

Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 32 — Lambe, William (1495-1580)

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LAMBE, WILLIAM (1495–1580), London merchant and benefactor, son of William Lambe, was born at Sutton Valence, Kent, in 1493. According to the statement of Abraham Fleming, his contemporary biographer, Lambe came from 'a mean estate' in the country to be a gentleman of the Chapel Royal to Henry VIII. He was admitted a freeman of the Clothworkers' Company in 1568, and served the office of master in 1569-70. In early life he lived in London Wall, next to the ancient hermitage chapel of St. James's, belonging to the abbey of Gerendon in Leicestershire. Two monks of this community served the chapel as chaplains. A well belonging to them supplied its name to the adjoining Monkwell street. Through his influence with the king Lambe purchased this chapel at the dissolution, by letters patent dated 30 March 34 Henry VIII (1542), and bequeathed it with his house, lands, and tenements, to the value of 30*l.* yearly, to the Company of Clothworkers. Out of this he directed that a minister should be engaged to perform divine service in his chapel every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday throughout the year, and to preach four sermons yearly before the members of the company, who were to attend in their gowns. The company were also to provide clothing for twenty-four poor men and women, and received 4*l.* yearly from the trust for their pains. Lambe's chapel, with the almshouses adjoining, was pulled down in 1825, and in 1872, under an act of 35 & 36 Vict. cap. 154, the chapel was finally removed to Prebend Square, Islington, where the present church of St. James's,

of the foundation of William Lambe, was erected in its stead. At the west end of the church is a fine bust of the founder in his livery gown, with a purse in one hand and his gloves in the other. It bears the date 1613, and was removed from the chapel in London Wall.

Lambe also built at his own expense a conduit in Holborn, and provided 120 pails to enable poor women to gain a living by selling water. He also left an annuity of 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* to the Stationers' Company, to be distributed to the poor in St. Faith's parish, besides other benefactions to St. Giles's, Cripplegate, Christ's and St. Thomas's Hospitals, and the city prisons. For his native town of Sutton Valence he established in 1578, at his own expense, a free grammar school for the education of youth, providing a yearly allowance of 20*l.* for the master and 10*l.* for the usher, besides a good house and garden for the accommodation of the former. He also erected in the village of Town Sutton six almshouses, with an orchard and gardens, for the comfort of six poor inhabitants of that parish, and allotted the sum of 2*l.* to be paid to each of them yearly, entrusting the Company of Clothworkers with the estates and direction of these charities. He died 21 April 1580, and was buried in the church of St. Faith under St. Paul's. His tomb, which was destroyed with the church of St. Faith in the fire of London, bore a brass plate with figures of himself in armour and his three wives. His epitaph is printed by Dugdale (*History of St. Paul's*, 1818, p. 77). The names of his wives were Joan, Alice, and Joan. The last survived him, and was

buried in St. Olave's Church, Silver Street, Lambe was a strong adherent of the reformed religion and a friend of Dean Nowell and John Foxe. Hewas deservedly esteemed for his piety and benevolence, and, according to his biographer, 'hath bene seene and marked at Powle's crosse to haue continued from eight of the clocke until eleuen, attentiuely listening to the Preachers voice, and to haue endured the ende, being weake and aged, when others both strong and lustie went away.'

[A Memoriall of the famous Monuments and Charitable Almesdeedes of Right Worshipfull Maister William Lambe. Esquire, by Abraham Fleming, 1583, reprinted, with pedigree and notes by Charles Frederick Angell, 1875; Timbs's Curiosities of London.]

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