

The Presidential Address.

Mr. T. H. M. BAILWARD then delivered his address. He said :

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel sure that I only express the feelings of all members of the Somersetshire Archæological Society, both here and hence, in echoing your regret for the loss of so many distinguished members by death during the past year. Of our Patron, Lord Cork, who was always ready to aid the Society when called on upon any great occasion, and who did this not merely from a sense of duty as Patron, but from a genuine interest in everything connected with the history and antiquities of the county over which he so worthily presided as Lord Lieutenant; of Bishop Hobhouse to whose wide and accurate knowledge you have borne testimony in your report, and of whom I would say that he never made or at least earned an enemy, but on the contrary bound all those who knew him intimately by the closest ties of affection and respect; of the Rev. St. John Mildmay, Preb. Buller and Preb. Grafton, all men of wide reading and culture whose loss will be keenly felt by the Society.

It may at first seem strange that a Somerset Society should meet in Dorset, but if we consider the important influence on history of the forest belt, in which Gillingham is a link, which extended from Southampton Water by the New Forest, (enlarged not created by William I), Cranborne Chase and the forests of Blackmore and Gillingham, Selwood, Mendip and Kingswood into Gloucestershire, and the many interests which cluster round the borders of Somerset, Wilts and Dorset, we shall, I think, admit that the choice has been well made.

My geological knowledge is of that kind which is proverbially dangerous, yet I will venture to note one fact which appears to me of interest, viz.:—that whereas on the western side of the Stour and Cale basin the older formations, the cornbrash and forest marble, the fuller's earth and Mitford sands, are on the hill tops, dipping beneath the Oxford clay in the vale, on the east side the newer formations, the chalk of Mere and Hindon overlies the greensands of Stourton, Kilmington, and Pen, which in their turn rest on the Kimmeridge clay of Bourton and Gillingham succeeded by the coral rag of Stoke and Cucklington overlying the Oxford clay of the Cale valley.

There can, I think, be no doubt that the geology of the district has been the parent of its early history. It is common knowledge that the downs and uplands were the first and most densely populated parts of Britain. The artificial hill of Silbury, three-quarters-of-a-mile round and 170ft. high, and the great temples of Avebury and Stonehenge are in themselves proofs positive of a teeming population. The great stones of the outer circles of the latter must have been brought from the downs near Marlborough to their present position, on rollers, by thousands and tens of thousands of human hands. How raised, and especially how the great transoms were dropped into their mortises without cranes or machinery, must ever remain a mystery, though I think that we may conclude that the dreamer Merlin, to whom the work is attributed, was no mere dreamer, but a British Archimedes. There they stand, and perhaps will stand as long as the chalk on which they rest, "relics of things which have passed away, fragments of stone reared by creatures of clay." This theory of a teeming population is more than borne out by the researches of Sir R. C. Hoare. He found the downs of Wilts, Dorset and Berks, especially on ancient lines of communication, crowded with British remains. Near Woodyates, a Romano-British settlement which he identifies with the Vindogladia of the Antonine Itinerary and places on Gussage Cow Down; but

which General Pitt-Rivers, from the evidence of the spade, places with more certainty near Woodyates Inn. He found the line of the Icknield Way from thence to Sorbiodunum studded with camps, enclosures, traces of the settlement of the living, and, still more numerous, barrows of the dead, amongst them, at Broad Chalke, that of Gawaine, Arthur's sister's son ; the evidences of settlement less clear and numerous, often to be identified only by the greener turf and blacker earth turned up by the moles, for the simple reason that the plough obliterates a hollow much sooner than it does a mound. He found in the valley of the Avon, from Sorbiodunum to Upavon, camps and barrows without end, the remains including a racecourse on the east side of the Avon opposite to Stonehenge. He found on the line of another British and Roman road, which he traces from Sorbiodunum through Wilton, Dinton Beeches, Charnedge, Maiden Bradley, Wanstrow and Maesbury to the Bristol Channel near Brent Knoll, extensive remains of British settlements in Grovely and Great Ridge woods, including enclosures, ramparts, sites of dwellings and the covered ways by which British villages were connected. He found on the line of the Roman road from Marlborough to Bath the same wealth of British and Romano-British remains, including the site of the Verlucio of the Antonine Itinerary near Spy Park. There can, I think, be no doubt that the downs of Wilts, Berks and Dorset were the great centre of the religious and the political life of the Britons.

It is with much diffidence and probably more presumption that I venture to put forward the theory that this British centre, where not defended by forest, was protected by regular lines of fortification. On the north by the Wansdyke with its ditch on the north side traced by Collinson from Portishead by Belluton (Domesday Belgetone), Long Ashton, English Combe, Norton St. Philip, Hinton Charterhouse, Claverton Down, Monkton Farley and Wraxall ; by Neston and Spy Park to Morgan's Hill, by St. Ann's Hill and Chick

Changles Wood to Marlborough, thence by Great Bedwin, Everleigh and Scots Poor to Andover, length eighty miles. By Hoare, who does not consider the dyke from Marlborough to Andover part of the true Wansdyke from Long Ashton to Marlborough; and this great rampart was supported by the camps of Maes Knoll, Stantonbury, Bathampton, Rybury, Chisbury and Oldbury. I am aware that so high an authority as General Pitt-Rivers considers the Wansdyke to have been Romano-British on the strength of Samian ware and iron objects found in sections made near Devizes. He found in Section I at Shepherd's Shore an iron knife and nail on the old surface beneath the rampart and five pieces of Samian ware in the outer bank; in Section II at Brown's Barn, 7·9ft. deep, an iron cleat and one piece of Samian ware on the old surface line, and four other fragments in the body of the rampart; in all the sections British pottery: in surface trenching about ninety-five per cent British Pottery, five per cent Samian. The small amount of Samian ware and iron objects found on the old surface line is hardly, I think, sufficient evidence to prove the Wansdyke Roman or Post-Roman. Trade must have brought the so-called Samian ware, made largely in Gaul, to Britain long before the advent of the Romans, and the use of iron in Britain was probably at least a century anterior to the invasion of Julius Cæsar, and even if the presence of Samian ware and iron objects was proof positive of Roman occupation, the very few examples found might have been carried into the rampart by the work of moles, badgers, rabbits or worms, or completely altered in level by quarrying the Roman Road for materials for road making elsewhere. Hoare, on the other hand, has pretty conclusively proved that the Roman Road between Morgan's Hill, Devizes, and Monkton Farley was constructed to a great extent upon the agger of the Wansdyke. He found the names Wandsdyke, Wands Mead and Wands House attached to different parts of this road, a section of which was clearly visible in Neston Park, and that it had been at Bulcot Lane and

elsewhere almost entirely quarried through for road material. I therefore prefer to follow Sir R. C. Hoare, and Drs. Stukeley and Guest in considering the Wansdyke of Belgic origin. On the east, by the earthworks and camps of Casterly, Chisenbury, Knighton Down, Yarnbury, Ogbury, Clarendon and Sorbiodunum. On the south by Grim's Ditch running from Braemore by Odstock, Hunnington, Combe Down, and by the north of Vernditch to Woodyates, a work with its ditch on the south side perhaps corresponding to Wansdyke and intended for the protection of the district between them, and possibly continued through the woodlands of Cranborne Chase by an abattis of felled trees. General Pitt-Rivers has completely demolished all claim on the part of Bokerly Dyke to a pre-Roman origin by the discovery in the base of the rampart of a large number of Roman coins, one or two of as late a date as Honorius and Arcadius.¹ The line of Grim's Ditch was supported by the camps of Castle Ditches, Braemore; Chiselbury; Castle Ditches, Tisbury; Clearbury and Winkelbury. On the west by the forest belt to which I have alluded, strengthened by the great camp of Badbury, the camps of men of war mentioned by Leland at Stourton, Whitesheet, and the works of Roddenbury and Bratton, near Westbury. It will be objected that many of these works are not British at all, but Roman, Saxon, or even Danish. I would reply that, as I have previously observed, the Wansdyke carries upon part of its agger a Roman Road, that Icknield Way cut a gap through the Grim's Ditch, and that Sir R. C. Hoare, who investigated many of these camps with the spade, found that even where the form of the rampart was not British, there were invariably traces of British occupation: lastly that

1. May I suggest that Bokerly was Saxon. at first a defence against, and finally an approach to, Grim's Dyke; and, if thrown up at night, this would account for the large number of coins which must have been passed unnoticed by the workmen. And this surmise is perhaps strengthened by the name Britford near Salisbury, which like that of Englishcombe near Bath, indicates a point of long contact between the two races.

Suetonius records that when Vespasian, about 45 A.D., led the legions of Claudius from Southampton Water through the Down country to his final great victory at Penselwood, he fought thirty battles and took twenty oppida or hill-forts. Now, if these were not the very camps which have been named, or some of them, where are they to be looked for?

But the most thrilling interest of the district is that it was the scene of the Arthurian epic. Geoffrey of Monmouth and the romances of Arthur and his knights, translated from the French by Mallory and printed by Caxton, are no great authorities; though it must not be forgotten that Geoffrey drew from Welsh sources, and that when he wrote the Welsh were an independent people with their own history and traditions, and a race of hardy whose special duty it was to preserve these. The chief thing which we really know about these early Welsh writings is that the originals have been lost. The MSS. of the Triad and Mabinogion and Black Book of Caermarthen, are, according to Rhys, XIV Century; therefore Geoffrey of Monmouth contains, though much embroidered, some of the earliest notices of Arthur. Nennius, is more to be depended upon, but his facts as to Arthur are extremely meagre, hardly going beyond the enumeration of his twelve great battles. Neither Gildas, Bede, nor the Saxon Chronicle once mention his name. Rhys considers the greater part of the Arthurian legend as a collection of nature myths and Celtic mythology. It is, however, an historic fact, that between the victory of Cerdic, 519 A.D., at Charford, and conquest of the greater part of the Down country and the final overthrow of the Britons at Penselwood by Cenwall in 658, there intervenes a period of nearly 140 years. The tide of Saxon conquest must have been stayed by a succession of great leaders, of whom I think we may consider Arthur to have been one of the first. It may be doubted whether there is such a thing as pure fiction, whether every legend, however much embroidered, does not finally rest on hearsay, tradition, or the personal experience of

the narrator. In the present instance it is peculiarly difficult to separate fact and fiction owing to the disappearance of the original records, yet I think that we should be loath to regard the characters of Mallory and Tennyson as the mere creatures of a poetic dream, and though we cannot trace the Winter Sea, nor the river's broad expanse down which the Lady of Shalott looked "like some bold seer in a trance seeing all his own mischance with a glassy countenance," yet we may believe that Badbury was the scene of the great battle of Mount Badon. Cadbury the only true Camelot, and Glastonbury the true Avalon where, until the Dissolution, was the tomb of Arthur with the inscription, *Hic jacet Arturus rex quondam rex que futurus.*

But to return to sounder historic ground; it was behind this forest screen that Alfred collected his forces in Selwood before marching to his great victory over Guthrum at Edington, in honour of which perhaps he restored Shaftesbury Abbey, ruined by the Danes, as was recorded in an inscription seen by Leland in 1540. It was by a victory over the Danes at Pen in 1016, that Edmund Ironside checked for a moment the victorious course of Canute, pursuing the Danes to Gillingham, where the name "Slaughter Gate" and a long barrow still record the fact. This barrow was opened in 1804, and was found to contain many skeletons hurriedly interred and a large number of clay balls which puzzled Hutchins, but which I would suggest must have been sling-bullets, the ammunition of the deceased or perhaps the cause of their death. The wars of Stephen and Matilda penetrated the district, and were marked by the capture of Nunney Castle by Stephen from the Delameres and Cary Castle from the Lovells. The wars of the Roses kept more north and east. I know of one link with the west, viz.:—that Sir Alexander Hody of Stowell, who also owned property near Gillingham, lost his head when the Yorkists got the upper hand, perhaps in consequence of the doings after the battle of Wakefield, when Margaret crowned

“ the noble brows of the Duke of York with paper, and with her scorn drew rivers from his eyes, and when my father and when Edward wept to hear the moan that pretty Rutland made when black-faced Clifford shook his sword at him.” There was plenty of fighting in the west in the great Civil war. It was in Cornwall and Somerset that Sir Ralph Hopton of Witham raised the forces with which he stormed Lansdown, and beat Sir E. Waller at Roundway Down ; it was through this country that Charles II escaped to Brighton after the Battle of Worcester, after anxious delays at Trent and Heale ; it was through this forest belt from Leigh-on-Mendip that Monmouth attempted to escape after Sedgmoor, to be taken near the tree which still bears his name at Woodyates ; and it was through Devon and Somerset that William of Orange marched towards Salisbury, when the last blood shed in civil strife in England is said to have flowed in a skirmish near Wincanton.

I will now say a few words as to Gillingham Forest. It was of no great extent ; Leland tells us only one mile by four. Its boundaries are of interest on account of the number of names still the same. It was at least twice perambulated ; once, temp. Ed. I, when the royal forests were reduced to the limits which they occupied 1 Hen. II, and again under Elizabeth. The boundaries commenced from Barnaby's Bridge, Gillingham, thence up Mere Water by Bengerville and Hunters' Ford by a wood called Horsington, thence to the boundaries of Wilts and Dorset, Fernegore, Cowridge, Kingsettle by the borders of Shaftesbury and Motcombe, by Duncliffe, by Blakestone and Seet Water to the Liddon, and from its junction with the Stour to Barnaby's Bridge. It was a small forest but remarkable in one point, that it contained a Royal Palace, nothing of which now remains except a few mounds and hollows at the junction of the Liddon with the Stour. Its origin was probably Saxon : Edward the Confessor was chosen king by the Great Council at Gillingham in 1042, which makes it probable that there was some such centre there, as a

royal residence would have afforded. Henry I visited it ; John was there sometimes twice a year from the fifth to the fifteenth year of his reign. Henry III greatly enlarged it. We have precepts to the Sheriffs of Dorset and their accounts shewing that a new chapel was built for the king and another for the queen with central shafts to the windows and painted glass ; that a great chamber was built for the king and another for the queen each with solar, with chimneys, and a kitchen with round opening in the roof, marking the time when chimneys were the luxury of the few, the many still consuming their own smoke. Edward I was there twice ; but henceforward the kings of England resided in or near London and the palace fell into decay, so that in the time of Henry IV we have an account for hauling stone from the King's Court to repair a lodge in the forest. It was no doubt used as a quarry. The last record of the King's Court was in 1790, the era of Macadam ; the foundations were quarried out and used for the repair of the road from Gillingham to Shaftesbury, so that we shall this afternoon have under our feet the first and last fragments of the palace of the Plantagenets. The forest and manor of Gillingham were the appanage of several English queens, of Margaret queen of Henry IV, of Jane Seymour, of the unfortunate Catherine Howard, and the fortunate Catherine Parr, and of Anne queen of James I. Gillingham was disafforested about the same time with Selwood, 1627 to 1637, when Charles I was hard pressed for money in his attempt to govern without a parliament. Part of the manor and forest was leased to Bruce Lord Elgin, part to Sir James Fullarton, preceptor under James to Prince Charles. Lord Elgin sold his part to Sir W. Nicholas soon after the Restoration ; the Fullartons held their part by a succession of leases into the first quarter of the last century. All the royal forests were under a special law. The first code which we have is that of Canute, which by its Draconian severity must have warmed the heart of William I, who is said to have

loved the deer as if they were his children. Offences by free-men were subject to trial by ordeal and to compurgation. The forest was divided into walks, with verderers, foresters and regarders, who visited once in three years. An assault by villein or slave on verderer involved loss of hand, a second offence death. The penalty for slave for trespass in pursuit was *ut core careat*, which has been rendered that he should be flayed : it is more likely that it meant flogged. There were strict regulations as to keeping dogs. Not even a regarder might keep a greyhound : velterers and ramshunds might be kept, but in the forest and within ten miles these were to be deprived of three toes of the right foot.

There is a charter extant at Longleat exempting the dogs of the Abbot of Glastonbury from this provision, so that, when from his hunting seat at Sturminster Newton "with hound and horn he cheerily woke the slumbering morn," his pack possessed their natural number of toes. There were also stringent regulations as to hydrophobia. Any person allowing a mad dog to go loose in a forest was liable to a fine of 200 soldi. It might apparently bite a man without further expense to its owner, but if it bit a royal beast he was liable to the enormous fine of 1200 soldi. The forest law was mitigated by Edward I, though it still remains sufficiently severe. A trespass on vert or venison was punishable for the first offence by grievous fine with two pledges, for the second by the same with four pledges, for the third the same with imprisonment for a year and a day with eight pledges. If these pledges were not forthcoming the offender became an outlaw, and swelled the ranks of the Robin Hoods and Little Johns so famous in mediæval ballad. The race of deer-stealers existed up to the time of Gilbert White, who records that the deer in Woolmer and Alice Holt, were destroyed in order to break up a gang called the Waltham Blacks. We shall be glad to learn that our English Justinian did not forget the poor, for he provides that any beasts found dead in the forest should be given to the poor or hospitia of the

neighbourhood. We shall be overjoyed to find that even when on charity bent he had a frugal mind, for he adds "so that it be not sweet or fit to be eaten of the better sort of people." Henry VIII, who was apparently curious in horses as well as in wives, enacted that no entire horse should run in forest or common under the height of 14 hands in Dorset, and 15 in Somerset. He had a summary substitute for a Brood Mares Improvement Society, for common and forest were to be driven once a year at Michaelmas by the constables, and all mares unfit for breeding purposes to be destroyed.

There is nothing new under the sun, and Sir W. Raleigh when steward of the manor and forest under Elizabeth, set up a stud farm at Gillingham.

I have now endeavoured to give a very imperfect sketch of some of the interests of this most interesting neighbourhood. I must conclude by thanking you for the patience with which you have heard me. If, like Dogberry, I am as tedious as a king, like him I have had it in my heart to bestow all my tediousness upon you. I have no doubt that if the weather favours us, the Somersetshire Archæological Society will this year add one more to the long list of its successful annual excursions.

Mr. F. F. TUCKETT proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his interesting address. Mr. E. A. FRY seconded the proposition which was carried with acclamation. This concluded the business meeting.