at Wheathampstead Place were co-existing, and were both tenanted by members of the Brocket Family. This John also appears to have been Sheriff of Herts and Essex, and to have so served in the year just given. We now come nearer home, for among the sons of this John was the Sir John Brocket, knight, whose monument, with that of his wife, daughter and heiress of William Benstede, Esq., is now before us. The date of that knight's death, as given on his tomb, is March 23rd, 1558. His home was doubtless Wheathampstead Place, and I think when we examine that very interesting residence, which, through the courtesy of Mr. C. H. Lattimore, we shall presently be enabled to do, that we shall be led to assign most of the exceedingly valuable work which remains there, still in excellent preservation, to the time of this proprietor. This Sir John had two sons, Edward, who lived at Wheathampstead, and died Sept. 3rd, 1599, and John. John, the more famous of the two, was sheriff of this county in the years 1566 and 1581; in 1579 he was knighted, and was appointed in 1585 to train the men who were levied in these parts to meet the expected invasion of England by the Spanish Armada. This second Sir John, knight, died October 2nd, 1598, when about 60 years of age. I must refer you to Mr. Cussan's History, under Wheathampstead, for a very full description of the first Sir John Brocket's monument before us, which is most carefully given, and to Mr. Clutterbuck's History, under Hatfield, for the best Brocket pedigree which I know. The Brocket Family, as far as I can learn, have now quite disappeared from Hertfordshire. Their property passed through female lines by marriage successively to the families of Reade and Winnington, and was after-





Wheeler's place 1884. O.W.D. del.







wards sold to Sir Matthew Lamb, from whom it descended to the late Viscount Melbourn, and from him to the late Lady Palmerston, and is now the property of the present Earl Cowper. Wheathampstead Place seems to have been deserted as a residence by the more recent proprietors for the greater charms of Bocket, certainly one of the most beautiful parks in England; but we have this antiquarian advantage here, that while the ancient manor house at Bocket has given place to the larger and more commodious, but, as the late Lord Palmerston has been heard to remark, ugly mansion, which owes its design to the architect, James Payne, about 1755, we have still remaining at Wheathampstead, and that but little changed, a house, to a Society like our own, far more interesting, in the ancient seat of the ancient family, at Wheathampstead Place.

---