

Archæologia Cantiana.

A NOTE ON THE REV. WM. GOSTLING AND ON THE ROMAN ALTAR AT STONE-IN- OXNEY.

BY F. WILLIAM COCK, M.D., F.S.A.

RECENTLY Mr. W. H. Yeandle, M.A., has published a very interesting pamphlet on the History of the Parish of Stone-in-Oxney.¹ In it he discusses the question of the Roman Altar, now in the church, giving the various traditions relating to it. As I happen to possess the original letter from Gostling to Hasted on the matter, which I owe to the kindness of my friend Ralph Griffin, F.S.A., I thought it would be well to put the facts of the case together, leaving out any of the varying traditions and giving only what is actually on record.

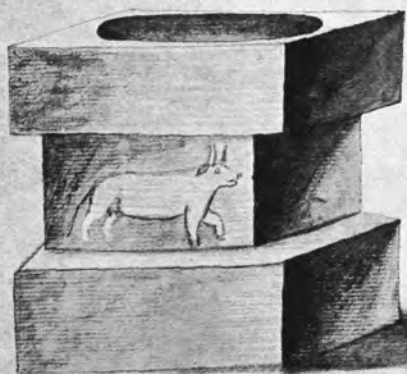
The first note we have is that in 1757 Mr. Ames sent a letter to the Society of Antiquaries saying that the Altar was in the possession of Mr. Gostling and giving an imaginary sketch of the Altar (Plate I). This entry in the MS. minutes, with the sketch, I have had facsimiled by kind permission of the Society. This sketch is reproduced in Gough's "Camden," 1789. Hasted in his first edition (folio) 1790, of the History of Kent, Vol. III, page 539, says that a "LATE STUPID" vicar had turned the altar out of the church and made it into a horseblock or as we say in Kent, a jossing block. This was done on the plea that the object was a Pagan one and not fit for a Christian temple. He gives a small copper engraving, also evidently drawn without inspection of the original. This notice slightly altered appears in the octavo edition, Vol. VIII, page 279, 1799, with the same illustration.

¹ Reviewed on p. 249 of this volume.—Ed., A.C.

Thanks were returned Him.

This Altar found at
Stone in Kent.

Mr Ames presented a Drawing of an
Old Altar found at Stone in Kent, in the year 1756,
now in the Possession of the Rev^d W^m Goddard, one
of the Canons of Canterbury



MS. 413
The Bell at Stone in the Isle of Axey.

It was some where in the Church there till a late vicar thinking that an improper place for such a Relique of Heathenism laid it at the Road side near his Gate for a Horte block.

It remained there much defaced & cracked in hundred till about 1762 when it was repaired and placed upright within the vicarage fence.

It does not appear to have had any Inscription but an Ore in relief on every side; only one of which remains fit to form a Drawing from.

The Baton or Top shik retains some blackness from the fire which have been made on it.

W. Gostling

1777

FACSIMILE OF GOSTLING'S LETTER TO HASTED.

Note the reversion to original spelling of the name.

Now for an attempted explanation of the presence of the Altar in the church. The late Mr. Edridge—Vicar of Stone, 1862-1906, told me nearly sixty years ago that he had always understood that the altar had been dug up in the chancel of the church. This was also told me later by Mr. Frampton, the verger, who is still living. Now we have no knowledge of the altar before the time of Mr. Gostling, who became vicar in 1753. How did it get dug up? If we look at Mr. Yeandle's list of mortuary inscriptions in the Chancels, N, S, and Great, we find several interments during the incumbency of the Rev. Culpeper Savage, Mr. Gostling's predecessor. Is it not probable that the altar was found when making a grave, that it was set up in the church, that this disciplinary vicar turned it out, made it into a horse block and that at the same time the bridle ring was inserted to tether a horse when necessary?

Taking the last point first, the ring and staple, though rusted, are not decayed as any iron would have been, if buried, for buried iron in this district decays because of the chemical action of common salt which exists everywhere in the soil. This I have repeatedly found when preserving, by the electrical process, iron long buried. Iron exposed to the air though rusting does not get salt infiltrated. Now burial stones in the chancels date from 1677 to 1791. There are two during the vicariate of the Rev. Culpeper Savage (Vicar, 1716-53), viz. 1733 and 1738, so if my theory is tolerably correct, it would be somewhere about those dates that the altar was disinterred. On the other hand it is possible that it was unearthed in 1677, and was only turned out of the church in 1716 when Mr. Savage became vicar. When Mr. Gostling succeeded to the living he had the stone removed to the vicarage garden (Plate II), where it remained, getting more weatherbeaten till 1926, when, under the auspices of Mr. G. D. Lander, D.Sc., and by public subscription, it was removed from the garden, repaired and placed on the South side of the floor of the Tower of the Church (Plate III). As Mr. Yeandle has given a full description with measurements of the altar and has noted the local traditions concerning

it, it would be quite unnecessary to repeat what has been most competently done. I am, however, in agreement with his suggestion that [it is possible that the present church represents the earliest church and that it, as was quite common, was placed on the site of a pagan temple or place of worship. The altar undoubtedly belongs to the cult of Mithras, the essentially military god, and being made of Kentish rag from the Hythe beds, might easily have been brought by the old Rother channel from the Roman Castle of Lympne and used for an outpost of the army at Stone.

In going into the records of the Roman Altar at Stone I had to look up those of its preserver, the Rev. Wm. Gostling, M.A., Minor Canon of Canterbury, and found a good many that are not mentioned in the necessarily condensed life in the *D.N.B.* He was the son of the Rev. John Gostling, M.A., also Minor Canon of Canterbury, chaplain and singing man to Charles II, of whose remarkably powerful voice all the anecdote books give the account that at his request Purcell wrote the anthem, "They that go down to the sea in ships", where there is a bass passage which Gostling alone could sing. Quite lately, when a competition for a place in the Cathedral choir was held, one of those singing chose this very solo as his essay for the post, thus showing that a modern voice was equal to that of the seventeenth century. Wm. Gostling also had a very fine bass voice and was compared favourably with Bartheleman, a leading bass at Westminster Abbey. He was an accomplished musician and wrote a certain amount of church music. I have had some of his choir books through my hands. The MS. is beautifully written and that is remarkable, as he was crippled almost universally by gout for many years, yet as will be seen by the facsimile, his writing was quite legible to within a few weeks of his death. In the B.M. is an oblong folio of Italian motets transcribed by him. This was bought by Dr. de Beauvoir from Flacton, the Canterbury auctioneer and bookseller. The ownership is marked on the flyleaf, (1) Thomas Bever (de Beauvoir), Fellow of All Souls (1777). At his sale it



ROMAN ALTAR AT STONE-IN-OXNEY
WHEN IN THE VICARAGE GARDEN.

A.C. XLVII.

PLATE II.

was bought by Thos. Greatorex. Then it went to Vincent Novello, then to Julian Marshall, and was bought finally by the B.M. in 1881. Gostling was a remarkably hospitable man, notwithstanding the *res Augusta domi*, for a family of nine, although most died as infants, kept him poor. The universal testimony to his cheerfulness and willingness to impart information is noticeable in all the books and references I have consulted. If he did not know the answer to a query, instead of a brief reply in the negative, he would do what he could to put his correspondent in the right way of finding out, clearly shown in a letter to Du Cases, the authority on shells, in my possession.

The following is a good example of his friendly hospitality to his neighbours.

Mint Yard Feb. 12, 1749.

Ladies. If you should like an hour or two of musick this afternoon you will be welcome to it here. My wife will give you a dish of tea & I shall have a Glass of Punch for you but I shall not ask you to stay Supper for I design my Germans shall do that and if my Table were big enough they would hardly be persuaded to sit down with you. If a more formal Summons be expected by any of you, you may find one overleaf.

Yo^r Ser^t,

W. Gostling,

Come to the House, My Gallant Souls
 Where Mirth & music crown the Bowls
 Here no cross Cards, shall give you care
 Nor Idling Lovetales teize the Fair
 Nor Scandal vile nor Banter rude
 Shall on our joyous Hours intrude.
 These we disclaim and in their Place
 The cheerful Song, the cheering Glass
 Friendship and Harmony succeed
 For we are gallant Souls indeed.

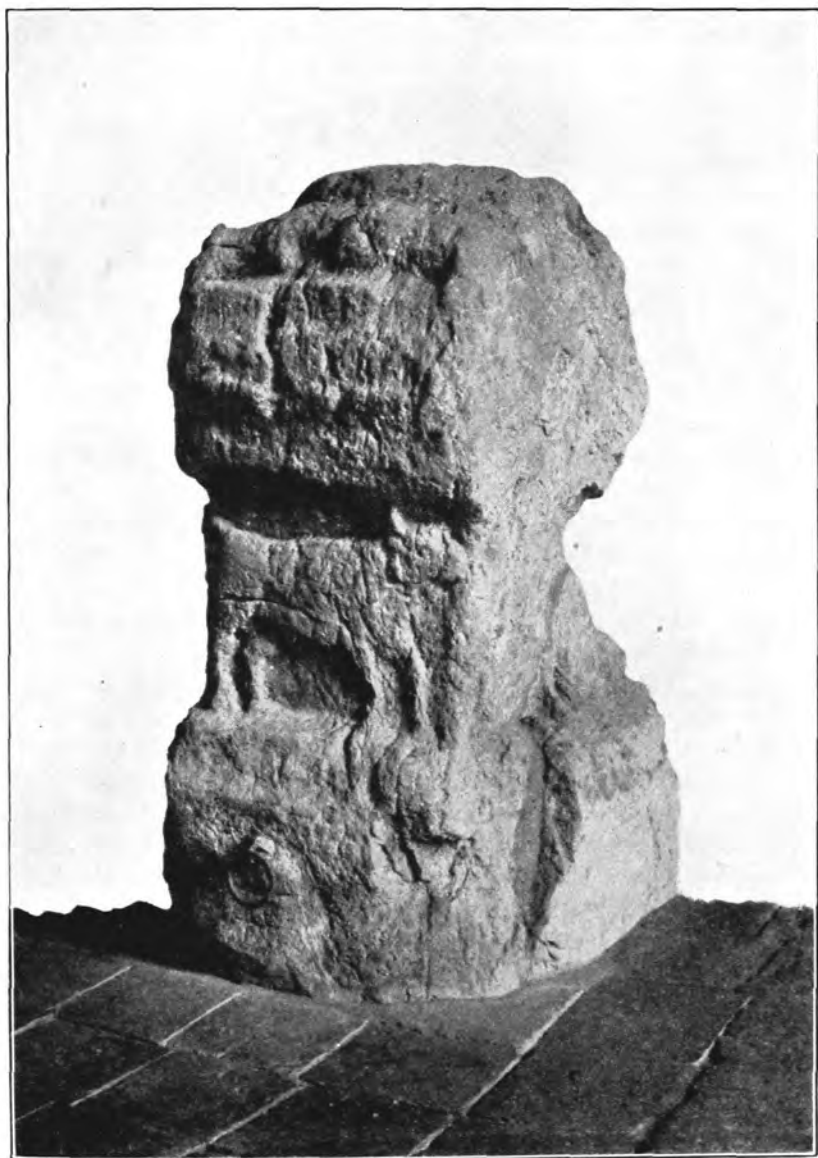
Addressed

To Miss Lynch's, Miss Hall, Miss Carter and Miss Bargrave.

The Misses Lynch were daughters of the then Dean, Miss Carter was the celebrated authoress and blue stocking,

Dr. Johnson's friend, Miss Bargrave of the family which gave many well-known officials to the Cathedral, but I am unable to place Miss Hall. A simple little survival of past happiness and harmony.

Wm. Gostling was given to rhyming. His longest effort was the putting into Hudibrastic verse Hogarth's "Frolic". His chief work by which he is remembered best is his "Walk in and about the City of Canterbury, with many Observations not to be found in any Description hitherto Published, by William Gostling, M.A., A native of the place and Minor Canon of the Cathedral," etc., Canterbury, 1774. Small octavo. He had been evidently preparing the materials for a long time, as there are letters to Essex, the well-known Oxford and Cambridge architect, in the B.M., discussing the buildings, material and plan of the Cathedral. These date back to 1760 and are printed in Nicolls' "Anecdotes". When crippled and unable to walk, his friends went over the ground and brought him notes on the various parts he was describing. He was most painstaking and accurate and to him we owe, among other things, the correct date, 1517, inscribed on Christ Church Gateway. We have what is a confirmation of this. When Thomas Streatfeild reviewed, in a somewhat critical spirit, Willement's work on the Heraldry of the Cathedral, he passes as correct the date, which he would certainly not have done if Gostling's statement had been wrong. The book sold out and is now one of the RARIORA of a Kent Library and its author immediately began collecting notes for a new edition, but he died whilst it was unfinished. As his faithful, devoted daughter Hester was left badly provided for, her friends carried on the work of editing. Dr. de Beauvoir described the painted glass, the Rev. T. Duncombe, the author of a poetical description of the Cathedral, did the general editing. No less than twenty-two new engravings were contributed by friends from all parts. An asterisk is placed before the names of those who increased their subscriptions and these number 107 out of a total list of 536. This is a high number for the period and as many subscribed for more than one copy we may calculate



ROMAN ALTAR AT STONE-IN-OXNEY AS IT IS, 1935, IN TOWER OF
CHURCH.

A.C. XLVII.

PLATE III.

that the edition was somewhere about 800. This accounts for the fact that copies of this second edition are more often met with than those of the other five.

We gain a good many sidelights on the old man, not only from Nicolls' "Anecdotes", but from Letitia-Matilda Hawkins' "Memoirs". She knew the family well and gives a lively account of the Minor Canon and his two sons. Like many of the old gouty people he was a large eater. On one occasion, dining with Mr. Colebrook, the father of Sir George Colebrook, of Chilham Castle, there was a haunch of venison and the Minor Canon fed heartily. His host watched him and at length remarked, "What would I give for your stomach?" "It is at your service at any time," replied the cleric. "Then I dress a haunch on Thursday," was the answer. Gostling was of a mechanical turn and invented several ingenious trifles such as the method of opening the top and bottom panels of a sash window at one operation. His house was full of what he called gimcracks, curios of all sorts, and these being arranged in several rooms became quite a museum. They were shown by his daughter, Hester, with the greatest willingness, though at the expense of much fatigue. She kept a register of visitors and the list amounted for several years to over two thousand a year. Gostling was of great conversational activity, joking, punning and full of vivacious talk, although he could, when he liked, be of the utmost seriousness. According to Miss Hawkins he spent more than enough on his experiments and collections, so that when the inevitable post mortem sale occurred these did not make much of a return. Part of his books were sold by Flacton in the year of his death, but the major portion of his library was sold by the Langfords. The catalogue was prepared by Sir John Hawkins, his MS. for this being copied with much care by Letitia Matilda. His friends rallied round again and made the sale a great success, to the relief of the faithful Hester. The list included MSS. of Purcell and Handel, besides many other rarities.

Miss Hawkins speaks of Thomas Simon, the maker of the celebrated petition crown. She states that he did not

die of the plague in 1665 and mentions his long hair and beard. This was evidently Abraham Simon, Thomas's brother. The interesting points are that he, too, was a musician and would stay with Wm. Gostling's father and would attend service and sing out of Gostling's book with him when in choir. He was very eccentric while a most accomplished artist, modelling in wax and making and casting medals. He made a number of wax models for Thomas to cast his medals from. He would come into Kent and stay with the Darell's, with whom he claimed relationship. That Thomas Simon died in 1665 is shown by his will proved in that year. His widow claimed a large sum from Charles II for his unpaid work. The MS. bill for this is in my Library and was printed in the second edition of Vertue's account of Simon's work. Of Wm. Gostling's two sons Miss Hawkins gives an amusing account. The one who became a priest was of a lively disposition. The other brother, Captain William Gostling of the Royal Artillery, was grave and almost clerical in his demeanour. He was married twice and Sir Joshua Reynolds' first picture was that of the first wife. He seems to have been a very highly accomplished man and a distinguished soldier. He served at Minden and in other battles. He had intended to take orders, but his father had him educated as an engineer and then he joined the Artillery. When he died the family came to an end, and the West Cloister of the Cathedral finally received the last of the Gostlings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Bibliotheca Cantiana, by John Russell Smith, 1837. Contains the account of the various editions of "The Walk". Also many references to the *Gentleman's Magazine* articles and letters concerning "The Walk" and to a death notice of its author.

Dictionary of National Biography, for both John and Wm. Gostling.

Memoirs, Anecdotes, Facts and Opinions collected and preserved by Letitia-Matilda Hawkins. 2 vols., 1822-24. 8vo. She was the daughter of Sir John Hawkins and knew the Gostling



Lo ! here his reverend Locks may Vie with Snow,
In silver Tissue curiously displayed,
Yet how much more becoming did they shew
Beneath the Velvet Covering of his Head.

family intimately. I can recommend her volumes as one of the most amusing anecdotal works that I have read.

MSS. in British Museum :

Add. 5851, page 147. One of Rev. Wm. Coles'. He left over 100 volumes of collections to the B.M.

Verses and Epitaph by Mr. James Six, A.B., Trinity Coll., copied from a MS. belonging to Mr. Gostling's Daughter, by Mr. James Essex, of Cambridge, when he was going to Margate, Aug^t 1779.

"On seeing a Mourning Ring in Memory of the Rev. Wm. Gostling, with a Chrystal Urn enclosing a platted lock of his Hair." Then follow nine verses on the lines of Gray's "Elegy".

Verse 2. "Oh ! narrow shrine and is thy Chrystal Stored
With all that pious Thriftiness could save ?
Yet shall Affection prize this little Hoard
Won from the crowded Coffers of the Grave.

3. Lo ! here his reverend Locks may Vie with Snow,
In silver Tissue curiously displayed,
Yet how much more becoming did they shew
Beneath the Velvet Covering of his Head."

I have put this last as a caption for the portrait. This shows Wm. Gostling wearing what were then called nightgown and cap. Now called a dressing-gown. The cap, a turban-like covering, was universally used when the wig was taken off, because the wearer was either bald or had his head shaved.

These verses were evidently much appreciated as they are reproduced in Nicolls' *Anecdotes* and in Freeman's *Kentish Poets*, 1826. The author, James Six, A.B. Cantab., was the son of that well-known philosopher who invented Six's Thermometer and other useful instruments. The family was of Canterbury. James died a young man from fever at Rome. There is a monument to him in Holy Cross Church.

Add. MS. 33924. "Mrs. Streatfeild's Gift."

A letter from W. Gostling, Sept. 18, 1763, to Dr. Ducarel. He says he would like a little additional preferment as times were difficult and even £30 a year would be of great help. "I may reckon myself among the old Standers in the Diocese having served as Curate or Parish Priest since 1720." (*Add. MS.* 23990.) Later on he worried the Doctor about some of the Vicarial revenues

of Stone-in-Oxney. Miss Hawkins says he was pertinacious in writing long letters and repeating them until he got an answer. And Dr. Ducarel, who was an impatient and irascible though very competent antiquary (he was Commissary to the Archbishop) wrote as follows:—"Aug^t 19, 1766. The enclosed is an authenticated copy of the Endow^t of the Vicarage of Stone-in-Oxney wch Dr. Ducarel sends Mr. Wm. Gostling as a present. The Dr. desires that y^e said Mr. Gostling would send no answer to this note as he wants no thanks on this Occasion, but he likewise desires the said Mr. Gostling to OBSERVE that for the future, he shall answer none of his letters except such as relate to his office as Commissary of Canterbury unless they should be about unavoidable business."

The same MS., page 71. This with Gostling's letter is quoted by Nicolls. This letter was merely asking about some tithes formerly enjoyed by the Vicar of Stone.

Gostling writing to a friend says that his gout is better but leaves him very incapacitated. Complains that the Chapter will not allow his son to officiate in his stead. (Elsewhere he states that he had done so for his Father.) Goes on to mention the Roper vault at St. Dunstons and says a Catherine Strickland had been buried in it comparatively recently although he did not know what relationship she had to the Roper family. In another place he describes Sir Thomas More's head, its covering of lead and its being protected by iron bars. This because the lower jaw had been stolen. We now know that the jawbone had been removed long before by one of the family and had been lost.

Gentleman's Magazine. The notes in these volumes are chiefly criticisms, mostly of a friendly nature, on Gostling having called the Lavatorium a Baptistery. Samuel Denne and others point out that no monastery church had Fonts. Gostling early shows his interest in Natural History by describing the fall of cliff at Lymne in 1727 (April, 1756), and of mechanics in describing as late as 1776 a new sluice at Dover.

Gostling's poetical version of Hogarth's "Frolic", reprinted in Hone's *Table Book*, with two woodcuts. Vol. 2, p. 289 et seq. There are several other editions.

Nicolls' *Anecdotes*, Vol. IX, pp. 339 et seq. Here he, under the heading of John Gostling, speaks of Charles II as a music lover. He could sing a good "plump bass" and a tenor to an easy song.

Describing Thomas Simon (really Abraham), he says he (John Gostling) bought an indifferent picture of him, but a good likeness. Mrs. Darell, wife of John Darell of Calehill, daughter of Lord Strangford, died 1753, stated that this Simon was a relation of the Darells' and used to visit them, and that she knew him well.

Roper Vault. Wm. Gostling states that it was opened about 1740, possibly for Lady Dering, who was one of the ultimate heiresses of the Roper family. In 1761 he mentions the Strickland interment. This Lady Dering, however, was buried at Pluckley, March 17th, 173 $\frac{1}{2}$.

I have made enquiries in the various parishes of which the Gostlings were incumbents, and there was little to be learned of their activities away from Canterbury. Mr. White, Vicar of Stone, says there is not a line of William's writing in the Parish books. But the Rector of Brook with Hinxhill, Rev. H. C. W. Allinson, quoting from the Vestry Book, states that the Rev. John Gostling (secundus) sanctioned the cutting down of yew trees and reducing the Rood loft to the level of the pews, and that the remains of this mutilation are still sadly visible.

Rev. G. F. Pollard has kindly searched the registers of East Malling and finds mention only of the birth and burial of a son of Thomas and Susan Gostling, 1656. Venn says John was baptised here.

I am indebted to Dr. Previt -Orton, Librarian, and Mr. Hugh Gatty, Fellow of the College, Custodian of the muniments of St. John's College, Cambridge, for kindly searching their records. The only mention of the family is the ownership inscriptions by John Gostling of two Latin theological works. Of William there is nothing.

The Rev. C. Eveleigh Woodruff, to whom I am indebted for much help, has searched the Chapter Minute Books and found that the Chapter presented the Rev. Wm. Gostling to the Vicarage of Stone-in-Oxney, June 23, 1753. And that on Dec. 5, 1770, "It is agreed (Mr. Gostling our Minor Canon having DECLINED any further service in the Quire) that our Treasurer shall deduct the sum of Fifty Shillings quarterly,

to be computed from Christmas next, of his Stipends and pay the same to such Person or Persons who shall officiate in his stead." This is the termination of the negotiations where Gostling had asked that his son might take his place and had been told he would possibly succeed him if he resigned. But there was another candidate and Gostling fought shy of the proposition.

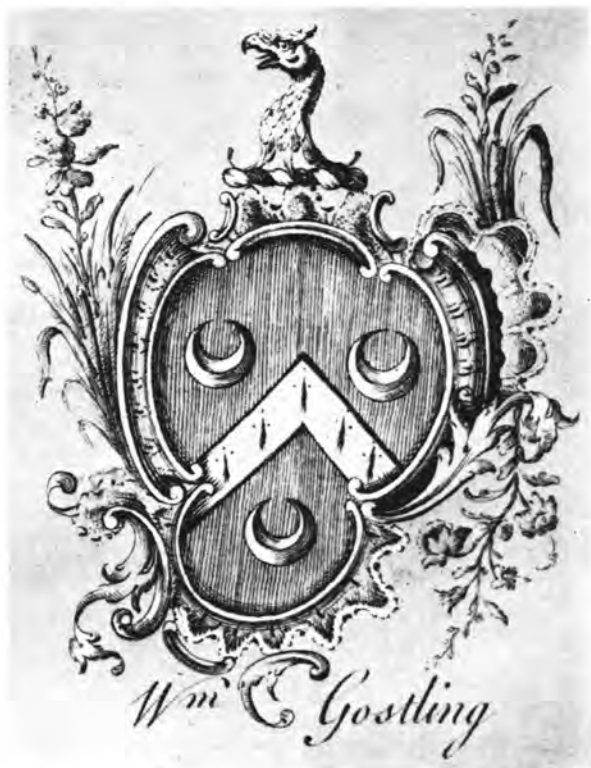
In neither the Bodleian nor the Cambridge University Library are there any references to the two senior Gostlings. In the printed books division of the British Museum there is nothing, not even a copy of "The Walk". I have remedied this hiatus.

The picture by Metz was painted when Gostling was eighty-one. Note the drawing of Christ Church gate in lower part, no doubt the original for the engraving in "The Walk".¹ As there were five of the family of Metz all practising at the same time, and several of them in England at about that date, it is not possible to say which was the painter. I am indebted to Mr. W. P. Blore for the reference in Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters*. The draughtsman for the engraving was "John Raymond, Painter" of Canterbury, as in the subscribers' list. R. Godfrey who engraved the portrait was the well-known topographical artist who drew a large number of Kentish scenes.

The Coat of Arms taken from a specimen in a subscribers' copy of "The Walk" is a variant of the Gostling coat. This is gules, a chevron ermine between 3 crescents (or) ? Crest, an eagle's head erased. There is another specimen in the B.M. (Egerton 2959).

The reason of Gostling's letters being in Coles' collection is that they were written to the architect Essex and he was a close friend of Cole, who entrusted much of his work to him.

¹ This is barely distinguishable as the picture requires cleaning.

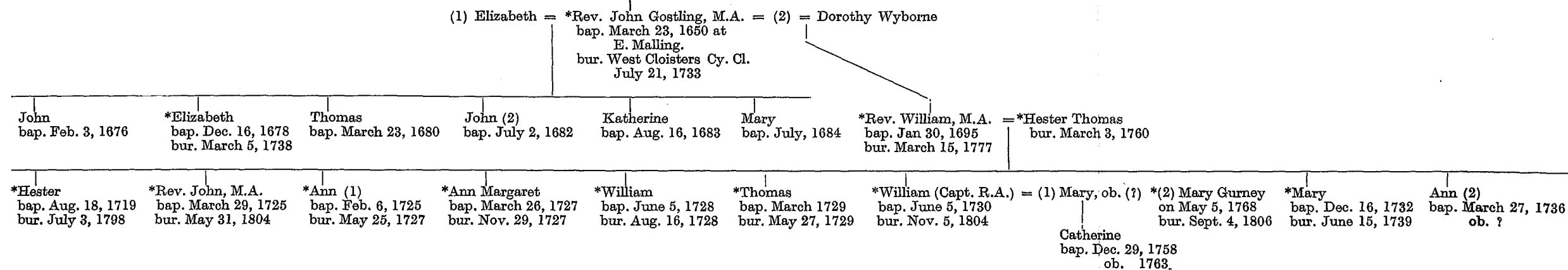


FROM AN AUTHOR'S COPY OF *THE "WALK IN AND
ABOUT THE CITY OF CANTERBURY."*

A.C. XLVII.

PLATE V.

ISAAC GOSTLING, Mercer of East Malling



Those marked * were buried in the West Cloister of the Cathedral. The stones were marked with initials and dates only. There was a mural monument, but this fell down and was broken. The fragments were later taken away.

Compiled from:

Hovenden's Registers of Canterbury Cathedral, Harleian Soc., 1878.

Cooper's "Memorial Inscriptions" in the same, 1897. Priv. printed.

Venn's "Alumni".

L. N. Hawkins' *Memoirs*, 1822-4.