

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00465-7 - The History of the University of Cambridge: From the Conquest to the Year 1634

Thomas Fuller

Excerpt

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THE HISTORY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
SINCE THE CONQUEST.

P R E F A C E.

Although the foundation of this University was far anterior, yet because what before this time is reported of it, is both little and doubtful, and already inserted into the body of our ecclesiastical history, it is early enough to begin the certain history thereof¹. Far be it from me to make odious comparisons between ^aJachin and Boaz ^{• 1 Kings 7. 21.} the two pillars in Solomon's temple, by preferring either of them for beauty and strength, when both of them are equally admirable. Nor shall I make difference betwixt the sisters (coheirs of learning and religion), which should be the eldest. In the days of King Henry^b the sixth such ^{b Ex bundello Petitionum Parliamenti Anno 23 Hen. 6. num. 12.} was the quality of desert betwixt Humphrey Stafford Duke of Buckingham, and Henry Beauchamp, Duke of

¹ There seems to us little room for doubt that when we first find authentic mention of the University of Cambridge, the place had been a famous seat of learning "from time immemorial," to use the expression of the lawyers. The story of its foundation by Cantaber three hundred and seventy five years before Christ, is of course a mere legend, but it shows that the antiquity of the town and University, taking this latter word in a more general sense than we now give to it, went back to an indefinite point of time. The charters of King Arthur and Cadwaldus, printed in Dyer, &c. are mere creations of the imagination, and that of King Edward in 915, is pro-

bably no better, though it is written much in the style of the generality of Saxon charters. However, we think, that in the time of the Saxons, to judge by the general character of the age, the privileges which the University would then enjoy, be they what they might, would need (or have) for their guarantee no charter at all, but merely custom. The fashion of holding privileges by charter was brought in by the Normans, and how soon after the conquest the University obtained a charter is very uncertain. In a note further on, we shall give a passage which seems to show that a charter of some kind had been granted before the reign of Henry III.

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Warwick, that to prevent exceptions about priority, it was ordered by the Parliament, that they should take precedency by turns, one one year, and the other the next year; and so by course were to chequer or exchange their going or setting all the years of their life. Sure I am there needeth no such pains to be took, or provision to be made, about the preeminence of our English Universities, to regulate their places, they having better learned humility from the precept of the ^c Apostle, In honour preferring one another. Wherefore I presume my aunt Oxford will not be justly offended, if in this book I give my own mother the upper hand, and first begin with her history. Thus desiring God to pour his blessing on both, that neither may want milk for their children, or children for their milk, we proceed to the business.

^c Rom. 12. 10.

The low condition of Cambridge at the Conquest.

A. D. 1066.
1 Will. Conq.



At this time the fountain of learning in Cambridge was but little, and that very troubled. For of late the Danes (who at first, like an intermitting ague, made but inroads into the kingdom, but afterwards turned to a quotidian of constant habitation) had harraged all this country, and hereabouts kept their station. Mars then frighted away the Muses, when the mount of Parnassus was turned into a fort, and Helicon derived into a trench. And at this present, King William the Conqueror going to subdue the Monks of Ely that resisted him, made Cambridgeshire the seat of war.

Cambridge Castle built by King William.

A. D. 1070.
5 Will. Conq.

2. For to the town of Cambridge he retired, and there for a season reposed himself, half dead with sorrow, that his design against the aforesaid Monks took no effect. At what time he found in the town 387 dwelling houses, 18^d whereof he caused then to be plucked down², to make room for the erecting of a castle,

^d Camden. Brittan. in Cambridgeshire.

² Doomsday says there were pose,—pro Castro sunt destructæ 27 houses destroyed for this purpose, xxvii domus.

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which he there reedified, that it might be a check-bit to curb this country, which otherwise was so hard-mouthed to be ruled. This castle, here built by him, was strong for situation, stately for structure, large for extent, and pleasant for prospect; having in it, amongst other rooms, a most magnificent hall: the stones and timber whereof, were afterwards begged by the Master and Fellows of ^oKings-Hall, of King Henry the fourth, towards the building of their chapel. At this day the castle may seem to have run out of the gate-house, which only is standing and employed for a prison: so that what was first intended to restrain rebels without it, is now only used to confine felons within it. There is still extant also an artificial high hill deeply entrenched about, steep in the ascent, but level at the top, which endureth still in defiance of the teeth of time; as the most greedy glutton must leave those bones, not for manners, but necessity, which are too hard for him to devour. King William had scarce finished this castle, when it was first handselled with the submission of the Abbot of Ely, who came hither ^fto bewail his errors, and beseech the King's mercy, having formerly paid 700 marks to preserve the life and liberty of himself and his convent. Besides, when that money came to be paid, and one ^ggroat thereof was found wanting in weight, a new sum was extorted from him for breach of covenants; to teach them who are to deal with potent creditors to weigh right, lest otherwise they approve themselves penny wise and pound foolish³.

A. D. 1070.
1 Will. Cong.

^e Caius Hist.
Cant. Acad.
lib. 2. p. 117.

^f Idem ibidem.

^g Speed, in the
life of King
William the
Conqueror.

³ "At the time of the survey Cambridge was divided into ten wards. The customary payments amounted to seven pounds; and, for Landgable, seven pounds and two oræ and two pence. The burgesses in King Edward's time lent their ploughs to the Sheriff three times in the year: though at the time of forming the survey nine turns were exacted. In the time of King Edward they found neither ploughs nor carts, but both appear to have been requir-

ed by the sheriff at the formation of the survey. Picot the Sheriff had as a heriot of the Lagemen in the town, eight pounds, a palfrey, and the arms of a knight. When Aluric Godricson was Sheriff, it is said, he took twenty shillings for a heriot". *Ellis's Introduction to Domesday*, vol. i. p. 197. At the time of the Domesday survey, the town contained in its ten wards, twenty-nine burgesses, a priest, and three Norman knights.

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[More information](#)A. D. 1080.
15 Will. Conq.Henry Beau-
clerk bred in
Cambridge.A. D. 1080.
15 Will. Conq.

3. Now, though these martial impressions did much discompose the studies of Scholars in Cambridge, under William the Conqueror; who being a military man, by his very constitution was not over-fond of learning: yet even in these days the place was not totally abandoned of Scholars. Yea Cambridge was in some reputation and eminence for literature. For Henry, youngest son to King William, was ^hhere brought up in the study of arts and sciences⁴, and afterwards he travelled beyond the seas (being at Paris, some say, though improbable, when news was brought of the death of his brother King William Rufus) so that both homebred and foreign learning met in him, to deserve the surname of Beauclerk. His father is reported to have designed him for a Bishop; as Maud, wife to this Henry, is said by her parents to have been intended for a Nun; and these two marrying together, were the most learned couple in that age.

^a Thomas Rudborne, Leland, Fabian, Bale, and Pitsius, p. 203.

Probably a Benefactor to the University.
ⁱ Caius de Ant. Cantab. Acad. p. 97.

4. Some ⁱsay that this Henry, afterwards King of England, in gratitude to Cambridge for his education, endowed readers of several languages therein, alleging Leland's verses, as alluding thereunto:

Quid quod Granta novem dicata Musis,
Henrici pietate literati
Tersis prænitet erudita linguis.

Cambridge devoted to the Muses nine,
By learned Henry's piety doth shine
With learned men, which languages refine.

But we will not wrest the words beyond the intent of the poet, who herein seems to relate to the Hebrew and Greek Professors founded in his days at Cambridge by King Henry the eighth, whom we may call Beauclerk junior, though short as in time, so in learning, of the former.

⁴ Thomas Rudborne the Historian of the monastery of Winchester, says that Henry took the degree of Master of Arts, *Hic tertio paterni regni anno in thoro regio genitus, postmodum in liberalibus artibus in Universitate Cantebrigie suum primum privitit tyrocinium, factusque est inibi Magister in Artibus.* *Anglia Sacra*, vol. i. p. 273.

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Thus though for the present we will not build the bounty of this King Henry to Cambridge on a false bottom, yet certainly he was a dutiful son to his mother, from whom he had his breeding, and not forgetting her favour unto him.

A. D. 1080.
15 Will. Conq.

5. Not long after, Roger of Montgomery most mischievously with fire and sword destroyed the town and county of Cambridge, spoiling the poor subjects, so to be revenged of their sovereign King William Rufus; in so much as, for a time, the University was wholly abandoned.

Mischievous
Montgomery.

A. D. 1088.
1 Will. Ruf.

6. Hugolina, a worthy woman, and wife to Picot, Baron of Bourne, and sheriff of Cambridgeshire, recovered at Cambridge of a desperate sickness: wherefore in gratitude (according to the devout mode of those days) she built a Church there, dedicating it to God and St. Giles, and placed six Canons therein: Yea, she prevailed so far with her husband, that he endowed this her Church with half the tithes of his demesnes in his manors of

Picot, his foundation in
St. Giles his parish.

A. D. 1092.
5 Will. Ruf.

1. Quy.	9. Rampton.	17. Caldecot.
2. Stow.	10. Cottenham.	18. Kingston.
3. Waterbeach.	11. Lolworth.	19. Wimpole.
4. Milton.	12. Trumpington.	20. Gransden.
5. Histon.	13. Haslingfield.	21. Hatley.
6. Impington.	14. Harlton.	22. Pampisford.
7. Girton.	15. Eversden.	23. Alewind. ⁵
8. Oakington.	16. Toft.	

⁵ The authority for this is the Barnwell Chartulary, which was used by Leland. Hugolina, when despaired of by her physicians, had made a vow to St. Giles of this foundation, and in consequence thereof, says the legend, she recovered in three days. Anselm archbishop of Canterbury and Remigius Bishop of Lincoln were present at the consecration of the church. Picot's endow-

ments are thus enumerated in the charter,—“Ecclesiam sancti Egidii de Cantebrige, ubi domus eorum fundata est, ecclesiam de Mordone cum capella de Redderia, ecclesiam de Thadelaus, ecclesiam de Brune cum capella castelli et cum capella de Caldecote, ecclesiam de Cumbertone ecclesiam de Maddingele, ecclesiam de Ramptone, ecclesiam de Harlestone et de Henxtone...similiter...duas partes

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[More information](#)A. D. 1092.
5 Will. Ruf.The injurious
original of im-
propriations.

But soon after, these tithes were but poorly paid; namely, when Robert Picot his son forfeited his barony, which King Henry the first bestowed upon Pagan Peverel.

7. See we here a grand difference betwixt the endowments of Monasteries before and after the conquest. The Saxons generally endowed them with solid and substantial revenues, out of their own estates, giving good farms and manors unto them. (Or if any tithes, only those within the circuit of that parish wherein that convent was erected; the secular Priests (and afterwards the Monks) therein, being presumed to take some spiritual pains in that place, to the deserving thereof.) This properly was frank-almonage, bestowing on God in his Church (as they accounted it) what was their own to estate upon him. But the Normans embraced a cheaper way of dotations, chiefly bestowing all, or part of the tithes of their lands, on convents of their foundation, payable out of parishes lying a good distance from the same; and this was according to the French fashion⁶. Now if it be true, that tithes be due jure divino, this was no gift, but a payment, which they were bound to tender to the church: yea, which is more, such grants of tithes were no better than felony, robbing the Ministers of their respective parishes, of what was due unto them: insomuch, that they took the oil from the wick (the pastor labouring in his church) and gave it to the thief or waster in the lamp, to which the idle monks may fitly be compared.

decimarum de omnibus dominiis omnium militum meorum in Cantabrigesire, scilicet de Queya, de Stowe, de Waterbeche, de Middeltone, de Impetone, de Histone, de Grettone, de Hokitone, de Ramtone, de Coteham, de Lollesworthe, de Trumpitone, de Haselingfeld, de Harletone, de Eversdone, de Tofte, de Caldecote, de Kingstone, de Wynepola, de Craudena, de Hattleya, de Pampesworthe, de Aldewinde." When Pain Peverel came to take possession of the forfeited property, he found Picot's

foundation entirely ruined, "desolatam et ad nihilum redactam." *Barnwell Chartulary*, foll. 11, 12. The first foundation was in 1092, *ib.* fol. 14. v°.

⁶ "Ad horum itaque sustentationem duas partes decimarum de dominiis suis, atque omnium militum suorum ejusdem provincie, antequam ipsis militibus fundos conferrent, uti mos erat Francigenis, domini Remigii episcopi prius habita concessione, assignaverunt." *Barnwell Chartulary*, fol. 11. v°.

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A. D. 1101.
2 Hen. I. 8. To repair the damage lately done by Montgomery to the town of Cambridge, King Henry the first bestowed many privileges thereon, which the University is so far from repining, she rejoiceth thereat. For well may the jewel delight to be put in a handsome cabinet. He freed the town from the power of the sheriff, making it a Corporation, upon the payment of one hundred and one marks yearly into the Exchequer, which sum the sheriff paid before for his profits out of the town, when it was under his jurisdiction. Besides, whereas the ferry over the river Grant was a vagrant before (even any where, where passengers could get waftage over) by authority and custom, it now began to be fixed near Cambridge, which brought much trading and concourse of people thereunto.

A. D. 1101.
2 Hen. I.
Cambridge first
made a Corporation.

A. D. 1103.
4 Hen. I. 9. About this time Barnwell, that is, Childrens-well,⁷ a village within the precincts of Cam-

⁷ The well, like many others which were seized upon by the Monks, had without doubt been an object of superstitious reverence among the Saxons, who, as we know from many sources, were much given to well-worship, and the meeting and games were nothing more than the celebration of a religious solemnity, such as in many places has left traces of its former existence down to modern times, in the ceremonies of crowning wells with garlands, visiting them in procession, &c. *Beornawyl*, in Saxon times, did not necessarily mean the well of the children, but rather the well of the champions or heroes, so named from the exercises they celebrated there. The account of the place given in the Barnwell Chartulary is so curious, that we cannot refrain from giving it in the original Latin. "Impetravit ille egregius Paganus Peverel a rege Henrico locum quandam extra Burgum Cantebrię, a magna platea usque in riveriam Cantebrię se extendentem et amenitate situs loci satis delectabilem. Porro de illius loci medio fonticuli satis puri et vivi emanabant, Anglice *Barnewelle*,

id est, fontes puerorum eo tempore appellati, eo quod pueri et adolescentes semel per annum in vigilia scilicet nativitatis sancti Johannis Baptistę illic convenientes, more Anglorum luctamina et alio ludicra exercebant puerilia, et cantilenis et musicis instrumentis sibi invicem applaudebant, unde propter turbam puerorum et puellarum illic concurrentium, mos inolevit ut in eodem die illic conveniret negotiandi gratia turba vendentium et ementium. In hoc etiam loco quidam homo magnę sanctitatis, Godesome nomine, conversari consueverat, solitariam vitam ducens, et parvulum oratorium ligneum in honore beati Andreę Apostoli constructum habens, qui parum antea defunctus, locum sine habitatore et oratorium sine custode dimiserat." fol. 12. v^o.

It may be well here to mention that the original Chartulary of Barnwell, which we quote frequently, and which Fuller mentions under the name of *Liber Barnwellensis*, is now preserved in the Library of the British Museum, MS. Harl. No. 3601. It is a large volume in 4to, written in a fine hand of the thirteenth century,

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A. D. 1108.
 † Hen. I.
 The original of
 Midsummer
 Fair.
 ‡ Liber Barn-
 wellensis.

bridge, got both the name thereof and a Fair therein on this occasion. Many little ^kchildren on Midsummer (or St. John Baptist's) eve met there in mirth to play and sport together: their company caused the confluence of more and bigger boys to the place: then bigger than they; even their parents themselves came thither, to be delighted with the activity of their children. Meat and drink must be had 'for their refection, which brought some victualling-booths to be set up. Pedlers with toys and trifles cannot then be supposed long absent, whose packs in short time swelled into tradesmen's stalls of all commodities. Now it is become a great fair⁸, and (as I may term it) one of the townsmen's commencements, wherein they take their degrees of wealth, fraught with all store of wares, and nothing (except buyers) wanting therein.

Jews, their first
 coming to Cam-
 bridge.

A. D. 1106.
 † Hen. I.

10. Jews at this time came first to Cambridge, and possessed a great part of the Town, called the Jewry at this day. Round Church in the Jewry is conjectured, by the rotundity of the structure, to have been built for their synagogue. Much like whereunto, for fabric and fashion, I have seen another at Northampton, where Jews about the same time had their seminary.⁹ Some

with additions at the end by later hands. Its contents are the History of the Monastery and all its law-suits, &c. with copies of the various charters and letters concerning it, and, inserted among the rest, a copy of the Statutes of Edward I, in whose reign the book was written, apparently in 1295. A translation of the historical part was published in Nichols' *Bibl. Topogr. Br.* vol. v. Ed. 1786. See "Some Account of Barnwell Priory," by Marmaduke Prickett, M.A. Cambridge, 1837.

⁸ The fair was established by Charter in the 13th Hen. III, which charter sets forth that it should last during four days, namely the vigil, and day of St Etheldreda the virgin, and the two following days, *Barnwell Chart.* fol. 30. v^o.

⁹ The notion of the Church of St Sepulchre having been a Jewish synagogue, is certainly incorrect. It is indeed the oldest of the four *round* churches which are still preserved, and is supposed to have been built about the reign of Hen. I, perhaps, as has been conjectured, by Pain Peverel himself, since it was appropriated to the abbey of Barnwell. That nobleman was a crusader, and the form of these Churches is supposed to have been brought from the East. The other three Churches of this kind are: 1, That of St Sepulchre at Northampton, built by the Templars towards the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century; 2, the Temple Church in London, the body of which was erected in 1185, but its clustered columns

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will say, Cambridge, an inland town of small trading, was ill chosen by these Jews for their seat, where the poor Scholars, if borrowing from these usurers, were likely to bring but small profit unto them. But let it suffice, that the Jews chose this place, whom no Christians need advise, for their own advantage. Here their carriage was very civil, not complained of (as elsewhere) for cruel crucifying of Christian children, and other enormities.

A. D. 1106.
7 Hen. I.

11. Now the reader is requested seriously to peruse the following passage as faithfully transcribed out of an excellent author, and of high concernment in this our history. Joffred, Abbot of Croyland, sent over to his manor of Cottenham, nigh Cambridge, Gislebert his fellow Monk, and Professor of Divinity, with three other Monks, who following him into England, being thoroughly furnished with Philosophical Theorems, and other primitive sciences, repaired daily to Cambridge; and, having hired a certain public barn, made open profession of their sciences, and in short space of time drew together a great company of Scholars.

Cambridge restored to learning by the Abbot of Croyland.

¹ P. Blænsensis in his additament to the history of Ingulphus.

12. But in the second year after their coming, the number of their Scholars grew so great, as well from out of the whole country as the town, that the biggest house and barn that was, or any church whatsoever sufficed not to contain them: whereupon, sorting themselves apart in several places, and taking the University of Orleans for their pattern, early in the morning, Monk Odo, a singular grammarian, and satirical poet, read grammar unto boys, and those of the younger sort assigned unto him; according to the doctrine of Priscian, and Remigius upon him. At one of the clock Terricus, a most witty and subtle sophister, taught the elder sort of young men Aristotle's Logic, after the Introductions

A grain of seed soon grown a Tree.

and incumbent arches are somewhat more modern; 3, the church dedicated to St. John of Jerusalem, at Little Maplestead in Essex, built in the reign of Hen. III. See, on them all, Britton's Architectural Antiquities, vol. i. p. 9—23.

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A. D. 1110.
11 Hen. I.

of Porphyry, and the Comments of Averroes. At three of the clock, Monk William read a lecture in Tully's Rhetoric, and Quintilian's Flores: But the great Master Gislebert, upon every Sunday and Holy-day, preached God's word unto the people. And thus out of this little fountain which grew to be a great river, we see how the city of God has become enriched, and all England made fruitful by means of very many Masters and Doctors proceeding out of Cambridge, in manner of the holy paradise, &c¹⁰.

The time of
this Author's
writing.

13. This author wrote some fifty years after the coming of these Croyland Professors to Cambridge; so that, who seriously considereth, how learning there, from a contemptible occasion, by small means, in so short a time, improved itself to so great an height, will conclude much of Providence therein; and we may observe, according to Scripture expression, "God had prepared the people, for the thing was done suddenly."

^m 2 Chron. 29. 36.

An apparent injury offered to Cambridge.

14. But some adversaries to the antiquity of Cambridge, represent and improve this action much to her disadvantage, as if newly now, and not before, she began to be an University. Objecting, that if Scholars were at Cambridge before the coming of those four Professors thither, they shewed small civility in giving those strangers no better entertainment, to whom they should have said, as once "Laban to Abraham's servant; "Come in ye blessed of the Lord, wherefore stand you without"? welcoming them

ⁿ Gen. 14. 32.

¹⁰ Peter of Blois, the author of the continuation of Ingulph, was the same person who is so well known by his Epistles, and was, at the time he wrote this history, Archdeacon of Bath. He died at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Fuller has translated somewhat loosely his account of Gislebert's labours: Peter of Blois uses the canonical divisions of the day, so that Terricus lectured at six o'clock in the morning, according to our present reckoning (ad horam vero primam), and Monk William at nine o'clock (ad horam vero tertiam). We should also read, "after the introductions and comments of Porphyry and Averroes" (logica Aristotelis juxta Porphyrii et Aviroiz isagogas et commenta). Fuller has also omitted to say that Gislebert's own preaching was chiefly directed against the Jews, and that by his means great numbers of those who dwelt at Cambridge and thereabouts were converted. See the passage in *Gale's Scriptores*, vol. i. p. 114.