

W.J. Bensly's preface to the 4th edition of W.B. Wildman's *A Short History of Sherborne from 705AD*, (4th ed., 1930):

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

The last edition of this book was published in 1911, and the author died in 1922. Lapse of time has rendered necessary a few corrections and additions, but apart from these the present editors have carefully respected Mr Wildman's text, and have made no attempt at emendation in a work which has long been recognised as a model of its kind.

A brief appreciation of the author may well be of interest to readers. William Beauchamp Wildman was born in 1852. He was educated at Glenalmond and at Oxford, where he was a Junior Student of Christchurch. After taking his degree he was for two years a master at Westminster, but migrated to Sherborne in 1877, and remained here, to our great content, for forty-two years. A quick temper and an intolerance of incapacity are not always easy attributes for a schoolmaster, but Wildman's anger passed so rapidly into wit, humour and generosity, and his encouragement of good work was so sincere, that his sudden onslaughts left no resentment, and his blame and praise alike served their purpose excellently as goads to industry. Classics and History were his chief subjects, and he taught them during his long career with an unflagging vigour and enthusiasm which may indeed at first have alarmed some of his pupils, but nearly always ended by delighting them, and inspiring them with something of his own joyful interest in literature and archaeology. Shirburnians of many generations still acknowledge him to have been the most alive and interesting teacher that they have ever known. From the first, Sherborne, with its glorious abbey, its ruined castle, its monastic school, and its proud historical record, made an irresistible appeal to him, and he set himself to study its story, alike in stone and in documents, with the intense zeal which marked everything that he did. He came to be recognised for many years as the chief living authority on local history and antiquities: it was he to whom all enquirers referred, and seldom unsuccessfully. He had, too, the power to awaken enthusiasm in others, and did much to rouse both in pupils and fellow-citizens a patriotic pride in Sherborne's ancient glories. And lastly he was endowed with a rich sense of humour and with a genial and lovable character. This volume – all too short – remains as a memorial of his researches: the man himself will be remembered with kindly affection and gratitude so long as his youngest pupil survives.

W.J. Bensly.

Sherborne, October 1930.