THE MUNICIPAL RECORDS OF THE BOROUGH OF SHAFTESBURY: A CONTRIBUTION TO SHASTONIAN HISTORY

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SHASTONIAN RECORDS

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MUNICIPAL RECORDS

OF THE

BOROUGH OF SHAFTESBURY

A Contribution to Shastonian History

BY

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SHERBORNE:

J. C. SAWTELL, THE PARADE,

1889.

PREFACE.

In the month of July, 1887, the opportunity was afforded me, through the courtesy of the Mayor and Council of the town of Shaftesbury, of inspecting the Municipal Records of that ancient Borough. These documents, upwards of three hundred in number, were lying in an Oak Chest, in the Guild Hall, without any form of arrangement, and in a condition which practically rendered it impossible to consult them with any advantage. As the Council, at a meeting held on the 3rd of August in that year, accepted my offer to Calendar the contents of this Chest, I proceeded, in the course of several visits to the town,* in that and in the succeeding month, to classify these documents under several heads, which I have styled A., B., C., D., E., leaving one other division, F., for such miscellaneous papers as could not readily be reduced under any of the former sections. To each document I affixed a small label, bearing the letter of the Class to which it belonged, together with the distinguishing number, thus, A.2, B.7, C.18, and so on, as the case might be, referring to the Calendar since offered for the acceptance of the Borough. The numbers under each letter are as follows:

*Through the kindness of the Corporation, I have also been enabled to to examine the greater number of the documents at leisure at my own home.

A. Royal Grants and Charters to the Borough, and other papers or copies of Documents, bearing upon the Privileges of the Town 17

B. Court Rolls 10

C. Rolls of Accounts 19

D. Charters of Feoffment and other Instruments, ranging from 1331 to 1641 100

E. Papers relating to Suits at Law and Equity, from 32 Eliz., to 15 Car. I. 162

F. Miscellaneous Documents 12

Total..320

For better preservation in the future, I placed the older and smaller documements in three wooden boxes, each separately labelled, which now repose in the Chest, and their contents are thus secured from falling again into their former state of chaos.

Box No. I. contains Class A., 1 to 13 inclusive, (omitting A.14, 15, 16 and 17) and class F., 1 to 10 inclusive, (omitting F.4, 11 and 12.

Box No. II. contains the whole of Class B., and Class C., 1 to 18 inclusive (omitting C.10, 14, 16 and 19).

Box No. III. contains the whole of Class D.

In the open space of the Chest lie the Legal papers comprised in Class E., tied in bundles (each bundle referring to a distinct suit, and bearing a large label on which I have written the name of the Action), together with those documents, belonging to the other sections, which were too large to be placed in the three boxes above mentioned. It will thus be a matter of comparative ease to consult these records on future occasions, as the reader of the Calendar will ascertain at a glance, where to

look for the Class of documents of which he is in search, and will find a label affixed to each parchment or paper, bearing a number corresponding to that in the list before him. This Calendar gives a description of each document sufficient to render its identification certain, and in most cases is full and complete enough to impart to the reader a fair idea of the contents and value of the records described. Especial attention has been paid to the Charters of Feoffment, and other documents contained in Class D., and by giving a summary of their contents, with the names of the Grantors, Grantees, and Witnesses, I have rendered it as a rule unnecessary for subsequent enquirers to incur the labour of a personal examination.

In the Report which accompanied the Calendar, and which is now printed with considerable additions, I have called attention to the salient points of interest contained in the six several sections under which I have classified the records, and I have endeavoured to show how the documents in question illustrate the History of the Borough, and exhibit in fuller detail some matters which are but briefly treated in Hutchins's History of Dorset. I need hardly say that the preparation of this Calendar* and Report has been a work of no little labour, but I shall feel amply rewarded for the task if I have thus contributed to the promotion of a just estimate of the value of the documents, and to the growth of a loving spirit of solicitude for their preservation: and I have much pleasure in dedicating the present volume

MAJORI ET BURGENSIBUS
BURGI SHASTON ALIAS SHAFTESBURY.

*This Calendar remains in MS., in the hands of the Corporation, to which it was presented at a Council Meeting, 6th February, 1889. The present Report, however, together with the Appendix, will be found to account for all the documents. The loan of any ancient documents in private hands, relating to the history of Shaftesbury, will be gladly welcomed by the writer.