

MR. J. H. PARKER read a paper on the "Bishop's Palace, at Wells," which is given in the present volume.

MR. W. W. MUNCCKTON then read a paper on Langport.

After describing the physical features of the country around, and pointing to the position of Langport, where the River Parret passes through a chasm in the range of hills extending almost from Glastonbury to Castle Neroche, and carries down to the Sea the Waters drained from nearly 190,000 acres, he accounted for the frequent inundations to which the lower parts of the town of Langport is subject.

Its early history, like that of many other places, is lost in the mists of time; but from the encampments

on Hurd's-hill, on the west bank of the Parret, and the one on which Langport proper is built, which are evidently Belgic British works, it must have been well known to the ancients; and no doubt the river and the pass (which now forms the street of Langport) were guarded with strict and jealous care. It must, from its situation, certainly have been a place of some considerable strength. There is a legend that a dragon lived upon Aller-hill, which fed upon and devoured all the crops in the neighbourhood, to the great injury of the inhabitants. This story prevails wherever the Danes made their incursions upon the Saxons, especially along the border country. The Saxons always called the Danes "dragons." It is recorded in the Saxon Chronicle that about the year 877, Somerton was plundered and laid waste by the Danes under their Captains, Inguar and Hubba. No doubt they came up the river, and after taking the fort of Langport, marched to Somerton. And it is reasonable to conclude that this story of the dragon alludes to this or a similar engagement. Mr. Jones has endeavoured to prove, in a paper published in our proceedings of 1853, that Langport was the Llongborth of Llywarch Hên's Elegy, which describes a fierce engagement between the Britons and Saxons, the British forces being commanded by Arthur, under the name of Emperor. The following is a translation of one of the verses :—

"At Llongborth was slain to Arthur
Emperor and conductor of the toil of war,
Valorous men, who with steel hewed down their foes."

He derives the name from the Celtic words Llong, a ship, and Porth, signifying a port or haven for ships.

This place was well known to the Romans. Traces of their road were found a short time since along the lower street of Langport, and the neighbourhood is full of

Roman remains, especially at Pitney. Midway between Langport and Curry Rivel is a place called Steanchester, from Stean, Saxon, and chester, castrum, camp; and below it, at Wiltown, many Roman coins, some of which I have deposited in the Museum, have been found.

It was a royal burg in the time of William the Conqueror, and formed part of the Manor of Somerton. It is thus surveyed in Domesday book :—

The King holds Somertone. King Edward held it There is a borough which is called Lamporth, in which reside 34 burgesses, rendering 15 shillings, and two fisheries render 10 shillings. It brings in per annum 79 pounds, ten shillings and sevenpence.

It was held by the Crown, according to Collinson, until the days of Richard I., who, having occasion for baronial aid, gave it with other estates in the neighbourhood to Sir Richard Revel, Knight. This Richard Revel procured a Charter for the town, and is said to have built a castle here.

Collinson appears to have been in error; for we find from an entry in the Hundred Rolls, that at an inquest holden at Langport on Wednesday, the festival of St. James, in the Second year of King Edward I., the jurors declared on their oath that the *Burg fo Langport* was given by King Henry II., the great grandfather of the reigning King, to a certain Richard Revel by the service of two Knights' fees as often as he should be summoned. He was at his own expense to attend the King in arms and on horseback for forty days. The value of the *Burg* at that time was 10 marks.

Revel or Rivel was a person of great note and Sheriff of Devon and Cornwall. For several successive years, Richard Revel is mentioned as one of the principal barons in this county in the time of Henry II. Sabina, his daughter and

heiress, carried it by her marriage with Henry de Ortiaco or L'Orti into his family, who belonged to the hundred and manor of Pitney. This Henry L'Orti was a great baron and landowner in the West of England. In 21st Henry III., he obtained license of the King to impark his woods at Curry Rivell, in order to be exempt from the regard of the neighbouring forest of Neroche. He died, 26th Henry III., 1241, and Sabina his wife survived him and had livery of the lands of her inheritance. The issue of this marriage was a son Henry, who became heir to the large estates of his father and mother. He accompanied Edward I. in his expedition into Wales, A.D., 1284, and on his return from thence he received a precept from the King for scutage, which was a levy of three marks, 40s, on every Knight's fee, to pay the expense of the war, from all his tenants by military service. In 22nd Edward I., 1294, he had a summons to attend the King at Portsmouth, equipped as a Knight should be, to accompany him into France; and on the 25th of the same reign, 1297, he was summoned, as a Baron, to Parliament. In the 32nd of the same reign, 1304, he obtained a charter of free warren for all his lands in demesne (a liberty which after the Norman Conquest was absolutely necessary for every landholder, who was disposed to enjoy himself on his own territories), with a license to establish a market upon Tuesday, in every week, at Cucklington, with a fair yearly, on the eve, day, and morrow after the Feast of All Saints, and on the seven ensuing days. This Henry L'Orti granted to the Abbey of Brindon, in Dorsetshire, all suit of court, with the homage, etc., in Stoke Trister manor. He died, 14th Edward II., 1321, leaving issue Henry, his son and heir, who by a deed dated 19th Edward II., 1326, granted to

Thomas Attayshe Baker, a messuage, with two yards of land, two acres of meadow, and two acres of wood in Curry Rivell and Langport Westover, parcel of the demeane lands of Curry Rivell, Pitney, and Stoke Trister, all held of the King in chief by a Knight's service. This Henry L'Orti died 15th Edward III., 1342, seized of all the manors forming the barony of Urtiaco, which consisted of Langport Eastover, Westover, Bradley, the hundreds of Abdick and Bulstone, Erna-hill, Curry Rivell, Martock, and Stoke Trister. He was succeeded by John, his son and heir, who inherited the estate, but left no male issue. He was twice Knight of the Shire in the time of Edward III. He gave the manor of Pitney about the 13th Edward III., to Ralph de Middeney, Knight, who had married his sister Elizabeth. About 1332 he married Elizabeth Child, of Stanford, who survived him without issue. He also had a brother Richard de L'Orti, 37th Edward III. This Ralph de Middeney was seized of lands in this borough as well as Curry Rivell. He took his name from the hamlet of Middeney, within the parish of Drayton, and bore for his arms three snails. He died, 35th Edward III., as appears from an obit kept for him in the Abbey of Muchelney,

The arms of Revel were, Erm : a chev gu ; and those of L'Orti, Az : on a cross or . . .

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Edward III., 1345, the manor belonged to William de Montacute as well as the rest of the barony of Urtiaco ; he had a capital seat and mansion at Donyatt, in this county, which, the 2nd Edward III., he caused to be fortified and embattled, but having done this without license, he was obliged to sue the King's pardon, which he obtained,

as likewise to impark a certain portion of his lands within this parish. For his great merit, and for his great and important services, he was created Earl of Salisbury, 16th March, 1337.

A leper hospital for poor lepers, dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, was founded here before the year 1310; when, Archer says, Bishop Drokensford granted the lepers here a brief to collect alms throughout his diocese for their support. An indulgence also was granted by Rd. Melford, Bishop of Salisbury, to the benefactors of this hospital. My friend, the Rev. Thomas Hugo, has very kindly looked over MS. Harl, 862, which he says simply states the fact of an episcopal indulgence of forty days being granted to all who shall aid in the good work of the leper hospital at Langport. A short time since, in pulling down an old house on the north side of the street leading to the river belonging to the Corporation, remains of an ecclesiastical building were found of the style of the before-mentioned period, and the remains of which are in the museum, and it is very probable to have been the remains of this hospital. Such an hospital was generally located outside a town, and this spot must have been far removed from the borough of Langport, which at that time was situated on the hill. The living of Langport is vicarial, and is united to Huish Episcopi, and both form a peculiar of the Archdeacon of Wells.

Not far from the Church is the fortified entrance to the town; it consists of a stone archway, with a Chapel above, which is generally supposed to have been a wayside Chapel. It is called Hanging Chapel, from the circumstance of three persons having been hanged there, for being engaged in Monmouth's rebellion, by Judge Jeffreys, about 1685; their names were Humphrey Pierce, Nicholas Venting, and

John Sellwood. James Hurd, of Langport, was one of the persons excepted from the general amnesty, or act of oblivion, issued by James II., 10th March, 1686.

On the conclusion of Mr. Munckton's paper, and previous to the departure of the company to examine the Earthworks around Langport, and the Churches, &c., the Rev. F. Warre gave a brief notice of the

Langport Earthworks.

MR. WARRE stated that the ancient earthworks around Langport were so completely cut up by modern enclosures, that an explanation was necessary before they went to visit them. He intimated his opinion that earthworks had been thrown up in the locality by the Belgic invaders : that there had once been a British cattle station there : and that there had also been in very early times a fixed town of residence, and place of strength on this spot. On the other side of the river the rising ground had evidently been scarped on all sides into terraces, not unlike the slopes of the Glastonbury Tor. On the side where access from the marsh was easier, he had discovered the remains of a British stone rampart, and he believed that it had been a station in Romano-British times. He found two or three of the flat stones of the country pierced for pegs, clearly of the Roman time ; and had no doubt that there were vestiges of a large and important British town of the primæval type.