

The Antiquities of
CANTERBURY:
William Somner

William Somner's *Antiquities of Canterbury*, first published in 1640, stands in the first rank of early town histories, in the tradition of, and probably inspired by, Stow's *Survey of London*. As an account of Canterbury, Somner's *Antiquities* has had only one real imitator, in Edward Hasted's section on Canterbury in his *History and Topographical Survey of Kent* (1788-1799), and Hasted derived much from Somner. Later general histories of the city have lacked deep original scholarship, so that Somner's *Antiquities* remains significant—as a body of original evidence; as a register of much that has since been lost; and as a fascinating piece of reading in its own right. This is especially so in the edition of 1703 where a modest metamorphosis has been effected by Nicholas Battely.

It is this edition of the *Antiquities* which is here reproduced, with the addition of some of the attractive illustrations taken from Battely's own *Cantuaria Sacra*, and prefaced by an authoritative Introduction by William Urry, himself the historian of Canterbury in the Angevin period. Dr. Urry places the writing of the *Antiquities* in the context of Somner's personal life and his literary career, and also provides an interesting note on Nicholas Battely. It is hoped that this new printing of Somner's *Antiquities*, still so frequently consulted, will make more generally available this unique contribution to the general history of Canterbury, and to early urban history.

The
CAN
Willi

Willia
bury,
the fir
the tr
by, St
count
ties
Ed
in his
Kent
much
ories
origina
Antiqu
body o
of muc
a fasci
right. I
of 1703
has bee

It is thi
is here
some of
from Ba
preface
tion by
torian
period.
the A
person
also pre
Nicholas
new prin
o frequ
generally
oution t
erbury,



INTRODUCTION

William Somner and his 'Antiquities'

A remarkable group of men had an origin in Canterbury within the century between Reformation and Civil War. They numbered the dramatist Christopher Marlowe (d. 1593); John Lyly (d. 1606), author of the best-selling novel *Euphues*; Stephen Gosson, the puritan controversialist (d. 1624); and Richard Boyle, 'Great Earl of Cork' (d. 1643). To these, born in the city, may be added William Harvey, the anatomist (d. 1657), and Robert Cushman (d. 1625), the grocer's assistant who was mainly instrumental in hiring the ship *Mayflower*. Harvey and Cushman (both of Kentish origins) underwent education and apprenticeship respectively in Canterbury.

William Somner stands high amid this diversity of talent and it is curious that he has never attracted a serious biography. A great discouragement has been the destruction of his papers in the fire at the Cathedral Audit House in 1670, the year after his death. There was a second, less well-known destruction of documents relating to Somner and his family in the air-raid of June 1942, though fortunately notes of their contents survive, while some letters to his distinguished correspondents are available. Moreover, as a busy official he left masses of administrative documents in his beautiful but difficult handwriting. Happily at least part of his historical collections, with his books both printed and manuscript (some of medieval date), had been transferred to the Cathedral library and escaped damage in 1670.¹

White Kennett compiled a *Life of Mr. Somner*, prefixed to the Rev. James Brome's edition of Somner's *Roman Ports and Forts in Kent* (1693). Kennett was himself a distinguished antiquary whose father, Basil Kennett, had known Somner personally. White Kennett was at this time Vice-Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, where he had been an undergraduate, and dated his *Life of Somner* with great precision from '*Edm. Hall Oxon. Feb. 15. 1693*'. Edmund Gibson, from the adjacent Queen's College, supplied learned footnotes to the edition of *Roman Ports*.²

Kennett's *Life*, however, though written in stately Stuart prose, with much charm and enthusiasm for its subject, is of limited value, for it is commonly vague, discursive, inaccurate and lacking in such essential features of a biography as sound personal chronology. In fact it is less a *Life* than a manifesto for the value of contemporary antiquarian studies. Kennett may perhaps be excused for a faulty compilation, since he lived far from Kent, had few materials to work upon, and was out of immediate contact with those who harboured fleeting recollections of the great antiquary and who could have supplied personal memories and touches. James Brome can less be excused, for as incumbent of Newington near Folkestone he was living only a few miles from Somner's widow and children. Brome (who enjoyed a name as a travel writer)

had wished the task of writing a memoir on to Kennett upon the excuse of a 'retir'd life, and want of access to books', yet he was no more than a ride from the Cathedral library at Canterbury.

Kennett is vague about Somner's origins, and commends him for not advertising them. The father proves to be another William Somner (son of David Somner), Registrar of the Canterbury Consistory Court, baptized at Boxley near Maidstone in 1572 and brought up not far away at Debtling. He reached Canterbury when about nineteen around the year 1591 and was apprenticed to lawyers in the Consistory Court, then conducted beneath the north-west tower in the Cathedral nave.³ He had left his heart behind him, for in October 1594 he went to Maidstone and on 22nd of the month married the twenty-year old Anne Winston, then of that town, who had been born at Linstead, near Faversham. William Somner the antiquary, her son, owned a medieval glossary once in the hands of Giles Winston, an objectionable Canterbury attorney, so perhaps there is a family connection with him.⁴

In the absence of much personal information about the mother of William Somner, we may proffer what we do know, and observe that she was, like many ladies of the day, unlettered and unable to sign her own name.⁵ She was near neighbour of and acquainted with Mrs Susan Fludd, the mother-in-law to Izaak Walton, and it is possible that William Somner met the author of the *Compleat Angler*. Walton liked to cultivate clerico-legal circles, and for his *Life of Richard Hooker* obtained a copy of Hooker's will 'attested under the hand of William Somner, the Archbishop's Registrar for the Province [sic] of Canterbury'.⁶ Walton probably used the copy of Hooker's will issued in 1600 for probate purposes by Somner senior. Both Izaak Walton the angler, and William Somner the antiquary were in accord over the excellence of Fordwich trout, remarking respectively that they are 'accounted rare meat', and that they 'beare away the bell'. Walton was intimate with Meric Casaubon, Prebendary of Canterbury, the antiquary's friend and patron.⁷

In a court case of 1622, the elder William Somner gave evidence and provided additional news of his movements. Entries of baptisms (underlined by the evidence) show that the young couple started married life in St. Margaret's parish in Canterbury. Their child George Somner was christened in that church on 17 February 1597, while a William Somner followed on 5 November 1598.⁸ The father, advancing in his career, was admitted Proctor in the Consistory Court on 7 June 1597,⁹ and about then moved into St. Alphage parish, dwelling in the building with the sign of the 'Sun', the wooden structure still standing on the Sun Yard in Sun Street.¹⁰ It seems once to have been known as the 'Splayed Eagle', and as such would have been the boyhood home of John Lyly, author of *Euphues*. Baptisms appear in the St. Alphage Register, of Henry Somner (1600), Mary (1603) and of John (1605).

After a sojourn of about five years, the Somner family returned to St. Margaret's parish, clearly moving into the large house with an overhang, today with a classicized front, numbered 5 Castle Street. At that time the house bore a sign, like the previous residence, namely the 'Crown'.¹¹ The house has a singular feature for it spans the three Canterbury parishes of St. Margaret, St. Mildred and St. Mary de Castro. Here was born another William on 30 March (according to family tradition), in the year 1606. Probably he was baptized at St. Margaret's, but in the absence of the parish register or of the Bishop's transcripts for that particular year, we are uncertain. The baptism is at any rate not noticed in any other of the central parishes. A sister, Mabel, was born in 1615 and baptized at St. Mildred's, Canterbury.

There can be no question but that the child William, born in 1606, is the antiquary. Kennett debates the point and the *Dictionary of National Biography* settles for the earlier date in 1598, but the child baptized then must have died, while the family perpetuated the Christian name. William Somner (the younger) himself resolves the question, for during a court case in November 1663 he said that he was born in Canterbury, had lived there *ab incunabulis*, and was then 56 years of age, which points to the later date

INTRODUCTION

(vii)

of 1606 but suggests that the famous historian had forgotten precisely how old he was, and was a year out.¹²

The young Somner grew up in an atmosphere of ecclesiastical law as suitors or clients came and went, for the 'Crown' was not only his father's office, but the centre of much diocesan business. Somner, senior, (as disclosed in his own Consistory Court records) was called upon to write wills, and occasionally agitated relatives induced him to ride far out into the countryside to take down a testament at a bedside.

William Somner, the younger, probably first attended school at one of the numerous small private establishments of which only a bare trace remains in local archives. He went on to the King's School, where his headmaster was the redoubtable John Ludd, with his famous boast of 37 Masters of Arts of his own bringing up. But Somner's stay at the school can hardly have extended much beyond the age of thirteen or so, when he was taken away and apprenticed to his father's occupation.¹³ The transition was easy, for he worked at home. The court archives were kept in the house, useful not only for reference to cases, but as sources of precedent, and in due time as a mine of information to the growing antiquary about medieval Canterbury, for the earliest Consistory register went back to the year 1396. Somner's interest in antiquity must indeed have fermented at an early age. Clearly the *Antiquities* published in 1640, when he was 34, written not in learned leisure but in the spare time of a busy professional life, can hardly have taken less than twenty years to compile.

In his career as an ecclesiastical lawyer the grade to be aimed at was that of Notary Public. There seems to be no record of his admission to the grade available, but on '3 April 1623, when he was just seventeen years of age, William Somner, junior, gave evidence in a case styling himself *Notarius Publicus*.¹⁴

He would henceforth be much in demand, representing people in the church courts, in a period when those institutions interfered to a now unbelievable degree in private lives. For instance, Sir James Hales of Reculver, a sworn officer of His Majesty's Privy Chamber, no less, early in 1626 sought the services of the Notary Somner, not yet twenty, to extricate himself and his lady from a charge of non-attendance at church.¹⁵ A Notary's word was as good as that of two ordinary witnesses. Somner could now draw up Notarial Instruments, that class of solemn legal document, adorned in great days during the Middle Ages with complex individual notarial signs. Such a sign, of William Somner, senior, is reproduced in this volume with attestation written out in the hand of his son, William, the antiquary.¹⁶

Several men connected with Canterbury influenced Somner's development as a scholar. These included William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose patronage of learning was marred by his tactless and overbearing rule, contributing so much to political troubles of the time. One of Laud's more ill-advised projects was an effort to impose conformity with the Church of England upon the French and Walloon Protestant refugees, of whom there was a very large community at Canterbury, worshipping in the Cathedral crypt. They were sober, disciplined and industrious, keeping their own poor and also providing employment for many native English. Few were anxious to see them disturbed but Laud could not keep his fingers off them. A commission was instituted to deal with them, including somewhat unenthusiastic members like Dean John Bargrave and Meric Casaubon B.D. (and later D.D.), the classical scholar, Prebendary of Canterbury (see below). The commissioners, among whom was Sir Nathaniel Brent, the Commissary, met delegates from the refugee churches in the Somners' own house in Castle Street, on 19 December 1634.¹⁷ The Archbishop had and has but few admirers. However he stirred a devotion in the heart of William Somner, who, when he came to publish his *Antiquities*, dedicated it in a fulsome address to Laud. But Laud deserved and still deserves adulation from scholars, for today they benefit from his great benefactions in manuscripts reposing in libraries like the Bodleian. William Somner, deeply learned in the history of the diocese, was of value to the Archbishop in resolving questions relating to benefices.¹⁸

Another influence upon Somner was Prebendary Meric Casaubon, son to the immensely learned Isaac, the refugee from France living in Geneva, enticed to this country by James I. Meric produced theological works and editions of the classics. He dwelt, the scholarly ornament of the Cathedral Chapter, in a house flanking the Mint Yard, where William Somner was certainly a visitor. It was Casaubon who directed Somner's footsteps towards a study of Anglo-Saxon. Yet another inspirer of studies (according to Somner's *Preface*) was Thomas Denne, Esquire, who may be identified with the Counsellor-at-Law (and later Recorder) to the Canterbury Corporation, a member of the distinguished Kentish legal family.¹⁹

William Somner developed enthusiasm for at least one field-sport. His passion for archery made him overstep bounds of prudence, though his publisher indulged him. He went off at a tangent in the *Antiquities* on the subject and in the Appendix reprinted in six sides of print *An Apologie for Archery* taken from Bingham's *Notes on Aelians Tacticks*.²⁰

No doubt Somner lived at home in Castle Street all these years. He was 28 before he married, late for the age. On 12 June 1634 he espoused Elizabeth Thurgar of the Archbishop's Palace precinct, a member of a Cambridgeshire family.²¹ Two children of the union have been traced, Elizabeth Somner who was unmarried at the date of her father's death in 1669, and Ann who married Richard Pising, a goldsmith—an unsatisfactory son-in-law, with erratic movements, if anything can be read into the language used of him in William Somner's will.

The next landmark in Somner's career was admission on 20 March 1638 as Proctor of the Consistory Court. His father had been admitted at 25, but the younger man was over thirty before promotion. Present on the occasion in court was Sir Nathaniel Brent, the Commissary, with William Somner, senior, as Registrar. William Somner, junior, appeared, flourishing a mandate from Archbishop Laud, enjoining his admission. The Commissary duly complied, but at once a question of precedence arose with Leonard Browne, N.P., admitted Proctor at the last court day. It was agreed by Browne that Somner might occupy a place to his right, whereupon Somner expressed his gratitude. All this question of protocol is now of course lost upon us, but clearly it must have meant a lot to the parties concerned.²²

Within this year the father died. He had prepared his will on 11 July 1637. Various legacies were made to the children and to servants. A surprising bequest for a supposedly pacific official was of armour, assigned to George. The principal legacy, the house in Castle Street, devolved upon George Somner, as the eldest surviving son. He had evidently no wish to live in it, and sold it to William, who had spent much if not all of his life there, and was probably dwelling in the building with his young wife. Probate was effected on 21 September 1638 in the presence of William Somner, N.P., junior, acting in his official capacity.²³

The office of Registrar was open to purchase. Somner could not succeed his own father, since two bidders had already obtained reversion to act jointly. It must have been galling when on 27 February 1639 Benjamin Holford, N.P., and Richard Cobb, N.P., attired in official robes, were established as joint-Registrars in the court place in the Cathedral nave, and even more galling when the couple arrived in Castle Street to take over the accumulated archives of the court. They turned everyone out of the depository even including William Somner himself. Eventually he was admitted and required to make an official record of proceedings.²⁴

It seems very likely, however, that Holford and Cobb left the records and the office where they were, and where they had been for 30 or 40 years, in which case things went on very much as before. It seems that Somner was living in the house in the years after 1639, for in 1669, when writing the pamphlet *Chartham News*, he remarked that his next neighbour in Castle Street, 'within these thirty years' had found Roman remains when sinking a cellar.

At this time Somner must have been hard at work completing the *Antiquities*, with

INTRODUCTION

(ix)

proof-correcting and journeys to London to see the publisher-printers. The work was finally brought out in 1640, and in the same year Somner, the fierce local patriot, had the gratifying experience of being admitted as a Freeman of Canterbury by gift.²⁵ He had actually made application, and would have expected to pay fees, but as the minute shows, he was accorded the Freedom on the grounds that he was now Deputy Registrar to the Archbishop (a fact not noticed in the records of the Consistory Court). Another minute, under date 14 April 1640, discloses that at the City Council meeting on that day, William Somner, Deputy Registrar to the Archbishop, presented to the city his book *The Antiquities of Canterbury*.

Little need be said of the *Antiquities* as the volume speaks eloquently for itself and its author. After the adulatory address to Archbishop Laud, Somner offers his own Preface, in the form of a charming apologia for the study of history in general, and of local history in particular. The author's passionate affection for his native city stands out in every line. He tells with tremendous relish the story of Cicero's visit to Syracuse, where he asked after the tomb of their famous resident, Archimedes. To Cicero's contempt this was only discovered after clearance of vegetation in the overgrown local cemetery, 'as if a man should scoffingly object to us here of Canterbury', that the graves of local heroes could not be identified. Canterbury Cathedral is more splendid than almost any other (Somner clearly mentally omits 'almost') in the realm, and likewise is richer in the 'unvaluable' (i.e. of non-bullion value) archives to go with the buildings.

The inspiration of the volume is obviously Stowe's *London*, in turn inspired by Lambard's *Kent*. Indeed some of the internal order is the same, for Somner follows the other topographer's subject matter, as in *antiquity, city walls, to the city ditch and defences*. Somner's chapters on *wards, parish churches, ecclesiastical government, and temporal government*, are clearly modelled on those in the London volume.

The *Antiquities* appeared at a most unhappy moment, on the eve of the Civil War. Copies remained unsold at the Restoration in 1660, and to clear the stock it was put out with a new title-page 'pasted over the old' (see Battely's Preface, below). By the end of the century there was call for a new edition. There were now many more readers than before the wars, but less ponderously learned, and Somner's heavy ballast of Latin documents was now not so welcome. Nicholas Battely, Vicar of the nearby Bekesbourne, decided to bring out a new edition, catering for the public of the time. He transferred the Latin evidences to the appendix for the greater part (often with translations), but left some of Somner's learned mannerisms still standing in the text. In effect Battely's performance is a work of popularization. His explanation of his methods should be studied in his Preface below. To Somner brought up to date, Battely added his own *Cantuaria Sacra* not reproduced here. As its title indicates, it is mainly concerned with the ecclesiastical side of local history.

During the Civil War Canterbury suffered grievously. The Cathedral underwent a desecration in August 1642 effected by Colonel Sandys and his ruffianly troopers.²⁶ What William Somner suffered during the episode hardly bears contemplation but a more systematic attack was to follow the next year. Acting on authority of Parliament, commissioners 'for abolishing monuments of idolatry', numbering the Mayor and the Recorder with the local puritan fanatic, the Rev. Richard Culmer, called Blue Dick from his gown with its unclerical colour, entered the building, hot upon mischief. The middle-aged vandals did not know where to start, and in an excess of refined cruelty, as the psychopathic Culmer gleefully records, they used a copy of Somner's recently published *Antiquities of Canterbury* to find their way around.²⁷

'The book was a card and a compasse to sail by in that Cathedral ocean of images. By it many a popish picture was discovered and demolished.'

One wonders if the Mayor had actually brought along the copy presented with glowing pride to the Corporation three years before. The terrible story of destruction is well-known, largely through Culmer's own account, *Cathedrall Newes from Canterbury*, by which

(x)

INTRODUCTION

the author damned himself to perpetual infamy. One medieval masterpiece after another was annihilated by the barbarians.²⁸ Somner must have been distraught.

A principal casualty in the Cathedral was the new font, given in 1639 by Dr. John Warner, Bishop of Rochester. Kennett says that the materials were carried off by the rabble, that Somner retrieved the fragments and was rewarded by his daughter being the first to be baptized when the font was re-established in 1660. But there are divergent accounts and the chronology seems unsatisfactory.²⁹ Kennett also says that at this time Somner concealed the Cathedral archives, depositing some in unsuspected hands, keeping some in his own custody, and redeeming some from needy soldiers, which suggests that certain were seized during the dragoonade of August 1642.

As far as we know Somner played no part in the disturbances which occurred in Canterbury in 1647 and which developed in the following year into a general royalist outbreak. The origin of the affair was a parliamentary decree that Christmas should not be celebrated. At Canterbury defiant shopkeepers kept closed, while the puritan Mayor went up and down trying to make them open up. A riot ensued and for a few days disorder reigned. The next May parliamentary judges came down to conduct the Assizes at Canterbury and to deal with the prisoners taken in the Christmas affray. These prisoners numbered distinguished local residents like the lawyers Sir William Man and Francis Lovelace, with Alderman Avery Sabine, the woollen-draper, who had tried to keep the peace. There were two sessions, one at the Guildhall for the City, and another at the Castle for the county. The bloodthirsty Justice Wilde, (who had only just hanged, drawn and quartered a royalist in the Isle of Wight) gave vent to an intemperate attack upon the prisoners, but was quietened down by his colleague, Justice Cresheld. The Grand Jury threw out the indictment. At once real rebellion flamed. Parliament sent troops into Kent under General Fairfax, who defeated the royalists in a furious battle at Maidstone on 1 June 1648. Canterbury now remained the centre of revolt. Three columns approached, Fairfax from the west, with Colonel Rich and Colonel Hewson, whose regiment had been badly mauled at Maidstone, coming from the south. With only 1,300 men to defend the long perimeter (1½ mile round the walls), surrender was inevitable. Terms, not unreasonable, were agreed with Fairfax at Faversham on 9 June 1648, and the next day the enemy marched into Canterbury under General Ireton. The city gates were pulled off their hinges and burnt, while a stretch of wall was overturned. Captured arms from the county to the number of 3,000 were laid out in the Cathedral, while 300 horses were led in to be stabled there.³⁰

The Somner family suffered grievous loss in the rising. George Somner, the elder brother, no doubt attired in some at least of the armour left him by his father, the Registrar, charged at the head of a royalist detachment in Olantigh Lane, close to Wye, and was killed in action.³¹ The rebellion was finally subdued with bloody retribution across the Thames at Colchester. William Somner's name is not found among those who turned out on behalf of the King. Yet, as Kennett says, while his 'profession and genius had less adapted him for arms . . . he was no less zealous to assert the rights of the Crown, and the Laws of the land, by all the means which his capacity could use'. He acted in his own way with great courage, setting to work upon an anonymous poem (where it must be confessed his passion outdistanced his Muse), entitled *The In-securitie of Princes, considered in an occasional meditation upon the Kings Late Suffering and Death*, produced in quarto by a printer who does not identify himself. Hardly had the head of Charles fallen, when the book *Eikon Basilike* went into circulation, bringing a revulsion against the judicial murder. Somner went to work again with more verses, under the heading *The Frontispiece of the Kings Book Opened*, again anonymous but anonymity in the small world of printers was easy enough to pierce. However, no trace of reprisals is found.

It may be asked, in the face of a breakdown in his professional world, what William Somner lived upon in these years. The disciplinary side of the church courts had

gone, while there was no more litigation for him to handle over tithes, matrimony or defamation, where he had once drawn fees. However, the local courts in their probate aspect were still functioning in the late 1640s so some income may have been available from professional charges. But there is a suggestion of collapse thereafter, when wills were no longer copied into registers.³²

A weary decade dragged by with terrors for antiquarians, for the horrors of destruction accompanying the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s were almost re-enacted. At one stage a motion was actually brought for the demolition of fifteen great cathedrals. First upon the list was that of Canterbury yet some vestige of commonsense prevailed and no action was taken. But William Somner had something else to occupy his mind. If barbarism was abroad, so was a surge of antiquarian interest. The Kentish gentleman, Sir Roger Twysden, gave up warfare and devoted himself to his great collection of ancient historians, still valuable today and not superseded, the *Scriptores X*, brought out in 1652. The distinguished Canterbury antiquary, Somner, could hardly be left out of the project, and contributed his much-lauded word-list of obsolete terms, in some 80 folio pages headed

'Glossarium: in quo obscuriora quæque vocabula . . . copiosè explicantur . . .
Gulielmo Somnero Cantuariensi, Auctore.'

A vaster project was under way, namely *Monasticon Anglicanum*. Roger Dodsworth has accumulated enormous transcripts relating to northern monasteries. William Dugdale, the Herald, was collecting materials elsewhere in the realm. Again Somner could not be left out. At the appeal of the compilers, he sent up the charters of Christ Church, Canterbury and of St. Augustine's Abbey, 'with the ichnography of the Cathedral, the draught of the monastery and other sculptures'. He 'furnisht them with the original charter of King Stephen to the abbey of Faversham, then in his hands . . . and then accepted the office imposed upon him, of bearing a peculiar part of the burden, by translating all the Saxon originals, and all the English transcripts from the itinerary of Leland . . . into plain and proper Latin'. Drawings sent up by Somner were prepared by Thomas Johnson, a member of the Canterbury family of artists living for many years in St. George's parish. Somner told Dugdale that one drawing would cost ten shillings. Wenceslaus Hollar himself engraved some of the plates.³³

The first volume of the enormous enterprise appeared in 1655. There seems to have been some feeling abroad that Somner's contribution to *Monasticon I* was in fact more substantial than it was. Six Kentish or Canterbury poets got to work and produced an amusing set of verses belauding the great tome. The verses were printed in sheets, a copy of which is inserted (as Kennett says) into the magnificent large-paper copy of *Monasticon I*, with its gilt vellum covers, its gleaming and goffered fore-edges, still in the Chapter library. The versifiers salute Somner as joint-compiler with Dodsworth and Dugdale. Richard Fogge Esq. of Dane court unambiguously heads his Latin effort *In Monasticon . . . a Rogero Dodswortho, Gulielmo Dugdallo, & Gulielmo Somner . . . editum*. Dr. Frederick Primrose, the Canterbury physician, starts off in similar terms, bringing the three names together, as does John Boys of Hode. Joshua Childrey, the Faversham schoolmaster, provides a charming imitation of Chaucer, addressed 'To the right ylered Clerks, Dan *William Sompner* & c. on her makelesse werke, high *Monasticon*'. Neither in the heading, nor in more than 60 lines of verse do Dugdale and Dodsworth even get a mention, *proprio nomine*.

The loss of William Somner's letters, his 'in' file, at the Audit House fire of 1670 becomes even more harrowing when his relationships to the great antiquaries of the day are reviewed. Sometimes letters from Somner can be found addressed to such scholars. Dugdale sent him a copy of his *History of Embanking and Draining* as a token of help given. On 11 April 1662 the Canterbury antiquary acknowledged the work, promising to promote the sale, 'but it is (you know) a dull and dead time'.³⁴ The letter concludes with best wishes to be sent on to a whole galaxy of mutual antiquarian

friends, Mr. Goddard, Captain Ashmole, Sir John Marsham, 'and the rest of my noble friends and benefactors, especially my patron Mr. Spelman'.

Somner was known to the great international scholar Francis Junius who wrote to Dugdale from the Hague in January 1656 sending his service to John Rushworth (compiler of the *Historical Collections*) and to Mr. Somner, 'with other lovers of Antiquities'.³⁵

White Kennett gives a long list of scholar-gentry, local and nation-wide, whose regard was gained by Somner. Sir Roger Twysden with whom Somner collaborated in the *Scriptores X* 'exchanged intimate visits'. Kennett provides a noble roll-call of these Kentish country gentlemen 'who had affection to virtue and good letters', who contracted relations with Somner and, if the language may so be interpreted, supported him or his learned projects.³⁶

A well-defined picture emerges of William Somner as a generous scholar anxious to share his enthusiasms with others, whether with a mature researcher such as Dugdale or a more youthful enthusiast like Anthony à Wood, who wrote from Oxford on 21 February 1662 to Somner, respectfully introducing himself as a young antiquary, asking for transcripts relating to the extinct Canterbury College. Despite his correspondent's dubious (and to Somner disadvantageous) postal arrangements, Somner had despatched from Canterbury by 21 March all that was needed by his enquirer.³⁷

The growing interest in English antiquities had drawn attention to one glaring want in the *apparatus criticus* of the day, namely an effective dictionary of Anglo-Saxon. Studies in the tongue had long been in progress, indeed since the days of Elizabeth I, at the hands of men like William Lambard. The general public had access to sermons of Bishop Wulfstan printed in handsome Old English type by John Day, in Foxe's *Martyrs*. Somner had long been interested in the language and certainly it engaged him through his pre-occupation in the early history of Canterbury. Prebendary Meric Casaubon relates in a delightful passage in his *De Quatuor Linguis* how he came to study Anglo-Saxon charters.³⁸ On his appointment to his stall at Canterbury he started looking at the muniments, and with awe discovered the ancient documents in the Cathedral treasury. At this juncture he came into contact with William Somner, who was making a start in the language. Casaubon claims to have urged upon Somner the compilation of a dictionary. Already by 1653 the question of special types for this dictionary was under discussion.³⁹ Sir Henry Marsham in his *Propylaeum* to the *Monasticon* (1655) remarks that Somner was preparing his Saxon-Latin dictionary for the press.

Wealthy collectors gave admission to their hoards. Somner was accorded admission to the library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, and worked there upon the great Anglo-Saxon verse *Genesis* (now B.L. MS. Junius XI).⁴⁰ Sir Thomas Cotton entertained him in his house at Westminster for some months 'to collect and digest his Saxon Dictionary', when Somner gained access to the Saxon *Orosius* (now Tiberius B. 1. 1), and other treasures of that collection.⁴¹

Sir Henry Spelman, a leader among the antiquaries and a man of means, took a practical step and established a readership in the tongue based upon 'a sufficient yearly stipend, with presentation to the benefice of Middleton, nigh *Lin Regis*'. The first Reader was the Cambridge linguist, Abraham Wheelock, who justified his appointment by producing a version of Bede and other like works. He made promise to work up a dictionary, but had not done much by the time of his death in 1653. Roger Spelman, grandson to the founder, on whom the patronage had devolved, planned to assign the readership to the Rev. Samuel Foster, 'a learned and worthy divine'. Archbishop James Usher, however, urged the allocation to William Somner, and Spelman deferred to the judgment of the great ecclesiastical historian, though Somner, with characteristic delicacy refused to accept without approval from Foster, who contented himself with the office of incumbent of Middleton.⁴²

The financial provision must have been very welcome indeed to Somner at a low

point in his career, with income from much of his normal professional activities in suspense. It can hardly be claimed that the readership supported him while at work on the *Dictionary* since it came to him near the end of his labours, close upon publication, but it must have re-imbursed him. The great work of scholarship appeared in two volumes in 1659 from the Oxford Press, with the title *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum*.⁴³ Ælfric's Saxon Grammar was published under the same covers. A group of friends, including again Joshua Childrey and John Boys of Hode, got together and produced a clutch of learned and humorous verses celebrating publication of the *Dictionary*, parallel to those produced to mark publication of *Monasticon*. As in the case of that work, a set of the verses may be found inserted into the Cathedral library copy of the *Dictionarium*.

The *Dictionary* was an extraordinary achievement, an instance of scholarship carried out into wide and obscure fields with no substantial predecessors to provide a foundation, though Somner's meagre materials, as Kennett says 'might have exercised a Critic, sooner than instructed a Novice'. Not only is it a pioneer effort, but it reached a singular degree of perfection at a first effort. Says Kennett:⁴⁴

'certainly, if we look back on the first attempts of this kind, in all the ancient and modern tongues, we shall find no one *Nomenclature*, in it's pure beginning so copious, and so exact, as this of Mr. *Somner*.'

No dictionary can ever be complete. Fresh materials came Somner's way, naturally through publicity provided by his own work. The bulk swelled continuously, and additional words and corrections were inserted into an extra-leaved copy (still to be seen at Canterbury). However, a new edition was not brought out in his lifetime.

It is a source of pride to Kentish antiquarians that the shire boasted of its own system of tenure, namely Gavelkind. Its chief feature was the equal partition of ground between heirs, and its attractions were less apparent to estate owners than to antiquaries. Many of the former had their lands disgavelled by Act of Parliament, as shown by lists included in William Lambard's *Perambulation of Kent*. The custom of Gavelkind remained to torment lawyers and owners until 1926. Clearly there was a need for an exposition of the custom, and Somner, both as a good antiquary and a good patriot, set about supplying the want. He had completed the work by 1647, but it was not until 1660 that it saw the light as *A Treatise of Gavelkind*. A second edition was called for in 1726 and was produced by the faithful White Kennett.

At some moment in the 1650s William Somner's troubles were sharpened by the loss of his wife, Elizabeth, with whom he had, as White Kennett says, 'liv'd in love and peace about thirty [read twenty?] years'. Parish registers were then being kept only intermittently, and her entry of burial seems not to have survived.⁴⁵

Politically the days were dark, but the military government as imposed by Cromwell was too alien to Englishmen to last. William Somner, who seems to have remained quiescent in earlier crises (apart from his publication of anonymous poetry), found a new boldness. With other local men he promoted a petition at Canterbury for a free Parliament. The unrepresentative body calling itself by that name, however, took immediate action and bundled him and fellow-petitioners into the castles of Dover and Deal. By February 1660 William Somner 'the proctor', in company with such an old offender as Sir William Man, with Mr. Masters from St. Paul's parish, and with 'old Mr. Boyce' (John Boys, the versifier?) is listed as a prisoner within the chilly battlements of Deal.⁴⁶

On 25 May, however, Charles II arrived at Dover to take possession of his kingdom, and in pious language thanked the Mayor of the town for the gift of a Bible. At Canterbury he was greeted in the suburbs by the Aldermen and City Councillors, probably in the region of Oaten Hill or Dover Street. A golden cup, containing gold pieces, worth £250 was presented to the Monarch, together with yet another Bible, richly bound. There was still a further present, again another book. William Somner, choking with royalist fervour, offered to the King 'on the bended knees of his body' a

INTRODUCTION

(xiii)

point in his career, with income from much of his normal professional activities in suspense. It can hardly be claimed that the readership supported him while at work on the *Dictionary* since it came to him near the end of his labours, close upon publication, but it must have re-imbursed him. The great work of scholarship appeared in two volumes in 1659 from the Oxford Press, with the title *Dictionarium Saxonicum-Latino-Anglicum*.⁴³ Ælfric's Saxon Grammar was published under the same covers. A group of friends, including again Joshua Childrey and John Boys of Hode, got together and produced a clutch of learned and humorous verses celebrating publication of the *Dictionary*, parallel to those produced to mark publication of *Monasticon*. As in the case of that work, a set of the verses may be found inserted into the Cathedral library copy of the *Dictionarium*.

The *Dictionary* was an extraordinary achievement, an instance of scholarship carried out into wide and obscure fields with no substantial predecessors to provide a foundation, though Somner's meagre materials, as Kennett says 'might have exercised a Critic, sooner than instructed a Novice'. Not only is it a pioneer effort, but it reached a singular degree of perfection at a first effort. Says Kennett:⁴⁴

'certainly, if we look back on the first attempts of this kind, in all the ancient and modern tongues, we shall find no one *Nomenclature*, in it's pure beginning so copious, and so exact, as this of Mr. *Somner*.'

No dictionary can ever be complete. Fresh materials came Somner's way, naturally through publicity provided by his own work. The bulk swelled continuously, and additional words and corrections were inserted into an extra-leaved copy (still to be seen at Canterbury). However, a new edition was not brought out in his lifetime.

It is a source of pride to Kentish antiquarians that the shire boasted of its own system of tenure, namely Gavelkind. Its chief feature was the equal partition of ground between heirs, and its attractions were less apparent to estate owners than to antiquaries. Many of the former had their lands disgavelled by Act of Parliament, as shown by lists included in William Lambard's *Perambulation of Kent*. The custom of Gavelkind remained to torment lawyers and owners until 1926. Clearly there was a need for an exposition of the custom, and Somner, both as a good antiquary and a good patriot, set about supplying the want. He had completed the work by 1647, but it was not until 1660 that it saw the light as *A Treatise of Gavelkind*. A second edition was called for in 1726 and was produced by the faithful White Kennett.

At some moment in the 1650s William Somner's troubles were sharpened by the loss of his wife, Elizabeth, with whom he had, as White Kennett says, 'liv'd in love and peace about thirty [read twenty?] years'. Parish registers were then being kept only intermittently, and her entry of burial seems not to have survived.⁴⁵

Politically the days were dark, but the military government as imposed by Cromwell was too alien to Englishmen to last. William Somner, who seems to have remained quiescent in earlier crises (apart from his publication of anonymous poetry), found a new boldness. With other local men he promoted a petition at Canterbury for a free Parliament. The unrepresentative body calling itself by that name, however, took immediate action and bundled him and fellow-petitioners into the castles of Dover and Deal. By February 1660 William Somner 'the proctor', in company with such an old offender as Sir William Man, with Mr. Masters from St. Paul's parish, and with 'old Mr. Boyce' (John Boys, the versifier?) is listed as a prisoner within the chilly battlements of Deal.⁴⁶

1660

On 25 May, however, Charles II arrived at Dover to take possession of his kingdom, and in pious language thanked the Mayor of the town for the gift of a Bible. At Canterbury he was greeted in the suburbs by the Aldermen and City Councillors, probably in the region of Oaten Hill or Dover Street. A golden cup, containing gold pieces, worth £250 was presented to the Monarch, together with yet another Bible, richly bound. There was still a further present, again another book. William Somner, choking with royalist fervour, offered to the King 'on the bended knees of his body' a

handsome large-paper copy of the *Antiquities of Canterbury* of 1640. What Charles said about this book or whether he regaled himself with it stands unrecorded, but at any rate the volume was taken into the royal collection, bound in blue morocco and stamped with the king's arms. Somehow, though printing was not carried out nearer than London, Somner had managed to get a special extra dedicatory leaf printed for insertion, with a declaration of loyalty accompanying the humble offer of the book.⁴⁷ The actual copy, it should be noted, still survives, and reposes today in the Henry Huntington Library in California.

William Somner settled down at once to the welcome task of establishing the *status quo ante bellum*. This involved re-activating the church courts. On 15 July 1660 the old Consistory Court register, with its last entry dated 1 June 1643, was fished out, and business re-started with never a glance at the seventeen-year gap.⁴⁸ The returned Dean and Chapter made William Somner their Auditor or Agent, and he and his employers set about recovering lost income with a will that made them extremely unpopular. Yet there seems to be some suggestion that Somner was actually involved in collection of Cathedral rents at Ladyday 1660. Had he compromised and worked in effect for Parliament which had expropriated the Chapter's estates?⁴⁹

Somner must have been excited and happy at this stage. For the time being there was no Archbishop, so the administration of spiritualities devolved upon the Chapter *sede vacante*. The joint Registrars Holford and Cobb seem to have faded from the scene. On 14 July 1660 the Chapter appointed as Registrar William Somner who now found himself exercising his father's old office. But the appointment was only temporary, and when Archbishop Juxon was enthroned he too had a candidate, George Juxon, clearly a kinsman. However, this man and Somner were made joint-Registrars from 6 October 1660.⁵⁰

Somner now enjoyed two offices satisfying to his tastes. White Kennett provides him with another, that is 'Keeper of the Archives' of Canterbury Cathedral.⁵¹ The precise title seems not to have existed at that date, but Somner would have performed such a function *ex officio* from 1660, and his long-standing love of the muniments meant that for long years before then he had kept a tutelary eye upon them.

The appointment as Auditor it seems carried with it the right to a house in the Precincts. In November 1661 Somner was still being paid at the rate of £12 per annum by the Chapter in lieu of a house. The map of the waterworks prepared in 1669 shows that the house was sited in what had been the southern aisle of the ancient monastic Infirmary, the front of the building framed in giant 12th-century arches. It may have suited Somner's antiquarian tastes but it was deep in the shadow of the great church, and perpetually deprived of sunlight.⁵²

Meanwhile William Somner had remarried, on 1 December 1659. The new wife, Barbara Browne, was widow to Edward Browne, Master of the King's School, and daughter to John Dawson, 'a great sufferer in the long rebellion' as Kennett calls him.⁵³ The new Mrs. Somner seems to have been much younger than her husband. Baptisms appear in the Cathedral register: Barbara, daughter of Mr. William Somner, was baptized on 11 September 1660. It is this infant, who it is claimed, was the first baptized at the restored font. The next child was William Somner, baptized on 3 November 1661; next was Francis, baptized on 16 August 1663. He died an infant, being buried 27 May 1664. The last child was John Somner, baptized on 1 July 1666, when his father was just 60. Kennett says (1693) that Barbara the daughter died unmarried. William went to Merton College, Oxford, and became Vicar of Lyminge in Kent. John Somner practised surgery in the area, and dying in 1695 when only 29, was buried beneath a handsome ledger stone in the chancel at Elham, bearing the Somner arms (see below), and declaring him to have been 'Son of the Learned Mr. William Somner of Canterbury'.⁵⁴

William Somner seems to have lived on terms of friendship with his brother John, who had followed the trade of a tailor, with a business next to Christ Church Gate,

INTRODUCTION

(xv)

where he appears to have prospered. John Somner had been made a city Freeman in 1658, but had refused office as a City Councillor during the Interregnum, and was apparently deprived of his freedom. He had been re-elected a Freeman of Canterbury after the Restoration (22 January, 1661) for his part in persuading Archbishop Juxon to give new doors for the city gates to replace those burnt by the parliamentary troops in 1648. The Archbishop also provided handsome new doors (still surviving) for Christ Church Gate to succeed those destroyed in the troubles.

John, like William, was a good friend of the Cathedral. He donated works of Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrews, and others, as well as the folio edition of Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, to the new Cathedral library built by Juxon to replace the ancient library destroyed in the war. John also acted as an on-the-spot supervisor of work in progress on the library building.⁵⁵

William had achieved eminence as an author, John was quite prosperous, and it occurred about this time to the brothers that they should seek the distinction of gentility and acquire a coat of arms. They applied to Sir Percy Bysshe, Clarenceux Herald (an old antiquarian contact of William's, probably on the heraldic visitation in Kent), and on 25 August 1663 were granted the handsome coat *Ermine, two chevronels or*. John, though the elder, bore his coat with a crescent for difference.⁵⁶

Friendly feelings between John Somner and the Canterbury Corporation were soon marred. He had conceived the generous notion of building, at a cost of over £400, a market house for the city. This was to be on the site of the ancient High Cross destroyed by fanatics during the Commonwealth, and was to have an open lower storey, a large upstairs room for public meetings and assemblies of the city trade-companies, with a loft for grain for the poor against time of dearth. The Somners, for William was concerned too, made a modest request of some use of the premises during their lifetimes. But mean people intervened and the brothers' generosity was thrown back in their faces, though not before the Market House was actually completed.⁵⁷ The building served the city well, for it acted on the ground floor as a butter market (and as such has given a fresh name to the little square previously called Bullstake), and upstairs as the local theatre until its replacement by another market house in 1790. The Somner family seems to have claimed some rights in the structure as late as 1734.⁵⁸

Kennett paints a picture of William Somner in his latter days as a local patriarchal figure, the doyen of Kentish antiquaries. He shows him appearing at the School, selecting likely lads as King's Scholars, and noting those to be sent on to the universities. In this period, too, he was appointed as Master of St. John's Hospital, outside the Northgate of Canterbury, and may be found assiduously defending its interests (with those of Harbledown Hospital) in letters to Miles Smith, Archbishop Sheldon's secretary.⁵⁹

Here we may well repeat the delightful apostrophe set in Kennett's Stuart prose:⁶⁰

'Mr. *Somner* . . . prosecuted the duties of his office with prudence and integrity. *An office* (as he calls it) *laudable, and enough honourable*. And when he had *any hours reliev'd from the business of his calling*, those he devoted to his beloved search into the mysteries of time: to which by the nature of his profession, he seemed the more determined; he himself observing, *that to the studie of Antiquities his particular calling did in some manner lead him*. He lov'd much, and much frequented the *Cathedral Service*; where after his devotions were paid, he had a new zeal for the honour of the *House*, walking often in the *Nave*, and in the more recluse parts, not in that idle and inadvertent posture, nor with that common and trivial discourse, with which those *open Temples* are vulgarly profan'd: but with a curious and observant eye, to distinguish the age of the buildings, to sift the ashes of the dead; and, in a word, to eternize the memory of things and Men. His visits within the City were to find out the Ancestors, rather than the present inhabitants; and to know the genealogie of houses, and walls, and dust. When he had leisure to refresh himself in the

Suburbs and the fields, it was not merely for digestion, and for air; but to survey the *British bricks*, the *Roman ways*, the *Danish hills and works*, the *Saxon Monasteries* and the *Norman Churches*. At the digging up foundations, and other descents into the bowels of the earth, he came often to survey the Workmen; and to purchase from them the treasure of Coins, Medals, and other buried reliques, of which he informs us, *that many were found in almost all parts of the City, some of which came to his hands*. Whenever he relaxt his mind to any other recreation, it was to that of shooting with the long bow, which no doubt he lov'd as much for the antiquity, as for the health and pleasure of that manly sport.'

Though he would not be considered old today William Somner was mature indeed by contemporary standards. He was in fact near his end, but went on working and writing to the last. He attended court as Registrar on 17 March 1669, but thereafter failed to make appearance. By now he was terminally ill. At this time he told his wife that in all his life he had never been let blood nor taken physic.⁶¹ However, they called in the local doctor, John Bale, at the very end.

Late in his life William Somner was working upon an acute essay called *Chartham News*. John his brother had acquired some ground at Chartham on the Stour a few miles above Canterbury, where workmen digging a well encountered certain strange and monstrous bones. Somner embarked upon a discussion, and here we have the spectacle of an acute mind grappling with preconceived notions derived from biblical chronology. How did the beast get to Chartham? What geographical changes had happened? Somner got a limner to make a drawing but it appears that only a view of the teeth is now available (as the engraving in *Chartham News*). Somner thought the animal must be an *equus fluvialis* or hippopotamus. The pamphlet was published in 1669 and reprinted by Battely with the *Antiquities* in 1703, and the engraving is reproduced below.

March 30 was William Somner's birthday. It is inconceivable that a man who had spent all his life writing wills, proving wills, and using them as historical evidence should not have made his own with all proper formality years before. Perhaps he changed his mind dramatically about legacies at the last moment. His own effective will was made on this day 30 March 1669, at the last moment, not in proper form but *nuncupativé*, by word of mouth.

He gave to his eldest son William (now aged seven), the house in Castle Street, to pass to him after the death of Barbara Somner, the child's mother. He discloses that he has ground at Chartham, like his brother John. He gave to his daughter Elizabeth by his first marriage the sum of £250, and to her sister Ann, wife of Richard Pising, goldsmith, the sum of £100 due from one Mr. Vaughan, who was to succeed him in his Registrar's place, a valuable insight into traffic in offices in those days. Twenty shillings were to be given to Mr. Stockar, minister of St. Alphage. The residue (after payment of miscellaneous minor legacies) was to go to Barbara the wife and her children which he had by her. His brother John Somner was named as executor, and the verbal will was attested by him with John Bale M.D. and Leonard Browne, his colleague for endless years in the church courts, now an Alderman of Canterbury.⁶²

Within the course of his birthday William Somner died, and was carried on 2 April to burial at his old parish church of St. Margaret, where he was laid to rest in the north aisle. The Chapter made what was both an attempt at a wise acquisition for their Library and a generous benefaction to the widow, in a payment of £100 which they gave her for William's papers, taken round the corner to the Audit House but with disastrous results as we know.⁶³ Barbara Somner did not long bemoan widowhood, for by licence dated 31 January 1671 she married the Rev. Henry Hannington, widower, vicar of Elham. He died in 1691.

For years no monument was erected above the remains of the great antiquary, a fact deplored by White Kennett in 1693:⁶⁴

'I cannot but admire and lament, that such learned ashes should lye without a letter on them: that he who rais'd the memory of so many great names, should

INTRODUCTION

(xvii)

himself sleep in a place forgotten: and after all his labours, to eternize the tombs and epitaphs of others, should have no such decent ceremony paid to his own dust. Sure the time will come, when some grateful monument shall be erected for him, either by someone of his family, whom providence shall enable to pay that duty: or by some one generous lover of Antiquities: or by that Capitular body, to whom he did such great service.'

Barbara Somner, now Hannington, soon took the hint, and at her own costs, in her widowhood, commissioned the handsome memorial still to be seen in St. Margaret's Church, 'in Memory of her beloved Husband'. There is no doubt where her affections lay. She had been married three times, but at the end demanded to be laid to rest, as she said, 'in the grave of William Somner my husband'.⁶⁵

William Somner's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* of 1659 may have been regarded by his contemporaries as his *magnum opus*, but it was a foundation-work, has long since been superseded, and pride of place in Somner's writings today must go to his *Antiquities*.

Somner's book is certainly not only the earliest, but also the best and most scholarly in that age among historical accounts of an English provincial borough and of its great ecclesiastical monuments. White Kennett recites a list of testimonials, sharpened by some very harsh judgments on works in the same field. Richard Izaac's *Exeter* (1681), is nothing but 'a dry collection, full of mistakes'; John Davies's *Cathedral Church of Durham* (1672) is 'an ignorant and pitiful legend', to repeat but two of his censures. On the other hand Somner's *Canterbury* earned wholesale approbation from the scholarly world. Meric Casaubon called it 'a pious and laborious work, and highly useful, not only to those who desir'd to know the state of that once flourishing City, but to all that were curious in the ancient English history'. John Burton, the editor of the *Antonine Itinerary*, refers anyone wanting to know about Canterbury to 'courteous Mr. Somners description of it', Richard Kilburne, the surveyor of Kent, touches only briefly upon Canterbury, 'because Mr. William Somner had so elaborately, judiciously and fully wrote of the same, and there was left but little . . . which he had not there set down'. Thomas Philpot, 'who had reason to envy him', acknowledges in *Villare Cantianum* that 'Canterbury hath . . . exactly in all the parts and limbs of it been describ'd and survey'd by Mr. Somner', and does not want to compete with the latter's work, 'pencilled out in so large and exquisite a volume'.⁶⁶

The *Antiquities* has had only one real imitator,—in Edward Hasted's section on Canterbury in his vast *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*.⁶⁷ Apart from Hasted, Somner has a minor competitor in William Gostling, who produced his *Walk in and about the City of Canterbury*, (published in various editions from 1774 to 1825), but this lacks deep scholarship, and for its more solid elements draws upon William Somner. Perhaps the enormous wealth of Canterbury in terms of architecture, archaeological remains, manuscript books, archives and chronicles is enough to deter would-be writers of any general account of the city's history.⁶⁸

The *Antiquities*, especially as revised and enlarged by Nicholas Battely in the edition of 1703 (made use of by Hasted and here reproduced), still stands as a unique contribution to the general history of Canterbury. It is a happiness of local historians that, however slight, their work is never entirely replaced and by the time another comes to rewrite their particular effort, the original has assumed an antiquarian value all of its own. Somner's *Antiquities* (at the other end of the scale) remains especially important not only in this way, as a register of so much that has been lost since his own days, but still as a fascinating piece of reading all in its own right, especially with the modest metamorphosis effected by Nicholas Battely.