

Somner: Antiquities of Canterbury
Reprint 1877. introduction by William Henry

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Nicholas Battely and his Kinsfolk: A Note⁶⁹

The editor of Somner's *Antiquities* was but one of a learned family with a taste for antiquarian studies. Nicholas Battely had an elder brother, John, and a younger, Thomas. The three were sons to Nicholas Battely, an apothecary of Bury St. Edmunds, and each became an undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge. There was a sister Ann, aged 50 at her death in 1714 (according to her monument at Bekesbourne, Kent, where her brother Nicholas became incumbent).

The eldest, John Battely, was born in 1646. He matriculated in 1662, was B.A. by 1666 and M.A. by 1669, becoming a Fellow of his college. He took orders in 1675 and was appointed chaplain to Archbishop Sancroft, who collated him to the rectory of Adisham in Kent, south-east of Canterbury. At the same time John Battely became Chancellor of Brecknock, though his pluralism (in this case hardly reconcilable with a Kentish incumbency), gave him misgivings upon his deathbed. In 1688 he became Master of Eastbridge Hospital at Canterbury, where he is remembered as a wise administrator and as a good and generous benefactor. Likewise in 1688 he became Archdeacon of Canterbury and Prebendary of the Cathedral.

John Battely was an excellent Latinist, and on arrival in Kent threw himself into a study of local antiquities. He collected Roman coins and pottery, acquired particularly at Richborough and Reculver, the Saxon Shore forts. He wrote up his finds in an engaging and humorous tract, *Antiquitates Rutupinae*, in the form of a colloquy between himself and other chaplains in Sancroft's service, likewise with antiquarian tastes, namely Henry Maurice and Henry Wharton. The tract 'generally admired for the elegance of the Latin'⁷⁰ was published posthumously in 1711 and republished by Oliver Battely, the writer's nephew and son to Nicholas, who under the same covers printed John Battely's *Antiquitates Sancti Edmundi Burgi* (1745). It was published in abridgment and translation in 1774, by the Rev. John Duncombe, who embodied collections relating to Eastbridge Hospital left by Nicholas Battely into his *Three Archiepiscopal Hospitals*.⁷¹ John Battely was twice married but left no issue. He died 10 October, 1708, at the age of 61.

Nicholas Battely, brother to John, and editor of Somner's *Antiquities* was baptized at St. James, Bury St. Edmunds on 14 June 1648. He was admitted as Pensioner at Trinity College, Cambridge on 30 March 1665, and matriculated in Lent, 1667. He was B.A. within the year 1668-9, and M.A. in 1672 as from Peterhouse, whither he had removed himself. He was Fellow of that college from 1670 to 1704. He vacated his fellowship on taking orders in the Diocese of Ely on 18 September 1675. He was Rector of Nowton, Suffolk from 1680 to 1685, and of Greeting St. Olave by 1681. He secured the living of Ivychurch in Romney Marsh, Kent in 1685, becoming at the same time Vicar of Bekesbourne, three miles from Canterbury. A tiny population in either cure left him ample time for research, profitably put to use in the Canterbury archives so close at hand, both for his revision of Somner and for his own *Cantuaria Sacra* which bears witness to original work among the plenitude of Canterbury MSS. At Ivychurch, over 25 miles from Bekesbourne, he no doubt put in a curate.

Nicholas Battely married Ann, daughter of Oliver Pocklington of Brington, Hunts. She died in 1716, aged 60 according to her grave-slab in Bekesbourne church. There were at least two sons of the marriage. The elder was John who attended the King's School, Canterbury. He too entered Trinity College, Cambridge (at the age of 17). He was B.A. 1708-9 and M.A. in 1712. He became Fellow of his college in 1711, having taken orders. He held livings in East Anglia. He was sufficiently esteemed by his uncle the Archdeacon to be recipient under his will of the latter's collection of antiquarian specimens.⁷² The younger John died in 1741. His kinsfolk eventually gave the collection to the library of Trinity College.

The younger son of Nicholas Battely was Oliver (clearly taking a name from his

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maternal great grandfather). He was born in 1696 and matriculated at Oxford as from Christ Church, on 8 June 1716 at the age of 19. He was B.A. by 1720 and M.A. in 1724. He graduated B.D. in 1734 and served as Proctor in 1731. He ended life as Prebendary of Llandaff. As indicated above he made a valuable contribution to antiquarian studies by producing an edition of his uncle's historical remains.

Thomas Battely, the third son of Nicholas the apothecary of Bury St. Edmund's, born in 1655, seems to have left no literary traces of himself. He may be identified with the Thomas graduating B.A. as of Trinity College, Cambridge in 1677-8.

There are handsome memorial slabs to be seen in Bekesbourne church, to Nicholas Battely, placed by his widow, Ann; to Ann Battely, placed by her son John, the Archdeacon; and a wall monument to Ann Battely, styled sister to John the Archdeacon.

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