

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ABBEY OF ABINGDON

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649749317

Early history of the abbey of Abingdon by Frank Merry Stenton

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FRANK MERRY STENTON

**EARLY HISTORY OF
THE ABBEY
OF ABINGDON**

University College, Reading
Studies in Local History

**The Early History of
The Abbey of Abingdon**

By

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Reading

Published by University College

1913

L. G.

NOTE

BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

WHEN in 1908 Mr. F. M. Stenton was appointed Research Fellow in Local History at University College, Reading, it was understood that one of the objects to which he would devote attention would be the elucidation of the early history of Abingdon and its abbey. The present volume, the second relating to Berkshire history produced by Mr. Stenton in this series, gives the results of his work. The cost of its publication has been defrayed by a grant made by the Council of University College.

The Research Fellowship in Local History, which had been rendered possible by the generous gifts of Mr. C. E. Keyser and Miss May, expired in July, 1912. But I am happy to say not only that it has proved possible to establish on a more permanent basis a Fellowship devoted in the first instance to archaeological study, but also that University College, Reading, is to continue to have the advantage of being able to claim Mr. Stenton as a member of its academic staff. For in July, 1912, he was elected to our Endowed Professorship of Modern History. No personal event in the history of the College has given me greater pleasure. Mr. Stenton was one of my first pupils at Reading: from Reading he proceeded to my old College at Oxford with an open scholarship; after his Oxford career and early publications had justified the hopes formed of him long before by those who knew him best, he returned at my invitation to Reading as Research Fellow; and now as Professor of Modern History in succession to myself he takes active charge of a subject and a responsibility to which for obvious reasons my own attention has for some years been little more than nominal.

If my own efforts in that field have produced results, I should look for it in the growth amongst us at Reading of a living interest in the study of local history as a means of illustrating the wider study of national history. I have handed over my responsibilities to my old pupil, colleague, and friend with all the more satisfaction because I know well that under his sympathetic and able guidance the future of our young school of local historical study is secure.

W. M. CHILDS.

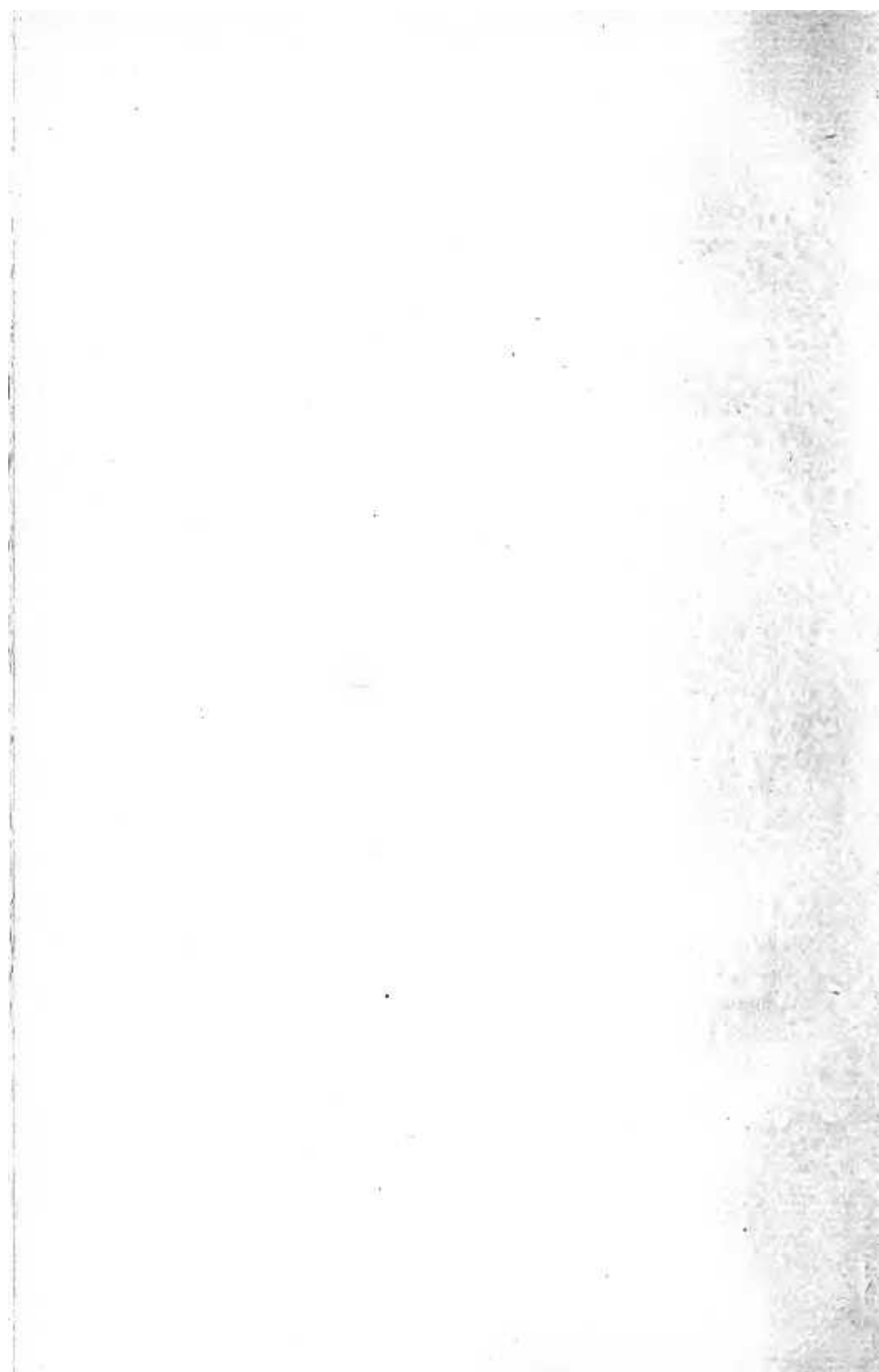
PRINCIPAL'S LODGE, READING,
January 6, 1913.

PREFACE

AMONG the secondary evidences which relate to early English history, the collected archives of religious houses claim an important place. In the present essay the documents relating to one of these early monasteries and the narratives of its foundation are examined with reference to their bearing upon the general history of England between the seventh and the tenth centuries. The Abingdon series of records is long, and, from the geographical position of the house, of peculiar importance for the period with which this essay deals. It is, for example, only Abingdon documents which demonstrate the annexation of Berkshire to the Mercian kingdom in the first half of the ninth century. The plan of the essay does not include a discussion of the documents and narrative which relate to the history of the abbey under the Anglo-Norman kings; but it is shown that this portion of the text, though only preserved in manuscripts of the thirteenth century, is the work of an author who ceased writing early in the reign of Henry II. It thus becomes contemporary evidence for the history of the Thames valley in the generation after 1100. To this generation, also, must be referred the earliest form of the foundation legend of Abingdon. It is suggested below that this legend, when allowance has been made for the invention of unhistorical detail, may fairly be allowed to illustrate the condition of southern England towards the close of the seventh century, and that an authentic outline of the early history of the house can be recovered from the materials which were compiled by its inmates in the Norman age.

F. M. STENTON.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, READING,
December 1912.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A. C.* 'Historia Monasterii de Abingdon.' Edited by the Rev. Joseph Stevenson (Rolls Series). 1858.
- Asser.* 'Asser's Life of King Alfred.' Edited by W. H. Stevenson. 1904.
- C. C.* 'The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents.' Edited by A. S. Napier and W. H. Stevenson. 1895.
- C. D.* 'Codex Diplomaticus aevi Saxonici.' Edited by J. M. Kemble. 1839-1848.
- Chron.* 'Two Saxon Chronicles parallel.' Edited by the Rev. Charles Plummer. 1892.
- C. S.* 'Cartularium Saxonicum.' Edited by W. de Gray Birch. 1885-1893.
- D. B.* 'Domesday Book.' (Record Commission.) London. 1783-1816.
- D. B. and B.* 'Domesday Book and Beyond.' By F. W. Maitland. 1897.
- D. C. B.* 'Dictionary of Christian Biography.'
- E. H. R.* 'The English Historical Review.'
- Eyton.* 'Court, Household, and Itinerary of King Henry II.' By the Rev. R. W. Eyton. 1878.
- G. P.* 'Gesta Pontificum.' By William of Malmesbury. Edited by Hamilton (Rolls Series).
- H. J.* 'Venerabilis Bedae Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum.' Edited by the Rev. Charles Plummer. 1896.
- Hist. Reg.* 'Historia Regum.' By William of Malmesbury. Edited by the Rev. William Stubbs (Rolls Series).
- Stubbs, Dunstan.* 'Memorials of St. Dunstan.' Edited by the Rev. William Stubbs (Rolls Series).

