



## Sandhurst, Berks.

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*(Continued from page 61, Vol. 20.)*

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A considerable part of this diary was printed in the Berks Archæological Journal of January, 1912, wherein among other unpleasant adventures Nunn records how

“Blacks came in the night shot at me three times two bullets into my chamb<sup>r</sup> window and agreed to pay y<sup>m</sup> 5 gs. at Crowthorne y<sup>e</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> inst.”

On this occasion valuable evidence was secured against the poachers. For while Nunn duly attended at the appointed place with the money, three of his agents concealed themselves near the house of the suspected leader and watched four persons, whom they were able to identify, enter the house, come out in disguise, and proceed to the rendezvous.

The Blacks were broken up, but the country was no less lawless at the end of the 18th century. It is hardly possible to open any of the earlier numbers of the “Reading Mercury” without finding an account of some highway robbery or burglary. Farms were constantly broken into at night, and inoffensive people clubbed on the head in the road. In 1787 Associations were being formed in the large parishes for apprehending and proceeding against burglars and robbers. Sandhurst, being a small village, joined with others in the hundreds of Charlton, Sonning and Wargrave to form an association, of which Mr. Edward Wise, a Wokingham solicitor, was treasurer.

Little mercy was shewn to persons convicted, but crime did not decrease. Every assize a dozen or more would be condemned to death and many more to transportation. The way public executions were conducted must have had a bad effect on the imagination of

the spectator. The criminal the central figure of the procession over the heath, the new suit of black, the crape covered cart, the draped staves of the escort, the crowd grateful for the show and therefore sympathetic, the last speech, and the so-called "edifying end"—one can well understand all these impressing many a poor ignorant rustic in a way never intended by the law.

The true heath dweller is now extinct in the parish, though here and there the features of a child suggest a strain of the gipsy race which was common enough thirty years ago. When Major Sawyer came to Hannicans Lodge about 1860 he found the broom makers of what is now St. Sebastian's still a most rough and primitive tribe. Few were married, their children were unbaptised, and some even exercised a kind of pagan worship.\* Their custom was to form themselves into associations of twenty or thirty, despatching the product of their work weekly to Reading market or Bristol. On Sundays they took a holiday, and indulged in drinking bouts and boxing matches. In spite of their faults of birth and breeding, however, such good judges as Charles Kingsley and Miss Mitford found in them many fine qualities; and the earlier church workers found them most responsive to sympathetic treatment.

Of the later keepers of Sandhurst and Bigshot Walks we know some of the names. Their post was more or less a sinecure, and the salary amounted to no more than £25 a year, with an allowance of £50 for grass, beans and turnips for the deer. The ruinous condition of the house was the subject of frequent correspondence between the keeper and the Treasury. Sir Charles Howard was succeeded by his son Charles in 1614. His commission, dated July 9th, describes him as "Ranger of Finchampstead and of the Walks of Bigshot, Easthampstead and Blackwater, *alias* Sandhurst." The royal keeper was presumably turned out by the Commonwealth, and in 1649 a Frenchman named René Bailly, late sergeant-major in Fairfax's Regiment, took over charge. This was the year when the Levellers, under John Lillbourn, were active in the neighbourhood. The new keeper arrived to find all the palings pulled up, and seems to have spent a good deal of his own money in repairing

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\* "Notes on the early history of S. Sebastian's," by the Rev. Arthur Carr, 1902.

"This pagan worship consisted of peat erections which looked like altars with little bits of broken china on them; and the people used to say prayers to these bits of broken plates and jugs with figures on them. I have been down into these half subterranean heath dwellings many a time."—Extract from a letter of Mrs. Kennett-Were in the above.

them. He petitioned the King after the Restoration either to give him employment or a pass to his own country, "as his nationality prevented him setting up a trade, and he had suffered much loss by the riots in the Walk of Bigshot Rails which was in his custody."

Between 1716 and 1723, Col. Negus, referred to above, held the appointment, and in the former year he made an application to the Treasury to be allowed to cut and fell trees to repair the lodge. In 1730, on Mr. Whitworth's memorial, the walks were surveyed by a Mr. Wither, who reported the lodge ruinous owing to its "exposed position in the midst of a barren heath," the rails were down, and the common cattle were wandering about in the enclosure. He recommended establishing the underkeeper in Sandhurst Walk, "as very extensive and well situated for His Majesty's hunting and for maintaining a large herd of deer." As a result, a grant of £472 10s. was made for the repair of the house and £10 a year was devoted out of the wood sales to hire a cottage in Sandhurst. In 1742 Lord George Beauclerk was keeper. He afterwards succeeded his father, who was at that time Warden of the Forest, as third Duke of St. Albans. The second Duke had a house at Finchampstead at this period.

The last regularly-appointed keeper was Major-General Cox, whose tomb is near the south door of the church. He was equerry to the Duke of Gloucester, and, before his appointment, had had a distinguished military career. The General died in 1788, and his widow continued to live in the house till it became a ruin.

The last part of the eighteenth century was the age of inclosures. Bread was dear owing to the war, and there was every inducement, therefore, to bring fresh land into cultivation. In every parish the wastes on which the inhabitants had grazed their cattle or cut their turf in common were being divided up among them individually by act of parliament. To the Lord of the Manor went the largest share, and to the other freeholders the rest in proportion to the value of their tenements.

In the forest the whole question of land tenure was complicated by the rights claimed by the Crown. Certain grants of land had been made from time to time, but since the Conquest as much as five hundred acres had been inclosed at different periods by individuals who could show no legal claims to their property. In some villages the parish officers had taken on themselves, quite illegally, the authority to dispose of portions of the waste to individuals for sums varying from twelve to twenty-eight pounds an acre,

and the parish kept the money. Such tenants could, of course, prove no right whatever to their holdings.

Accordingly, commissioners were appointed in 1805 to go into the whole matter and inquire generally into the condition of the forest. Several reports were issued, from which it appears that things were in the greatest disorder. The right of common was everywhere much abused, the timber and the deer had been much neglected, and all kinds of people had assumed all kinds of rights, quite illegally, within its bounds. As an example, they gave the history of "browse-wood" and "rootage." It appears that the keepers used formerly to cut off the lops and tops of the trees and leave them on the ground for the deer to strip off the leaves and bark in the winter (browse-wood). When the deer had done with them the people were allowed to carry them away for firewood. The inhabitants might also, under certain conditions, and at stated periods, turn out their pigs into the woods to grub up acorns and beech masts (rootage). The report goes on to say that "by a most unwarrantable extension of the privilege of taking browse-wood, the inhabitants at large without any restriction have of late claimed the right, either in the case of a fall of timber by order of the proper officer of the forest, or in the case of a tree being blown down, to carry away the largest branches, leaving little more than the trunk. And by a most extraordinary perversion of the term 'rootage' they have claimed and carried away the roots of the trees."

The following particulars of Sandhurst parish are given in the report :—

	A.	R.	P.
Inclosed land belonging to the Crown ...	6	2	25
Encroachments on the forest since 1789	1	3	1
Open forest land—			
Heath and Common ...	340	8	3 34
Wood ...	14	3	24
Water ...	0	3	20
Private enclosed property ...	101	7	3 36
	—	—	—
Total acres ...	445	1	0 20
Number of houses, 23.	Population, 222.		

During the previous eight years about eight acres had been illegally annexed from the waste in Sandhurst and Bigshot Walks by the simple process of digging a ditch and throwing up a bank, and this proceeding had been going on for many years.

The court sat on certain days in different parts of the forest, when all having claims were ordered to come forward and prove them. General Cox's son, who appeared before the commissioners as his mother's representative, stated that he had performed the duties of keeper of Bigshot Rails since his father's death. The under-keeper, John Smith, was also called, and stated that he had for some time been living among the ruins and drawing a salary of £20, which he paid to Mrs. Cox for the rent of the estate. He had not seen the keeper for the last three years. The commissioners reported the house as "in no way habitable," and recommended that it should be dismantled and sold, as it would only give encouragement in the winter to thieving. The house was purchased soon afterwards by Sir Watkin Wynn, who repaired and enlarged it. About 1860 it came into the hands of Major Sawyer, and later of Charles Smith, Esq. It is still the residence of Mrs. Charles Smith.

Besides the claim of Mr. Richard Heavyside to the title and rights of Lord of the Manor, the tenants, represented by John Rackstraw and James Giblett, claimed common of pasture and turbary over all the open parts of the forest within the parish. The opinion was given of these rights generally, that the former was much abused and needed restriction, while the latter was founded on no legal right at all, though it had long been enjoyed, and from motives of humanity could not well be disturbed.

The result of the commissioners' report was the Windsor Forest Inclosure Act of 1813, by which the forest laws ceased to exist, the Crown reserving a certain proportion of the land, while the remainder was distributed in allotments among the various landowners. The award for Sandhurst was issued in 1817, and is now in the custody of the parish clerk.

The largest proprietor at this time was Mr. John Moseley. His estate, which had been in his family since about 1767, comprised about 211 acres at the west end of the parish, besides the glebe of 14½ acres which he had on lease from the Dean of Salisbury. The houses on the property were Ambarrow Farm, Groves' Farm, and an old house adjoining the north-west of the churchyard, since demolished. Whiting's Farm had been burned down in 1803, and was never re-built. His tenants for many years had been members of the Giles family. The Rev. Charles Norris' estate consisted of 166 acres, and included Breech Farm, the house now called Rivermede, and the cottages and buildings opposite, which are now the

the property of the rector. His land lay chiefly between the village street and the river.

Mr. Heavyside's demesne appears to have been represented by two acres of land round Sandhurst Lodge. He was now allotted 14 acres adjoining,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres at Ambarrow Hill, and a large tract of 352 acres at Hurt's Hill and Broadmoor Bottom "as a compensation and satisfaction to the rights and interests of the said Richard Heavyside in and to the soil of the wastes of the said manor." Others who benefitted were Mr. Blackall Simonds, who held at the time 91 acres, including what is now called College Farm ; Mr. Charles Simonds, Cave's Farm ; Mr. William Simonds, Sandhurst Farm ; the Royal Military College ; J. Martin, J. Sevier, J. Rackstraw, W. Berry, Elizabeth Barnard, J. Bourne, C. Eeles, A. Draper, James and John Giblett, Mary Giles, J. Horn, J. Hart, J. Justice, M. Justice, J. Kimber, W. Parfet, W. Taylor, Mary and Moses Watts, Robert Watts, and Miss Wise, Mr. Carwithen and his successors, as curate-in-charge, also received an allotment, and the impropriate glebe was augmented. The poor of Yateley and Sandhurst, under the provisions of Bannister's Charity, possessed nine acres and a-half in the parish. They were now allotted three further pieces of land. Gravel pits were handed over to the Surveyors of the parish highways near Snaprails and on Ambarrow and Scotland Hills. A portion of the present R.M.C. grounds was reserved for the Crown, and land to the value of over £1,300 was sold to various persons to defray the cost of the survey.

*(To be continued.)*

