

Thursday: Excursion.

The Members of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society, in connection with their Bristol meeting, made an excursion through some of the most beautiful scenery in Gloucestershire. In the morning the party of ladies and gentlemen assembled at the Queen's Hotel, Clifton, where vehicles were waiting to convey them to the different spots selected. The civic carriage, containing the Mayor (Sir G. W. Edwards), headed the procession.

The leading idea of this day's excursion was a visit to the Aust Cliff bone beds, under the guidance of Professor Lloyd Morgan, for the sake of the Natural History section of the Society; but several places full of interest were visited *en route* (with the cordial assent of the Bristol and Gloucester Society, to whose domain they, strictly speaking, appertain), and a most agreeable and successful expedition was the result.

The first place at which a stoppage was made was

Westbury-on-Trym.

Here Mr. J. TAYLOR read a paper, showing that this was the first house of the Benedictines in England.

It should be noted here that the papers which were read, and the observations which were made, upon this and the excursion of Friday, full of interest as they were, are treated very shortly in this report, inasmuch as they do not fall within the sphere of a Somersetshire Archæological Society.

Precentor VENABLES, of Lincoln, followed with an interesting description of the Church, and of the various architectural changes which could be readily traced in it.

Henbury Church.

At Henbury the Rev. J. H. WAY, the Vicar, described the Church, pointing out that the two eastern arches of the nave were round before 1830, but were then altered (for the sake of harmony!), so as to match the rest of the arcade of late tall Norman columns with pointed arches. The alteration then made in brick is now replaced by stone. On the north side the columns, which are slightly taller than those on the south, stand on high bases, with the exception of the most eastern; those on the south are on very low bases.

The whole Church was restored by Mr. Street, nine years ago. He extremely admired the capitals in the porches (Mr. Way says), especially those in the south porch; and at once said, on looking at them from a little distance, as the masses of plaster and paint were being knocked off, "those capitals are only found under the shadow of Glastonbury and Wells and in St. David's diocese; but, oddly enough, I have just seen them at Christ Church, Dublin, where they must have been brought by Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke; and there, too, they have *the round mouldings like these*. Very odd, he added, for I have seen that combination nowhere else; and if it is exactly like Christ Church, these round mouldings ought to

have a sharp line down the middle." And so they have. "There," he added, "the same builders; be sure of that."

The historic connection of Bristol and Dublin, from the year 1172, when Henry II granted a charter to the men of Bristol, giving them the city of Dublin to inhabit, "with all the liberties and free customs which they have at Bristol and through my whole land," may account for this similarity of workmanship.¹

A lovely drive through Hallen brought the archæologists to the retired parish of

Compton Greenfield,

where they were welcomed by the Rev. G. HOPE DIXON, the Rector, who, himself an ardent antiquary, at once invited the party to inspect some geological treasures which he had collected and carefully classified. One or two objects in the collection are unique.

The principal feature of the Church is undoubtedly the fine Norman arch at the entrance, the date of which is 1140. Rarely is so excellent an example to be met with, and fortunately it has not suffered at the hands of injudicious restorers.

Mr. SOMERVILLE pointed out that the dripstone terminations are exactly like some in the Church of Dinder, near Wells.

Aust Cliff.

To Aust was a long but pleasant drive.

Here, standing at the foot of the cliff, near a remarkably distinct fault in the strata, Professor LLOYD MORGAN gave an exceedingly clear and interesting lecture upon the geology of the district. He remarked that Aust Cliff was, for several reasons, interesting to geologists. The secondary, or Mesozoic rocks, rested uncomformably upon the upturned edges of the Palæozoic mountain limestone. In this series were the red

(1). Hunt's *Bristol*, p. 24.

and green marls and sands of the Keuper, containing bands of gypsum or alabaster, and above these the rhœtic beds containing the celebrated bone bed. They had here also good small-scale examples of faults.

He proposed to say a few words, first, about the physical history of the spot, as evidenced by the beds in view, and then about the bone bed. They had only to look out across the Severn to see the older Palæozoic rocks rising in bold form. These were composed of a long series of marine beds, constituting the Cambrian, Ordovician, and Silurian of geologists; then of the Old Red Sandstone deposited in a great old-world Welsh lake, and lastly of the Carboniferous rocks. Then came in this district a great break, evidenced by the unconformable relations of the Keuper to the mountain limestone. The millstone grit and coal measures, which once spread over this spot had been entirely removed by denudation, though they had been preserved beneath the Severn a little to the south-west, as had been proved by the Severn Tunnel. While in other parts of England 6,000 feet of deposit (Permian, Bunter, and Keuper) were being laid down, only 110 feet of Keuper was here deposited. This showed how long was the continuance of land conditions. During these land conditions many of the most characteristic features of our south-west scenery had been marked out. It was true that the sculptured surface had since then been buried beneath thick accumulations of secondary rocks. But much of the work of more recent denudation had been the re-exposure of this old-world scenery.

Turning to the bone bed, Professor Lloyd Morgan said that it contained chiefly the remains of fishes. They were represented by spines, teeth, and scales. There were several shark-like forms; one resembling the Port Jackson shark, another like a saw-fish. There were hard-scaled fishes, like the garpike of America (Ganoïds), but the most interesting form was *Ceratodus*, of which genus there were more than 350 teeth in

the Bristol Museum, besides those which were in Mr. Dixon's collection, and elsewhere. Agassiz had been the first to describe it from the teeth. But in 1870, Mr. Gerald Krefft had discovered that the genus was still living in Queensland rivers. It was a vegetable feeder and lived in stagnant water. When the water became very impure it breathed by means of lungs, at other times by means of gills. There were four teeth in the upper jaw, and two in the lower jaw. Some authors reckoned nine species from Aust; others reduced these to two. There was no representative of bony fishes at Aust. They did not come in till later geological times. Besides fishes, there were Ichthyosaurian, Plesiosaurian, and Labyrinthodont remains in the bone bed. In the overlying Cotham marble there were remains of beetles and other insects.

A short visit was paid to

Aust Church,

for the purpose of seeing a reputed pre-Reformation chalice. The date, however, of 1571, is engraved upon the cover, and this would seem, from the form and pattern, to be the correct date.

John Wycliffe was Prebendary of Aust.

Luncheon had been provided at the Swan Hotel, at Thornbury, but the many points of interest in the morning had taken up so much time that the party did not arrive there until late.

Thornbury Church and Castle.

After luncheon, the fine Church was visited, under the guidance of the Rev. H. B. HODGSON, the Vicar.

In the nave arcade and clerestory there is much likeness to Stratford-on-Avon. The greater part of the Church is supposed to have been rebuilt about the end of the 15th century, or, as some think, in the time of Henry VIII, by the Duke of Buckingham, when he built the Castle.

At the Castle, Mr. EDMUND BUCKLE gave a detailed de-

scription, partly from an account which Mr. Stafford Howard, who was unavoidably absent, had kindly forwarded to the Hon. Secretary.

In Thornbury Church and Castle, as in all the places visited to-day, there is interest enough to fill many pages of description, but this is not the province of the Somersetshire Society, who only come to them and enjoy them as passing visitors.

It was now so late that it was reluctantly decided to give up a visit to Almondsbury Church, and a few minutes only could be allowed upon the return journey, for the magnificent western view over the rich level plain, and far away across the Severn.