The Presidential Address.

Lieut.-Colonel J. R. Bramble, F.S.A., then delivered his address. He said :

It is now twenty years since your Society last met in this town, in which during that time great changes have taken place both in size and population. The latter numbered then some 12,000 only, having increased from 108 since the beginning of the 19th century. During those twenty years there has been a still further increase until Weston-super-Mare is now the most populous town (it is not a borough) in the county—and contains some 20,000 inhabitants, varying as

1. Both the flagon and chalice have since been returned to the church. (See *Som. and Dor. N. and Q.*, Vol. ix, p. 335.)

do most sea-side towns to the extent of some 25 per cent. according to the season of the year. But, like similar towns the increase has been attributable to a very substantial extent to an aptitude for removing their neighbours' land-marks, and considerable portions of Uphill and Kew Stoke have at one time or another been absorbed by their younger and more pushing neighbour.

But the transformation of the letters in "Weston-super-Mare, Somerset" into "A sweet open summer resort," which only so late as the 4th inst. exercised the ingenuity of a correspondent of the *Evening Standard* is not without justification.

During our meeting you will have opportunities of visiting not only the town but its surroundings, and while it cannot perhaps be said that we have any objects of surpassing interest there will be plenty to occupy our time. To take matters in order. The geological features, extending from the old red sandstone of which the core of the Mendips is chiefly composed; the very extensive deposits of mountain limestone on its flanks, and the later dolomitic conglomerate forming the ancient sea beaches which extend up the vallies or combes; the new red sandstone and lias of the lower grounds; and, later again, the small deposit of oölite and Midford sands capping the well-known Brent Knoll, afford a wider scope for study than is often obtainable within a comparatively limited area. With respect to Brent Knoll I find that its general contour still keeps alive the delusion that it is an extinct volcano, at a very recent period giving rise to not a little apprehension. The Knoll, however, is in no sense volcanic, but, except the small oölitic cap, is composed of different beds of lias, portions of which, of varying degrees of hardness, have been extensively denuded. It is certainly safe to say that it is not a volcano, it never has been a volcano, and it is humanly safe to predict that it never will be one. Not that we are wholly without the volcanic element. There is a considerable upheaval of igneous

"trap" in the cutting at Uphill. But this has no reference to the popular name of the bridge over this cutting—the "Devil's Bridge." I learn on excellent authority that a much more modern individual, who some sixty years ago was a great opponent of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, is entitled to this honor.

There is also an extensive dyke and deposit of volcanic ash near Woodspring.

But if we have nothing of surpassing interest there is the Worlebury Hill, with its extensive fortifications and hut circles, well written upon and illustrated by Mr. C. W. Dymond, F.S.A., and the Rev. H. G. Tomkins. This you will explore this afternoon. Then the Priory of Austin Canons Regular at Woodspring or Worspring, a cell to the College of that Order, now Bristol Cathedral. Please note that Woodspring was never a House of friars or monks of any order, but of Canons.

Of churches, those named in our programme, especially, but by no means exhaustively, shew the ecclesiological wealth of the neighbourhood. I would especially mention as the more important, Banwell and Axbridge, but the smaller ones have their points of special interest. Of the churches in Weston-super-Mare proper I will say little. Some are less ugly than others.

The Roman remains in the neighbourhood are extensive and important. There is in particular the cross-mound, by some deemed to be a "botontinus" or survey mark, and the roadway passing from Brean Down to Banwell and over the Mendips to the Roman Lead Mines at Charterhouse, thence proceeding towards Priddy and in the direction of Salisbury.

On the Rev. Chas. S. Taylor, M.A., F.S.A., becoming Vicar of Banwell, he observed that the line of road as laid down on the ordnance map of his parish involved practical impossibilities, to which he called the attention of the ordnance surveyors. At the request of the survey officer for the district

I went carefully over the whole line, Mr. Taylor kindly accompanying me over the Banwell portion to which he had directed attention. His minute information was most valuable, and I was able to endorse his conclusion in every particular.

Starting, as we then did, from the top of Banwell Hill and working westerly from the undoubted Roman Road N.E. of Whitley Head we considered that the hypothetical dotted line on the survey marked "Roman Road" follows, from an engineering and practical point of view, an impossible course—the gradients would not permit of it.

We could find no traces indicating the existence at any time of a Roman or other road or track, in the course of the dotted line from its commencement at the bend in the acknowledged Roman Road N.E. of "Whitley Head" right through the Sheet XVII, N.W.; and from my previous examination I can extend the remark to the point "Ad Axium" on the O.S. XVI, N.E. I can only suggest that the surveyors, on the occasion of the old survey, started with the idea that Roman Roads were *always* straight, instead of being *generally* so.

At the point before referred to, N.E. of Whitley Head, I consider that the Roman Road, owing to the contour of the ground, turned N.W., and shortly after the direction altered to almost W. until near the corner marked "180." There the indications would suggest that the angle of the existing road was cut off, the ancient road turning S.W. Then it followed the existing road, past "Whitley Head" and then along "Bridewell Lane" to the N. corner of "Christon Plantation." Then it turned S.W. to or near the corner of the Parish Boundary below Christon Hill (it is possible that where the line here bounds an arable field it might have been slightly diverted) and then turning W. it gradually reached the top of Bleadon Hill and passed into Sheet XVI in which (upper corner of S.E. Long. 2·57 W.) are the *very* extensive traces of a so-called "camp." I should be inclined to call it a "town," on the S. slope of Bleadon Hill. If there was an "Ad Axium"—I

can find no early authority for the term—this was it. The line of road can be carried farther, but it is merged into, and practically extinguished by, the modern roads.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the Romans simply adopted, and improved, what was to a great extent at all events, a pre-existing road. The contour of the district is such that certain lines of road would necessarily be adopted from the first by *any* race.

From the commencement of the hypothetical dotted line s.w. of "The Caves," Banwell, through "Whitley Head," "East Hill," "Upper Canada," "Hutton Wood," "Hay Wood," "Oldmixon Copse," and past "Uphill House," I can find no traces whatever of any "Roman Road." The double dotted lines lettered "site of ROMAN ROAD," between "Hay Wood" and "Oldmixon Copse," are in a very deceptive position. There is a *natural* terrace, some eighty feet in width, used more or less as a road, and kept clear for shooting purposes. A recent cutting, for draining purposes, was open on the occasion of my visit. The earth was natural "talus," and in no degree artificial. I am assured by gentlemen who have shot over the road, and others, that there is no trace of any road through "Oldmixon Copse."

At Locking-head Manor there is the upper portion of a natural mound of Lias. It has been converted into a very well designed "British" Encampment. On the northern side, facing the farm house, the hill has been scarped to a gradient of (say) two in three feet, and a road or deep ditch driven through the eastern slope, twenty feet deep by ten feet at the bottom—cutting off the eastern slope and forming a strong defence on this side. The earth and stones from this ditch appear to have been carried up to the southern portion of the upper part of the mound, and form an upper circular mound (say) twelve feet in height. The approach appears to have been from the south, where there is an existing field-track, and after entering the "ditch" to have curved its way, west-

ward, towards the upper mound. There is a distinct ditch inside a bank—neither of great dimensions—edging the main mound throughout.

The tenant, Mr. Criddle, under the idea that the upper mound or tumulus was sepulchral, excavated a space on the top of it, 9ft. by 3ft. and 5ft. deep, and found a chamber, or foundations of (?) dry walling. I am inclined to consider this as the foundation of a windmill erected in much later times.

East of the "ditch" referred to there is a pitched pathway, traceable, running a little E. of N. This is called "The Roman Path," and has been cut elsewhere in draining. It runs in the direction of, and is said to have led to, Woodspring Priory. Locking-head Manor belonged to that House. Probably the name is a corruption of "The Romans' Path," meaning "The Roman Catholics," and would probably have been applied to the path at some time subsequent to the "Suppression."

In a field N.E. of the farm house is a piece of limestone, 8ft. 6in. by 3ft. 6in., by 6ins. to 7ins. thick, bridging a ditch at a gateway—length parallel with ditch. It is locally known as "Jack Plumley's Stone." John Plumley was owner of the estate at the time of the Monmouth Rebellion, in which he joined. The tradition is that he hid under the stone (since somewhat lowered for convenience), for three days and nights, but was taken and hanged.

Castle Batch, the tumulus at Worle, I fear you will only pass, but it should certainly be visited by any whose time permits, as it is of more than casual interest whether or not it, and the others which formerly existed near the Old Pier and the Cemetery, were connected with the Camp at Dolebury. The Batch is excavated, and no doubt had a defensible dwelling in the hollow, and was surrounded, as it still is in part, by a moat. There are instances of similar arrangement near the "Castle of Comfort," on Mendip, and in the North of England they are more numerous. Here, however, they are very rare, although ordinary sepulchral mounds are common.

I have preferred to allude in detail more to the objects of interest which you will *not* see than to those which you will visit, and have a better description on the spot by those specially qualified to give it, from their intimate knowledge of the subjects and localities.

The DEAN OF WELLS proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his interesting address, and made some observations with regard to the Roman roads.

MR. H. J. BADCOCK, in seconding, deprecated the sale of church plate, and said he hoped the clergy would set their faces earnestly against it. When a clergyman wanted to roof his church or to fence off his churchyard he sold his church plate, and the laity raised no objection, because it naturally saved their pockets. One need not be permeated with great archæological interest to feel pain and disgust that these sacred vessels should be divorced from their proper use in the Church of England to be won as prizes at races at Cardiff.

The motion was carried with acclamation, and the President responded.

The REV. F. W. WEAVER having thanked the Assistant-Secretary and Curator for having done so much in connection with the general arrangements and programme of the meeting, the business meeting concluded and the company adjourned to the Assembly Rooms for luncheon.