

The PRESIDENT-elect in delivering his address said :—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

BEFORE opening the proceedings on this occasion, I wish to thank you for placing me in my present position as your President. It is now twenty-one years since this honorable Society held its annual meeting in this part of Somerset. Many of those present retain a grateful recollection of the pleasure, mingled with instruction, which they derived on that occasion from the enjoyable excursions taken, and the learned papers read. But there are those in this assembly who, if not actually reclining in their perambulators, or their then substitutes, were, like myself, too young to take an intelligent interest in the science of archæology. As a representative of this class of juveniles, I feel sure that I do not misrepresent their feelings when I say that we congratulate ourselves on being now about to enjoy the advantages formerly offered to our elders. Not being myself a savant in archæology, I shall be as brief as possible, for I take it to be the function of a President, under these circumstances, to do little more than open the proceedings, and then to make way for those who have kindly come prepared to impart their special knowledge to the Members of this Society and their friends. We shall, in the course of the next few days, have the leading places of interest explained by those who are able to do ample justice to their respective subjects; but it may afford some pleasure to those present to have put before them a few facts and curious incidents associated with Clevedon and its vicinity.

To begin, the name Clevedon is supposed to owe its derivation to the Celtic word *Dun*, meaning a high stronghold, and *Cleve*, a split ravine. Various ancient remains which have been discovered from time to time, prove this part of the country to have been the habitation of man at a very early date. Of this we have some valuable proofs in the sketches taken in 1789, exhibited in the Museum to-day by Mr. J. W.

Braikenridge, of hut circles and earth works then existing about Clevedon. They have now disappeared.

There is not much in Clevedon itself of archæological interest, with the exception of the old Church, the Court, Cadbury Camp, and the Roman road leading from thence to the Pill; but let us take a glance at the surrounding country, such as we might get from the top of Dial Hill.

Those who live in Clevedon are familiar with the two islands which strike the eye on looking down the Channel, the Holmes. Of these, the Steep Holme (*Steopan Reore*), or reed island of Saxon times, is the most important. It is the point of division between the counties of Gloucester and Somerset. Here the British historian, Gildas, found sanctuary during the wars between the Picts, Scots, and Saxons. Here he wrote his work, *De Encidio Britanniaë*. Here he remained till driven out by the pirates who infested the island, when he retired to Glastonbury Abbey.

Leland refers to Gildas thus: "He preached every Sunday in a church by the sea shore, in the time of King Trijunus, an innumerable multitude hearing him; he always wished to be a faithful subject to King Arthur. His brother, however, rebelled against the king, unwilling to endure a master. Hueil, the eldest, was a perpetual warrior and most famous soldier, who obeyed no king, not even Arthur himself. The terms of a year being ended, and his scholars returning from study, the Abbot of St. Cadoc and the excellent Gildas, went to two islands, Romuth and Echin. Cadoc entered the one nearest Wales, that is, the Flat Holme, and Gildas the other nearest to England, the Steep Holme."

So much for Leland's account of Gildas and his connection with the "Reed Islands." Passing down the pathway of time, we come to the year 1067, when Githa, mother of Harold, patriot and king, retired thither, when the sun had set on their hopes of Saxon freedom. On yonder rugged shore it was that the Danes took refuge after their defeat near Watchet.

Here, in more peaceful times, the pirate haunt became the home of religion, when Maurice, third Earl of Berkeley, founded a priory.

Notwithstanding the name of Reed Island, applied in Saxon times, the names Steep Holme and Flat Holme would seem to have a clearer derivation for us. Holme is a name given to land lying at the mouth of a river—a river island; and here we have two such islands, simply distinguished by their special peculiarities—steep one, the other flat.

Before passing on I must mention the Dole Moors, in Congresbury, which are portions of land, occupied till about 60 years ago, in a remarkable manner. Its customs are fully told in Collinson, but I wish to record that a precisely similar custom existed until lately in the parish of Bampton in Oxfordshire. The marks by which the land was distributed there were in the possession of the late Mr. Joshua Williams, a distinguished property lawyer, of London. These customs are certainly survivals of the village communities, which Sir Henry Mayne has shown to lead us back to the most ancient form of property, and which still exist unchanged in Russia and in our Indian Empire.

Hard by Congresbury stands the town of Yatton, whose church we shall view this afternoon. In the year 1828 a very curious discovery was made in the parish. About a mile from the church, in an enclosure called Wemberham, a stone coffin, very thick, and cut out of a single block, was unearthed at about a foot from the surface; it contained the skeleton of a man, and portions of a leaden shell. The coffin lay north and south, thus denoting its antiquity and the pre-Christian date of the burial. But the most mysterious circumstance connected with this grave is that it was made on such a lonely spot, then far removed from the habitations of men, and where the sea covered the land in every direction at high tide.

And now I have nearly done, and it only remains for me to wind up as best I may. I am well aware that my address has

been fragmentary, but I have had some difficulty in avoiding the ground about to be opened up by the learned archæologists present, and would urge this circumstance as my excuse. I cannot do better than conclude with the wish that we may all have a very pleasant time, and that the weather may be favourable for our excursions.