

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
DURING THE YEAR
1906.

THE fifty-eighth annual meeting of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society, was held at Minehead, on Tuesday, June 26th.

LT.-COLONEL J. R. BRAMBLE, F.S.A., took the chair at the opening of the proceedings, and said the last duty of the retiring President was to introduce his successor, but he could not imagine anyone in that neighbourhood—and he would go further and say in that county, or anywhere in that part of England—who required less need of introduction than his successor, MR. GEORGE FOWNES LUTTRELL. At the same time it was a necessity that the new President should be introduced to them, and he had much pleasure in doing so on that occasion.

The Presidential Address.

MR. LUTTRELL then took the chair and proceeded to deliver his address. He said:

You have done me a great honour by electing me your President for the year. This is the second time that you have conferred that honour upon me, and I wish I could feel that

my knowledge of Archæology enabled me to be worthy of it, but I must rely upon your indulgence. I beg to thank you most sincerely.

In the name of Minehead and its neighbourhood, and in my own name, I offer you a hearty welcome: we appreciate the compliment you pay us by selecting Minehead for the second time as your place of meeting. I well remember the last occasion of your meeting here in 1889; you seemed, then, to have exhausted all the subjects of interest, and, as it is not in the nature of such subjects to increase and multiply, in hoping that this your second visit will not be disappointing, I must rely for the fulfilment of that hope mainly on the natural beauty of the scenery, which can well bear being re-visited.

But although there may not have been an increased number there has been a development and enlargement, for the valuable books of Mr. Chadwyck-Healey and Prebendary Hancock have added greatly to the stock of knowledge, and to the interest of Luccombe, Porlock, Selworthy, Minehead, and Dunster Church and Priory, they will become considerable contributions and portions of a future history of Somerset.

The feeling of reverence for objects of antiquarian interest, created and fostered by this Society, has been apparent in the district, and there has been, I believe, no wanton destruction, but an evident wish for preservation.

When at Old Cleeve you will be near Blue Anchor. When the foreshore there is denuded of sand and shingle, as is often the case, and when the tide is out, the remains of the Submarine Forest are plainly visible. In digging for the foundations of the County sea-wall a few years ago, some horns and bones were found on the site of the Forest. The late Mr. Ayshford Sanford of Nynhead, not long before his death, gave me a short description of them. I will show them to you when you are at Dunster.

Talking of Blue Anchor, Sir Robert Purvis, in conversation with me, suggested a possible derivation of the name. Blue

Anchor Bay is, and probably always has been, a favourite anchoring ground for vessels waiting for the tide to go into Watchet harbour. Watchet is an old word, meaning blue, often used by the early poets: thus you have Watchet, or blue anchorage. Why Watchet was called *blue* I cannot say—certainly not from the colour of the sea there, excepting under the principle of derivations of the old Eton Latin grammar—of *lucus a non lucendo*.

I am glad that Withycombe is included in the programme, it is fresh unexplored ground, not hitherto visited by this Society.

SIR HENRY MAXWELL LYTE, K.C.B., F.S.A., has sent me an abbreviated history of the Manors of Withycombe, which he has written and which I will read if you will allow me:—
“At the time of the Domesday Survey, a certain Edmer, presumably an Englishman, held Withycombe under the Bishop of Coutances. It was the most valuable estate in the old Hundred of Carhampton. When the Bishop's nephew and heir, Robert de Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, got into trouble in the reign of William Rufus, his lands were forfeited to the Crown. Withycombe, was thereupon granted to William de Mohun, of Dunster, doubtless in exchange for lands more distant from his castle. Mohun did not keep it long in his own hands, for he there established a certain Durand de Mohun, who may have been his nephew or cousin. Durand and his descendants became tenants of the Honour of Dunster, owing military service to their overlord, and liable to the usual feudal incidents.

“In 1194, Ralph son of William son of Durand, granted a yearly pension out of his church of Withycombe, to the Benedictine monks of Bath.

“After his death, without male issue, in the early part of the thirteenth century, his estates were divided between his two daughters and a grand-daughter. In this partition, the original manor of Withycombe was cut up into three parts, each of

which came to be regarded as a separate manor, with courts of its own. The advowson of the church went to the eldest daughter, Lucy Malet, as part of her share of the inheritance, and she also got certain feudal rights over the other two manors of Withycombe. In 1238, her husband, William Malet, was released from his liability to aid in repairing the walls of Dunster Castle, in consideration of a pecuniary fine, which was applied by Reynold de Mohun to the building of the lower ward, of which some parts remain to this day. From Lucy Malet the first third of the original manor of Withycombe passed to her daughter, Lucy Meriet, and it continued in the Meriet family more than a hundred years.

“By means of a purchase made in the latter part of the fourteenth century by Thomas Wellington, this manor passed to his heirs, the Wroths, and so, successively, to the Paltons, and the Beaumonts. For a very long period, it belonged to wealthy families who resided elsewhere, and regarded it merely as a source of revenue.

“In the first half of the sixteenth century, it was held by the Daubeney, and Henry Daubeney, Earl of Bridgwater, granted a copyhold there in 1544.

“Some sixteen years later it was sold to John Southcote, who became a judge of the court of Queen's Bench. In his time and afterwards, it was called the manor of Withycombe Wyke. There is, however, no place called Wyke in the parish, and the manor never belonged to any family of that name. The error, for such it is, appears to be derived from a document of the fourteenth century, in which the name of Withycombe is followed by that of Wyke (near Taunton) without an intervening comma.

“Edward Southcote, grandson of the judge, got into trouble in the middle of the seventeenth century, through being a Roman Catholic, and, in 1650, he sold the manor of Withycombe, with the advowson of the church, to a Somersetshire man, Thomas Cridland. The heiress of the Cridlands married

three times, but had no issue. Her third husband, Col. John Codrington, of Gloucestershire, survived her, and, in the early part of the eighteenth century, dismembered the manor. The advowson and the estates were then sold to various purchasers, no one of whom bought so much as a half of them.

“As an instance of the continuity of English institutions it may be interesting to remark that some five hundred years after the division of the original manor of Withycombe into three parts, the manor of Withycombe Wyke continued liable for a payment of two shillings to Dunster Castle every third year, and that it comprised a third part of the only grist mill in the parish.

“Reverting to the reign of Henry the Third, we find that, at the partition of the original manor of Withycombe, a third part of it went to Isabel Peverel, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Ralph son of William son of Durand. By her it was eventually settled on her grand-daughter, Amy, and Robert Martin, her husband, a younger scion of the important family of Martin of Barnstaple. Robert Martin gave it to his younger son, Edmund, who, in 1318, received episcopal licence to keep a private chaplain to celebrate divine service in his chapel at Withycombe. Having no children, this Edmund Martin sold the reversion after his own life, to Sir Ralph Fitzurse, who was already possessed of the remaining third of the original manor. The second manor thus had a very short separate existence.

“The third section of the original manor of Withycombe went, in the reign of Henry the Third, to Richard of Combe, and Maria his wife, grand-daughter and co-heiress of Sir Ralph son of William son of Durand. From them it passed to the Fitzurses, or Fizours, descendants of a half-brother of Reynold Fitzurse of Williton, one of the four murderers of Thomas Beket. Isabel Fitzurse was in possession in 1284, and, from that time to the present day, this manor has never passed from one person to another otherwise than by hered-

itary descent. Its history is, therefore, very much simpler than that of Withycombe Wyke. The two effigies which you will see in the church may represent owners of this manor. If their approximate dates can be ascertained by the evidence of architectural details and costume, names could probably be assigned to them.

“The Fitzurse estate at Withycombe, doubled in extent by the purchase from Martin, passed by marriage to the Durboroughs of Heathfield, near Taunton. The accounts of their reeves contain many entries of interest in connexion with feudal tenures and ancient customs. Thus we learn from them that the lord of this manor was bound, in respect of his land at Gillcotts, to provide a wagon with eight horses and two men to carry the hay of the lord of Dunster from Caremore to the Castle. Some of the payments relate to ecclesiastical affairs. The Prior of Dunster used to provide the bread and wine for the celebration of masses at Withycombe, at a yearly cost of two shillings and sixpence, paid by the Durboroughs. Five pence a year used to be paid by them for wax for a taper before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and they also provided sixpence a year for fat for a mortar which burned on the night of every ‘double feast’ throughout the year.

“From the Durboroughs two-thirds of the original manor of Withycombe passed by marriage to the Hadleys, who came from London, and the heiress of the Hadleys, brought the manor of Withycombe Hadley to her husband, Thomas Luttrell, of Dunster, in the middle of the sixteenth century. The manor-house became a farm, but, although much altered, it retains the name of Court Place, marking the site of this ancient abode of the Hadleys, the Durboroughs and the Fitzurses.”

It now only remains for me again to thank you.

The Right Hon. HENRY HOBHOUSE, P.C., in moving a vote of thanks to the President for his interesting address, said it seemed to him, and perhaps to them all, quite a short time ago

when they took part in a similar function in that place, but, alas, time flew, and he found from the records of the Society that it was seventeen years ago when they met in Minehead under the same presidency. They must all agree that during those seventeen years steady progress had been made in that county as well as in other counties of England towards interesting people in the past history of their country. Wherever they went they saw that was the case. If they visited the Museum at Taunton and remembered the condition it was in a decade ago, they would find a vast improvement. The collections had been largely added to, and they had been excellently arranged under the superintendence of Mr. Gray, their curator. In his own neighbourhood the smaller Museum at Glastonbury must be of great interest to everybody. He remembered some years ago, when he was President of that Society, pressing on a scheme for a county history. That scheme had, of course, not been completely carried out; but there had been a large mass of materials prepared, which would be of great assistance in their herculean task to the editors of the new *Victoria History* of the county, of which he was glad to see the first volume on the table at that meeting. They must congratulate themselves on having in the chair that morning a gentleman who of all others was most fitted, by the past history of his family, as well as by his own personal position in the county, to preside over that Society. He need hardly remind them that it was nearly eight centuries ago that the Luttrells came to reside in that county, and everyone who knew their history knew that they had well carried out the duties of their position. He had been recently looking over some deeds granted by Mr. Luttrell's ancestors to his ancestors, then living in a humble capacity in the town of Minehead, and he was glad that though his (Mr. Hobhouse's) family had left that town for many years they had always continued their acquaintance with and their respect for the family who now owned that place.

Mr. C. TITE seconded, observing that Mr. Hobhouse had expressed most ably the feeling of everyone there towards their President.

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT said he could not sit still in silence, although he had said all he possibly could, but he must again express his hearty thanks to them, not only for electing him as President, but for the way in which the vote of thanks had been proposed and received.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER, F.S.A., Hon. Secretary, having announced that a letter of apology at being unable to attend had been received from the Rev. C. S. Taylor, F.S.A., President-Elect of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, read,