

**HISTORY OF THE CATHEDRAL
CHURCH OF WELLS AS
ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY OF
THE CATHEDRAL CHURCHES OF
THE OLD FOUNDATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649603633

History of the Cathedral Church of Wells as Illustrating the History of the Cathedral Churches of the Old Foundation by Edward A. Freeman

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Cover @ 2017

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EDWARD A. FREEMAN

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OLD FOUNDATION.

*George Adair Somerset
No. 51.*

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London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.

1870.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

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PREFACE.

THIS small volume is a reprint, with hardly any change, of three lectures which were given to a local society in Wells in the months of December 1869 and January 1870, and which were printed at the time in a local paper. I have added some notes and references, but the substance is essentially the same. The subject seemed to deserve more than local attention on more grounds than one. I wished to point out the way in which local and general history may and ought to be brought together. As a general rule, local historians make hardly any attempt to connect the history of the particular church or city or district of which they are writing with the general history of the country, or even with the general history of its own class of institutions. On the other hand, more general students of history are apt to pay too little heed to the history of particular places. I have here tried to treat the history of the Church of Wells as a contribution to the general history of the Church and Kingdom of England, and specially to the history

of the Cathedral Churches of the Old Foundation. I have also a special object in calling attention to the origin and history of those foundations, to their original objects and their modern corruptions. It is quite impossible that our Cathedral institutions can stay much longer in the state in which they now are, a state which satisfies no party. If they are not reformed by their friends, they can hardly fail to be destroyed by their enemies. The awkward attempt at reform which was made thirty years back was made in utter ignorance of the history and nature of the institutions. Instead of reforming them, it has merely crippled them. Our Cathedral Churches have indeed vastly improved during those thirty years; but it has been almost wholly because they have shared in a general improvement, hardly at all by virtue of the changes which were specially meant to improve them. I wish to point out the general principles of the original founders as the model to which the Old Foundations should be brought back, and the New Foundations reformed after their pattern.

What I have now written is of course a mere sketch, which does not at all pretend to be a complete history of the Church of Wells, either architectural or documentary. I had hoped that Professor Willis would have allowed me the use of the materials of both kinds on which he grounded his lectures in 1851 and 1863. But it seems that he reserves them for the general work for which architectural students have been waiting so

long. I have therefore been left to my own resources, that is, as far as documents are concerned, to the ordinary printed authorities in *Anglia Sacra*, the *Monasticon*, and elsewhere. But it is to be hoped that some day or other the documents that are locked up in manuscript at Wells and at other places may be made available for historical purposes. Some of our capitular records would be excellently suited for a place in the series issued by the Master of the Rolls.

I have given an historical ground-plan, but the scale of the book forbade any strictly architectural illustrations, while it seemed needless to give any mere picturesque views of a building of which engravings and photographs are so common.

SOMERLAZE, WELLS,
May 18th, 1870.