

The President's Address.

BEFORE proceeding with my address I think I ought to say a few words in order to give a personal expression to the feeling which I am sure must be uppermost in the minds of us all; that is of our regret for the sad loss we have experienced by the death of our late Secretary, the Rev. James Bennett, which has occurred since our last Annual Meeting. To him archæological pursuits were both a business and a delight, and his best energies were ever devoted to advancing the interests of the Society which he had himself so much at heart. Though only four years have elapsed since he undertook the duties of our Hon. Secretary, I am sure the Society has had ample opportunity of recognising how great a loss it has sustained in the so early, I might say untimely, removal of one of its most active and distinguished members.

In welcoming your Society to our town this day, I cannot forget that its first meeting here, now twenty years ago, was signalized by an address from a President of the highest eminence as an Archæologist and unequalled in his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history and lore. I feel it to be an act of temerity on my part to have consented to follow him, even at so long an interval, and I must crave your indulgence accordingly.

But in one respect the very wideness of Dr. Freeman's knowledge and research has left an opening and an opportunity for a less gifted successor. For in looking over the Society's *Proceedings* for 1871 I observed that in the whole of that able and eloquent address, interesting and instructive though it was, there was no mention of, or allusion to, any site or subject connected with the special locality, and even the name of Crewkerne does not once occur therein.

Now in local names and local traditions I conceive there may be often found imbedded, as in geological strata, what to the expert may throw a strong light on the history of the past, and afford the means of clothing the dry bones of the simple annals which have come down to us through the mists of earlier ages. And so in tracing the origin of the name of this town I believe that matter of much interest may be exhumed.

We may, I think, fairly assume that in Saxon times Crewkerne certainly played a significant part in the building up of our own Wessex, that somewhat independent infant which has since grown up into the giant Empire of which we are all so proud to form a part. This town must even then have been a place of importance, since we see that in the reign of Ethelred II it contained a Mint, and a coin of that monarch struck at Crewkerne is to be found in the National Museum at Stockholm, which locality it is presumed to have reached through the medium of the Danegeld, a tax which was first levied by the above-named King in order to buy off the Danes from making their dreaded incursions on our coasts, such as took place at Seaton, Sidmouth, and at Charmouth on two occasions. Of these visitors a local remembrance in the vicinity of this town has lasted to our own times in the name of "Danefield," belonging to an enclosure in Haselbury, where a pit was found a few years since containing ten skeletons thrown hurriedly together, some of which bore evidence of a combat, from which circumstance the spot no doubt derived its name.

The first mention of the town of Crewkerne occurs in the 10th century, on the coin of Ethelred to which I have alluded, where it is spelt *Crucern*. In Domesday, 1080, it is called *Crucha*. In a Cartulary of the Temple at Bristol, 1185, it is spelt *Crukes*; in Kirby's Quest, 1277, *Cruk*; as also in Drokensford's Register of 14th century. In the *Nomina Villarum* of 9th Edward III, 1315-16, the Hundred is *Cruke*, the place *Crukerne*; the termination in *ern* or *ærn* meaning in Saxon an inhabited place or spot. Camden, in his *Britannia*, quotes the Saxon name *Crucerne*; on 17th century tokens it is spelt *Crookhorne*, *Crewcourne*; and again on a coin dated 1666, *Crewkerne*, as we have it now, though it is still pronounced by the local folk *Crewkhærne*, possibly an inheritance from Saxon times.

If asked the derivation, one would suggest that the first syllable derived itself from *cruz*, a cross; and the second from *ærn*, a dwelling place; doubtless from some cross existing there—either cross roads or perhaps a sacred British cross, or from some physical feature of the ground surface; and I might add that the peculiar configuration of the ground on which Crewkerne stands, viz., the intersection of two deep valleys, with four conspicuous eminences dividing them, lends a superficial probability to this view.

But if *Cruz* is to be adopted in a religious sense as the origin of the first syllable, we need I think seek no further reason for the remarkable aggregation of Holy places and cells in the immediate neighbourhood. I would instance St. Reigne, St. White, the Hermitage which one would look for somewhere on the Lyme road, and the famous cell of Wulfric hard by at Haselbury, also the anchorite cell at the west of Crewkerne Church, and the double Chantry on the north-west which have only disappeared within living memory.

But as an inhabited district Crewkerne must have had an individual existence at a much earlier date than Saxon times. There is evidence of this in the discovery of a grand palæo-

lithic axe or weapon by a former townsman on the heights between the town and the railway, and also of British coins at Townsend by the late Mr. Pulman, an archæologist of no mean rank, and an adopted son of whom Crewkerne may well be proud, as the author of *The Book of the Axe*, a work so full of learning and research that it may be considered the text book of the district.

That the British occupied the adjacent heights is clear, as also did the Romans in succession, for in the excavations made when digging the foundations for Mr. Hoskins's house above Broomcroft, places of sepulture were unearthed in various spots within a certain radius containing *int. alia*—a skull, with teeth perfect, and still retaining the small coin for Charon's fee; besides a Romano-British quern and some fine Samian ware, with the maker's name, indicating the residence of an official of some standing. All which points to the fact, never heretofore suggested, that this locality, being the highest point between the great Roman station at Ham Hill and the Dorset hills was a minor advanced post, while Ham Hill was occupied in large force, as commanding for so many leagues the surrounding country.

Again, at a short distance from Crewkerne, on the south, we find a similar station on the highest point of Henley farm, in view of the earthwork at Winyard's Gap and the camp at Ham Hill. On these two hills, being as they are on opposite sides of the Parret, were probably confronted the two tribes of the Durotriges and Damnonii, though they were subsequently utilized by the Romans—so quick to appreciate the value of native sites for purposes of defence.

Though apparently sequestered from the wars and tumults of the middle ages, Crewkerne did not find itself exempted from the strife of the Civil War and its consequences. It was frequently occupied by both parties in turn, and notably was the base of operations by Fairfax (under whom Gen. Cromwell was then serving), resulting in the battle of Lang-

port, which terminated by a curious coincidence on nearly the exact spot where forty years later Monmouth met his fate.

Monmouth's enterprise itself cannot fail to be vividly recalled to your memory, for to-morrow and next day you will be following the same route he travelled, and visiting some of the chief places at which he was entertained in his Progress of 1680. Ford Abbey, Hinton, Barrington, South Petherton, and White Lackington—and at the latter place the luncheon will be held almost under the shadow of the famous old chestnut tree (now withering at top) which then looked down on the entertainment provided by George Speke underneath its branches for the unfortunate Pretender, who five years later met with such a bitter end on the plain of Sedgemoor.

The chief object of this afternoon's excursion will be the Church in this place, and on its merits as a specimen of late Perpendicular I need not expatiate. It speaks for itself, and is the pride of all connected with the town—and though full appreciation of it in its then state was shewn on the previous visit of your Society, I think that those who may have seen it in its former condition will acknowledge how much we owe to those munificent townsmen who have recently so carefully restored it to its former appearance of beauty and comeliness. It may perhaps be regretted that this should even now lack absolute completion, that the chancel should still be untouched and the side portions of the west gallery still remain *in situ*. But I understand that the desire for perfection has in this case yielded to the English habit of compromise. We must hope that some day the good work may be carried still further, until the Church is restored to us as the ancient builder left it. I would draw the attention of those who may see it for the first time to the exceeding beauty of the west front, perhaps one of the finest to be met with among our parish Churches. The peculiar niche in the south-east corner outside the south transept is also noteworthy, and has much exercised the minds of the learned as to whether it was intended as an out-door

pulpit or to receive the image of some saint, though I believe the latter theory is the one now generally adopted.

In the Cistercian Abbey of Ford which your Society will visit to-morrow, not for the first time, we shall have the opportunity of contemplating one of the most perfect specimens now existing of those splendid monastic establishments which once abounded throughout the land. Perhaps by some it may be considered that its architectural harmony has been somewhat impaired by Mr. Prideaux's alterations under the auspices of Inigo Jones. Still it remains as a whole one of the most stately and magnificent buildings, converted to domestic use, which has come down to us from mediæval times.

But I must not dwell too long on the ecclesiastical element around us, especially as some of these will be learnedly discoursed on by our associate and friend Mr. Edmund Buckle, the newly appointed Diocesan Architect of Bath and Wells.

In the course of our travels we shall ask some of our *savants* for an explanation of those curious old boulders or blocks of stone which have at some remote time been mysteriously brought into the villages of Haselbury, Merriott, and Lopen, apparently like the round towers of Ireland, as a son of Erin once said, for the sole purpose of puzzling posterity.

The mention of these stones induces me to congratulate you on the fact that the geology of the district will be ably desecanted on by so distinguished an authority as Mr. Ussher, of H.M. Geological Survey.

Although I fear we cannot offer many sensational attractions to the Members of our Society in South Somerset, yet the road we are about to travel over, and its associations, will offer to the reflective mind materials for thinking out some of the history of the locality from the very earliest times to those almost within our own ken.

The suggestions of the old-world character of the early inhabitants of our district are called forth by the knowledge that very early stone implements have been picked up on our

hills and uplands. The Romano-British remains though few are genuine, whilst Mediæval history is written on Monastery, Church, and Manor around us, and remembrance of the Civil wars is assured while Hinton House stands in its place.

Again, the recollection of that romantic chapter of our history connected with Monmouth's futile attempt to win the crown of England, cannot fail to linger around this district, so full of the mute witnesses of his rise and fall, and we may well congratulate ourselves on the immunity from fratricidal strife which we have now for two hundred years enjoyed since that last shock of civil conflict took place on English ground.

May the onward march of our civilization now so accelerating its pace, with its attendant handmaids, education, toleration, and mutual forbearance, make a recurrence of such scenes as were witnessed then, an impossible anachronism in the future history of our country.

I will not dare to tax your patience any further. Prolivity is a vice much to be avoided at all times and in all places, so I will conclude with the hope and the expectation that although this district may not be quite virgin soil, yet that it may yield to a second delving a store of added information, not less interesting and instructive than that which has been already recorded in the *Proceedings* of your Society.

Major SPARKS proposed a vote of thanks to Col. Hoskins for his admirable address. As a Crewkerne man, he felt much obliged to the gallant Colonel for presiding.

Rev. R. HOLME seconded.

Colonel HOSKINS expressed his acknowledgments and hoped that the visit of the Society would be a successful one.

After luncheon the party repaired to