

A MEDIEVAL ENGLISH HAND ‘RELIQUARY’ FROM GLASTONBURY ABBEY? UPDATE

After peer-review and publication of ‘A medieval English hand ‘reliquary’ from Glastonbury Abbey?’ in last year’s *Proceedings* (*SANH* 152, 228–31), it was brought to my attention that an apparently identical hand to the Ely Place hand reliquary was included in the catalogue of 19th-century brass pole-finials photographed and listed in Margaret Fuller’s *West Country Friendly Societies* in 1964. The finial recorded by Fuller belonged to the Cullompton Friendly Society of Devon founded in 1850.¹ As this hand resembles the Ely Place hand almost exactly, I arranged to inspect the hand Fuller listed which is now in the collection of the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading. Upon arrival I was informed that the collection contained not one but two identical hands received from different sources; one from a Mr C.M. Foster of Newbury, the other from the Jardine Collection, formerly of Nottingham.² Upon inspection it rapidly became apparent that the hands, although not quite identical, were sufficiently similar

to the Ely Place hand to suggest that all three were contemporary, produced in the mid 19th century. The modelling and production of all three hands differ markedly from the other friendly society finials held by Reading, which are mostly flat, cut-out shapes with machine-finished sockets. How the Ely Place hand finial made its way to Glastonbury Abbey remains a mystery.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Fuller, M., 1964. *West Country Friendly Societies*, Reading: Oakwood Press, 143, pl. xlvi, ill. 261.
- ² Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading: no. 55/224 and no. 55/878. Unfortunately, neither the origin nor the date of acquisition is recorded on either acquisition sheet.

T.F. HOPKINSON-BALL