

It is a picture of medieval life with Sir George's native village of Eckington as a background, and it has been his endeavour to dwell upon the beauty and wisdom of that period rather than on its follies and superstitions which have so often been the theme of other writers. The people who were the builders of our most magnificent cathedrals and abbeys were no fools, and it is well that this should be pointed out to us moderns in no uncertain voice.

Sir George's chapters deal with the Lord of the Manor (he has been one himself for 70 years), the feast, the pilgrim, the rector, the manor court and the serf, and his pen pictures have been aided by drawings from contemporary sources, which have the merit of authenticity.

The book is beautifully printed on good paper, and is a distinct ornament to our Derbyshire literature, although its appeal is by no means local in its extent.

Sitwell, Sir George Reresby, Bart. *Tales of my Native Village*. 1933, Oxford University Press, 12/6 net.

ADDRESSES AND EXCURSIONS, 1933.

On the 10th February a lecture was given in the Assembly Rooms by Mr. G. W. Stafford, M.A., F.R.Hist.S., etc., on three years of excavations at Caistor-by Norwich, the Roman town or settlement of Venta Icenorum. It was finely illustrated by an extensive series of lantern slides (some in colour), representing views, plans and drawings of details, and was attentively followed by a typical audience of appreciative local archaeologists.

Brigadier-General Godfrey Meynell, C.M.G., J.P., was in the chair, and in introducing the lecturer said it gave him much satisfaction to learn that Mr. Stafford was of a Derbyshire family and a member of our society, and he felt that few undertakings more worthy for historical students could be entered into than the investigation

of the foundation and development of the Roman dominion in our land.

Mr. Stafford in opening said the work was undertaken by Professor D. Atkinson, of Manchester University (who, by the way, had been willing to start similar work at Brough for this Society if the tenant's permission could be obtained), his skilled assistants being a coin specialist and the lecturer, with valuable help from the local rector, the lord of the manor, schoolmaster and a retired naval commander, hired labourers necessarily doing the heavy excavations. Caistor is believed to have been on the site of the British oppidum of the Iceni whose queen was the famous Boudicca, better known as Boadicea, converted, probably in the second century or earlier into a Roman settlement. Its site long under cultivation, had thrown up occasional coins and retained some walling, but otherwise was little known until in 1928, an air photograph revealed in the varying hues of ripening barley the plan of the town. This plan is fairly typical: the walls are pretty extensive, enclose an area of about 35 acres, are built of finely squared cubes of flint set in a core of rubble, bonded at intervals by bands of tiles usually about three deep, with an enormous backing of earth or clay, perhaps original, perhaps subsequent to the walling, the whole rising in places 18 ft. with a further 2 ft. of cresting. Gates are about midway in the wall faces and a watergate—still surviving—opens on an external stream. The streets run thro' the area at right angles, cutting it into four major *insulae* and these are similarly divided. The local societies undertaking this investigation being unable to purchase the ground are opening up these "islands" as their resources permit, plotting, photographing and recording and then covering them in again, restoring them to their original function. Two temples of Romano-Keltic type, a central cell enclosed in a colonnade, have been uncovered, the first

of c. 200 A.D. and the other c. 270 A.D., this being a tower like structure. A town-house of the inner corridor L type, had a narrow passage on the outside only 18 inches wide, in which household refuse had been thrown and a low flint wall capped with tiles formed a base for panelled timber-framed partitions filled with coarse and then fine clay faced with a film of plaster (showing the antiquity of half timber construction) on a network of fine twigs. No foundations were found, these walls were simply reared on the levelled ground. Another house of about the third century, gave evidence of having been destroyed c. 400 A.D., the remains of thirty-six persons, slaughtered in the raid, being discovered. Other finds were three pottery kilns, an annealing oven for glass (fragments of which remained), bones, and potsherds in immense quantities, a few coins valuable for dating purposes, two of which were particularly important, being British, one in excellent condition being shown on a slide. Questions by Mr. H. E. Currey and Mr. Walton being dealt with, General Meynell expressed the appreciation and thanks of those present for an instructive and fascinating address, indicated here in some detail for its suggestions to those who may contemplate similar work.

THE FIRST EXCURSION of the season was carried through under very pleasant conditions of weather and environment on the 18th of May, being arranged by Mrs. Margret Evans, B.A., acting as Excursion Secretary, every item worked out without a hitch.

The company, numbering well over a hundred, first assembled at Melbourne church where a paper on the structure by Mr. C. B. Sherwin was read by Mr. Walton. Mr. Walton prefaced his reading by stating Mr. Sherwin had studied the fabric for many years and had discussed its problems with members of the British Archaeological Association as far back as 1914. The plan was unique in England and certainly not of the parish church type.

On Benedictine lines, it consisted of nave, aisles, transepts, extended presbytery with apsidal termination; shallow eastern apses (now destroyed) opening from the transepts flanking the choir, and central lantern tower. Its unique feature is the western gallery over the narthex which Mr. Routh suggested should be called a return aisle. The triforium and clerestory are combined and open from this gallery, running round the entire structure including the base of the noble tower. Later the choir or east-end was reduced to half its height, its apse squared and the flanking apses destroyed. This east-end still retains traces of barrel vaulting, and this combined with the low chancel arch and the level triforium gallery convince Mr. Sherwin that the structure contained, an almost another unique feature, a double or upper and lower choir, an opinion, he agreed, not accepted by all authorities. He further demonstrated that, from the absence of abutments and the position of the gallery passage neither nave nor aisles were intended to be vaulted. From the weathering of the triforium and its obvious rebuilding on the south side (c. 1220) he concluded there had been a serious fire early in the church's history and that it had remained roofless for many years.

The company then proceeded to Melbourne Hall gardens, which by the kind permission of Mrs. Kerr, were next inspected, being first received by the courteous agent, Mr. Pearce who later conducted them over the beautiful and historic grounds. General Meynell here called on Mr. W. H. Walton for some brief notes on the history of their design and development. This, the speaker considered, is one of the finest surviving examples of the formal garden, something, he said, directly derived from the great pleasancess of classical Rome, a matter of stately trees and shrubs, graceful statuary, plashing waters and balanced architectural design rather than of mere floral luxuriance and colour, and descending into our modern

life from Renaissance Italy through France to the Restoration England of the Stuarts and the palaces of the great families then flourishing. A sketch of the family, descended from the Cokes of Trusley, was here given and it was shown that in 1710 the great-grandson of the founder, Thomas Coke, a court favourite and Vice-Chamberlain of Queen Anne and George I, succeeded in converting a three generation lease into a freehold and in anticipation of this commenced in 1704 the lay-out of the present beautiful conception, with its shady alley, its shining pools and basins, its quaint leaden statuary and its formal walks, and most interesting of all, locally, its noble ironwork by Derby's famous smith artist Bakewell, who first comes into written history concerning his work here. The design of these gardens has frequently been attributed to the master-spirit in the creation of Versailles, Le Notre, but Mr. Walton said that artist had never been in England so far as is known, but his influence had percolated thro' an English pupil Rose, who on returning home took as a fellow worker, a man named Wise, gardener to Charles II. Later Wise entered a partnership with one named London and these two were what we should now call the contractors for the Melbourne Hall pleasance. And thus came the great Le Notre or French court influence into the heart of England, and in Melbourne we still have one of the most delightful examples surviving of the Formal Garden.

Delightful spring weather having permitted al fresco lunch to be taken by the Pool side the party proceeded thence to the beautiful estate of the Rt. Hon. Earl Ferrers, F.S.A., etc., Staunton Harold, an exquisite natural composition of ancient timber, shimmering waters and verdurous enfolding hills about a stately house and beautiful church. This church His Lordship explained, with detailed comments, to his audience, stating it was built during the Commonwealth (1653) by the Sir Robert

Shirley of that day, a devout churchman when such were out of favour. Planned on normal lines, a fair approximation in style to fourteenth century work, it was by Bloxam called the last gothic church built in England. Panelled in the contemporary style of its period it is effective and pleasing and the speaker said it remained practically unaltered save for Robert Bakewell's fine wrought iron screen (1717) and later additions to an exceptionally good organ. Prebendary Clark-Maxwell referring to the plan compared it with a nearly contemporary example (1656) he knew, raised by a Puritan gentleman, a mere simple parallelogram.

By charming byways through moorland and pastoral Repton was attained and in a reconstructed loft over the ancient priory hospitium the company was welcomed by the Headmaster of its famous school and then handed over to the guidance of Mr. A. G. Grundy who first gave a rapid sketch of the history of the priory, the materials for which have been recently augmented by the publication in the current *Journal* of newly revealed Repton Charters for the locating of which, he said, the editor, Mr. F. Williamson, should be credited. From these documents it would seem that the first service in the new buildings was not later than 1184, a date consistent with the domestic structures but earlier than anything surviving of the church, containing nothing preceding the lancet or Early English period. In the church Canon Livett, who had kindly attended from Canterbury gave a long address on the famous crypt and the pre-Norman abbey of which it was a part. He had been allowed to make certain excavations and his primary object was to investigate the theory that the first structure was the mausoleum of the earliest Christian Kings of Mercia, of which he seemed to think two at least may have found sepulture here So concluded a crowded and very successful excursion.

THE SECOND EXCURSION took place on the 21st June, a grey day with light showers in the morning. This was

arranged by Mrs. Cooper of Culland Hall. Mr. W. H. Walton acting as excursion secretary, a company little short of a hundred taking part. This was one of the Society's pleasant and informing expeditions beyond the strict border of its regional activities involving a delightful progress thro' the whole length of the Peak to its first objective, the wild and beautiful Lyme Park and Hall in Cheshire, the ancient seat of the Leghs, ancestors of the present Lord Newton. In this park up to the 80's of the past century, the semi-wild park cattle roamed, yet later a famous kennel of mastiffs was maintained and still red and fallow deer survive in the deep park glades sweeping down from the flanks of the Peak. The house retains part of the original structure of 1541, but the main court and the stately garden facade are of the Italian Renaissance style by Leoni of 1710. Its special wealth in furniture and tapestries and good pictures can only be noted in passing as also the finely laid out garden front where we observed two fragmentary pre-Norman crosses, with interlacing knotwork c. 10th century.

Thence westward along rural byways to Bramall Hall, a private residence, most kindly thrown open without reserve to the members of the Society by its owner Mrs. Davies. Historically famous, this is one of the few first rank examples of half timber residences still surviving in full occupation in the country. The generous owner had an illustrated leaflet prepared for presentation to her temporary guests, making inspection easier and more significant. The hall is among the earliest of its kind, and it is claimed that 13th cent. remains are embedded in the later work. The chapel, though dismantled at present contains much exquisite tracery and carved work but recently uncovered, for it suffered drastic reconditioning in Elizabethan days, the great queen herself having presented to the Davenport of the day the massive mantelpiece of the drawing room. The company reluctantly left this beautiful home and its

gracious family, proceeding thence by pretty byways to the idyllic but now rather sophisticated Cheshire village of Prestbury where tea was taken and the antiquarian attractions inspected. These included an ancient half timber vicarage—now a bank—with other pleasant buildings in its old-time street, its beautiful church (in admirable condition) with an adjacent chapel or school, a rebuilt Norman structure with a well preserved original doorway and in the churchyard a number of old sepulchral fragments and a glass protected tenth century cross with knotwork ornament. In the absence of the vicar, the courteous church-officer made an efficient guide.

THE THIRD EXCURSION and the last of the season was arranged by Mr. P. H. Currey as Excursion Secretary for the occasion, on the 30th August. The first place visited was Elvaston Castle and gardens by kind invitation of the Countess of Harrington. The lay-out of the gardens with their shrubberies, fine trees and topiary work were long famous and their decorative gateway said to have been obtained from a Madrid palace is well known, but their excellencies are less striking in these difficult days than of old, but still of historical interest. The house or 'castle' was rebuilt in the castellated or pseudo-gothic style of the second decade of the last century, but recent repairs have revealed a small chamber of the earlier Jacobean house incorporated in the later building, which interested the visitors, who were allowed to wander at pleasure over the house. Thence they passed to the church where they were received by the vicar, the Rev. W. Davies, M.A., who gave an address on the family and the building. The manor was with Alselin at Domesday; was passed by an heiress to a Bardolf and in the reign of Henry VI was purchased from them by Lord Montjoy from whose family it passed also by purchase in the middle of the sixteenth century to the present family of Stanhope. The earldom of Harrington was created for services to the State in 1742. The fine church

retains examples of all the pointed styles, but is essentially of the 15th century and its outstanding qualities are its noble "perpendicular" tower and its fine oak screens. Its east end and reredos are a reconstruction by the late G. F. Bodley, R.A. From Elvaston the company proceeded by pleasant ways to the church of Sandiacre with its fine fourteenth century chancel, constituting with Norbury and Dronfield a trio of which the county may be proud. The triple sedilia, and piscina with their foliated canopies are noteworthy as is the raised stone bench round the walls; the nave is plain with a good late Norman south door and chancel arch and suggestions of pre-Norman masonry. Lunch having been taken in or about the rectory gardens, Dale Abbey, Hermitage and church were next visited, such notes of the familiar story as were needed being communicated. In the quaint little church probably originally the Infirmary chapel, attention was called to the recently uncovered and restored wall paintings, and the very dilapidated condition of the gallery timbers noted with concern, the necessity of early repairs being emphasised. Here Mr. Currey handed a collection of notes on the history and buildings of the foundation to General Meynell who read a selection of them to the assembled company. Thence the members passed on to Breadsall Priory where Miss and Captain Haslam very kindly provided tea. A brief sketch, by the host, of the more outstanding facts of the priory's history with an examination of the very scanty remains of the earlier structure and the charming gardens brought a very pleasant and informing expedition to a conclusion.

[The recorder regrets he was unable to be present at this last excursion, being in Austria at the time, and his report therefore has had to be derived from members present combined with his own knowledge of the places visited].

W. H. WALTON.