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Font and Pillar at St. Alphage, Canterbury

(with a plate)

The church of St. Alphage at Canterbury, as is frequently the case with town churches, built in confined situations, is of irregular form. It is divided into two nearly equal parts by a single range of arches, the character of which, and of its other architectural features, show that it was rebuilt about the reign of King Edward the Fourth. This fact is ascertained by other evidence beyond a doubt.

The Font, which is hexagonal, and is represented in the annexed Plate, bears the inscription G. Rer. (which is also engraved at large.) Four other sides are carved with roses and blank shields. The east side stands against a pillar, to which is attached an elaborate crane of wrought iron, for raising the cover of the font, which is gaily painted in green and gold though some subsidiary pullies appear to have superseded its more spreading machinery.

On the second pillar from the west end remains a singular memorial of the re-edification of the church, commemorating the benefaction of one Thomas Prude, who bequeathed the cost of this pillar, the church probably being in the course of re-erection at the time of his decease. Such was the zeal and co-operation of the ancient times in the works of the church. Somner says of this benefactor, "He lived in Ed. 4 dayes, and by his Will in Regist. Consistor Cant. appoints to be buried by Christ-church porch, and therein gives as much as would build a Pillar in this Church (St. Alphage) and 5 marks to Christ-church works, anno 1468. (Antiquities of Canterbury, p. 328)

A friend examined for us the will to which Somner refers. Amongst sundry benefactions of 6s. 8d. and sometimes 6d for lamps at different altars, the testator says, "Item lego ad fabricam unius columpne in Ecclesia predicta tante pecunie summam quantam ad illius sufficiet constructionem sive edificationem." We observe also that Hasted has mentioned an item of the same will, by which one pair of organs was given to the use of this church.

The height of that portion of the pillar which is represented in our Plate is about four feet. The draughtsman has carefully represented seven rings, which still retain their places. That in front probably

assisted in sustaining the image of a saint which stood on the bracket, and was surmounted by the canopy. The pendants of the canopy are the royal badges of the rose and portcullis. The benefactor's arms are affixed on a brass plate, with this verse, Gaude Prude Thomas Per quem fit ista Columpna.

The arms of Prude are thus blazoned: Azure, three otters passant in pale, each holding in his mouth a fish argent. It has been suggested (by Mr. Moule, in his "Heraldry of Fish") that "the name Proude may have the same origin with that of the Prudhomme, who, among fishermen, is chosen to preside of the community; but Prud'homme (prudens homo) has nothing to do in especial with fish or fishermen, as of any other craft, the title having an analogous origin to that of the alderman, or elder-man, of municipal corporations. The man most respected for age and prudence was selected as the warden or the echevin, or any other similar office of authority amongst trades.

But Proude or Prude bore fish in allusion to his name, from the obsolete name (unless still retained in some remote corner of Wilts or Somerset" of the small fish called the Pride, in old spelling Pruyde-Prude. The Prides in the Isis are described by Plot, Hist. of Oxfordshire, p. 183. William of Worcester and other old writers say it was a fish like a "lampurne" or small lamprey. (Worc. Itin. p. 291)

Hasted says, "Among the wills in the Prerog. off. Canterbury, I find that William Prowde, of St. Elphe, was buried in 1596 (1496 or 1506) in this church before the altar of St. James and St. Erasmus. "Serlys Prude, alias Proude, of St. Alphage, gent. in 1584, before his pew."

John Proude was one of the citizens for Canterbury in the Parliament of the 20th Ric. II.

In Canterbury Cathedral is a monument, with a kneeling effigy of a gallant member of this family, who was killed in Flanders in 1632. It bears the following inscription: etc. etc.

Court given to understand that William Holybone 'halywaterclerk' on 24 Oct, 16 Edward IV assaulted etc in parish of St Alphage one William Proude. In following entry recounts that William Proude assaulted W.Holybone bacul' et glevys. Proude claims that W.H. assaulted him with a stone, etc. CCA Court of Pleas