XVI.

NOTICES OF COLD HARBOUR, CROYDON.

BY CUTHBERT WILLIAM JOHNSON, ESQ., F.R.S.

READ AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT CROYDON, JUNE 12TH, 1856.

Although an examination of this district and its immediate vicinity, may lead to the discovery of but few traces of the ancient inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and their pagan priesthood, and those indications are chiefly to be found in the names of places, many of which have, in the lapse of time, become exceedingly corrupted; still these indicia, scanty as they are, appear to be of sufficient importance to render them worthy the notice of the archaeologist.

Before proceeding to trace out these footprints of a bygone race, it may be useful to consider the probable state of the district before it was inhabited by man, and what were the reasons likely to induce some of the first settlers, who migrated into Surrey from the continent, to select this place as the site of those two or three rude huts which, slowly increasing in number, at length became a village, and then grew into a town. First, then, as to the appearance of the district in its uninhabited state, when the bear and the wolf wandered unmolested by man, around the sources of the Wandel.

The town of Croydon is situate on the verge of the great basin of the London clay; a formation which constitutes the soil of almost all that portion of the
county which lies to the north of the Wandel river. A narrow belt of the plastic clay formation is found running parallel with the margin of the London clay, usually about a mile or less in width; and adjoining to and running parallel with this we find the northern extremity or verge of the range of chalk wolds or downs known as the North Downs. These clay formations would be, in their primeval state, thickly tenanted by the oak, the hazel, the ash, and the birch; in fact, we learn that even in historic times a dense forest covered the north of Surrey. Small portions of that great wood yet remain. The sites of Norwood and Forest Hill, it is true, now almost as little remind us of a forest that once existed there—the great north wood of our county—as Woodside (close by this town), which still retains the name, when the once adjacent forest has long since disappeared. We are well assured, then, that in former days this great wood densely covered the land between the Wandel and the Thames, that its trees crowded the fertile soil of the plastic clay in which the springs of the Wandel rise, and that this wood, not far from the south of our town, would cease to extend itself, since the chalk which there commences will not support the oak or other woodland trees; the furze and other indigenous bushes would rather be its tenants. If any trees were thinly scattered on the chalk downs, they would probably be the birch or the beech.

It was through such a comparatively open country that, after landing on the southern or eastern shores of our island, the first families who migrated into Surrey would penetrate over our chalk downs to the borders of that dense and wild wood to which I have alluded. And could the members of a wandering tribe be likely to find a more attractive site for their habitations than
was then presented to them? Here were to be found excellent water, wood and reeds for their huts, and for fuel, cover for their game, on which they would at first subsist, an open chalk country behind them, and, when they began to have herds and flocks, and arable lands, the rich diluvial soils of our valley and its slopes for their subsistence.

With such natural advantages, we may perhaps safely conclude that from the earliest periods when man occupied our island, around the head-springs of our river at Croydon were placed some of the dwelling-places of the natives. These aborigines would soon give simple names to the objects around them; some of which, I believe, they yet retain. The well-drained land on which the “old town” of Croydon is placed would then have abounded with a chain of pools and irregularly filled water-channels. Now, within a few yards of those old channels we have certain names which seem to refer to these waters, such as Tain-field (which comes, I take it, from the Celtic word tain, water, and field, a field) and Duppa, or rather Dubbers Hill (perhaps from the Celtic word dubadh, a pond or pool). Coomb Lane leads from these through a little valley; now cym, in old British, signifies a low situation or valley.

Then came the period when the increase of the population caused not only the formation of track-ways or roads,¹ but brought into this neighbourhood the pagan priesthood, the first races of whom are perchance utterly forgotten; then came the Druids and their mystic religious ceremonies, and then would soon arise the pagan temples—rude erections, of whose faint, yet pretty distinct

¹ One cause of principal roads being made from the sea-coast to London in the direction of Croydon, might be that they thus rounded the head-springs of the Wandel and their attendant swamps.
traces, still existing in the local names within a few hundred yards not only of each other, but of Croydon, we have next to inquire.

In our pilgrimage from this town to Beddington, as soon as we are well out of modern Croydon, we shall find ourselves in the hamlet of Waddon, once known, and marked in the old maps of Surrey, as Wodden or Woden. The name would here suggest that in its neighbourhood probably once stood a temple or idol of the great God of the northern men; that here were located, among their woods of oak and near to copious springs, the Anglo-Saxon, the Druidical, or a still earlier priesthood. That such was the case, let me remark, before we proceed to other indications of their former presence in the neighbourhood, the very name of the Wandel, which flows through Waddon, also seems to suggest. We may test, and perhaps render this pretty probable, by tracing the etymology of the similar name of Wandsdyke, or Wansditch, one of the great works of the early Britons, which extends across the county of Wilts. Now, when we find it is the opinion of most antiquarians that this great way or ditch derived its name from an adjacent temple of Woden, shall we not be justified in deeming it as probable, that our Wandel is also a corruption of Woden, and perhaps of dal, the old Saxon word for a dell or little valley? Camden, speaking of the Wansdyke, indeed remarks (Britannia, by Gibson, p. 84): "The natives have the tradition that it was made by the devil on a Wednesday (or Wodensday); the Saxons termed it Woðenerðic, that is Woden's or Mercury's Ditch, the village of Wodensburge [Camden adds] is near this dyke."

We may perhaps fairly then regard it as probable that close to the west or south-western side of the
modern town of Croydon once stood some great idol or temple sacred to Woden, that religious rites were there performed, and that to some of these ceremonies were devoted adjacent woods and meads, the site of which may be indicated by the name of Haling, a manor which is hardly half a mile from either Waddon or Croydon, and whose name is derived by Ducarel from the old Saxon word for sanctus, which is halig (from whence also comes the old English word All Hallows, for All Saints); and he deems it not unlikely that the words halig and inge may mean "holy meadow" (Ducarel's Croydon, p. 73); for in the names of places, as Gibson remarks in his "Camden," inge signifies a meadow, from the Saxon ing, of the same import: and it may be worthy of notice, that from the very unusual names of two of the fields at Haling (Great and Little Rangers), we might conclude that circular stones, or earthworks, connected with Druidical ceremonies, once existed here; "Ranger" being derived from the old British rhenge, which comes from the German ring, a circle.

Now, in the interval between Waddon and Haling, short as is the distance, yet in that half-mile we pass a little group of two or three houses known as "Cold Harbour"—a place, like almost all the other Cold Harbours (and they are many) dotted over England, of very remote antiquity; but whether it was originally the site of a military or religious station, or the place of meeting for the old British bards, antiquarians are not exactly agreed; they all, however, seem to incline to the conclusions that the name of Cold Harbour is a gross corruption, and that it marks the site of the transactions of very early ages. The word Cold, as Sir R. Colt Hoare remarks in his "History of Ancient Wiltshire" (Stinton Station, p. 40), is frequently prefixed to the names of places, as
“Cold Arbour,” “Cold Kitchen Hill,” &c., and is probably a corruption of the Celtic word *col*, signifying a head or chief; Kitchen he deems to be a corruption of the Celtic word *crech* and *crechin*, a hill or summit; so that *Col Crechin*, or the chief summit, has been anglicized into the “Cold Kitchen Hill” of modern Wiltshire.

Before I proceed with these imperfect glances, let us inquire into the origin of the word Harbour. This word, according to Todd, seems to be derived from the Saxon *hepebenga*, a military station, a lodging for soldiers. So that from these readings we might conclude that Cold Harbour is a corruption of *col* and *hepebenga*, or a chief military lodging or resting-place. Such an explanation is apparently supported by the fact that these Cold Harbours are commonly found in the immediate vicinity of old British trackways, or the Roman roads which were often raised on the ancient ways of the Britons—roads portions of which, we shall presently see, may yet be traced in the neighbourhood of Croydon. As a resting or halting place for soldiers our Cold Harbour would possess the considerable advantage of being close to one of the chief springs of the Wandel, that at Waddon Court.

The name of Cole, or Cold Harbour, remarks Mr. Arthur Taylor (when speaking of the Cold Harbour near Thames Street), is known to be remarkably suggestive and significant in its general connection with ancient military works, and its occurrence here would

---

2 *Herberge* in French; *herberg*, Dutch; *albergo* in Italian. From this usage of the word, adds Todd, which obtained among the Germans also, the sense of it as an inn, or lodging for any persons, was adopted into several languages.

3 In a conveyance of the reign of Edward III. called “Colde Herberghe.”
seem to point out this spot as one marked by something more conspicuous, or more durable, than lines of encampment. (Archæologia, vol. 31, p. 120.)

That something Admiral Smythe (Ibid. p. 128) is inclined to believe to be a mere vestige of the once almost universal Ophite Worship, the accurate history of which still continues to be a desideratum in archaeology.

I do not feel inclined to do more than refer to the Arbour Lows of Derbyshire as having some possible connection with our Cold Harbours. Thus, near Middleton is to be found, says Davies in his “Derbyshire” (p. 581), one of the most remarkable of our county’s monuments of antiquity; this is the Arbe-lous or Arbor-lows, a circle of stones within which the ancient British bards were accustomed to hold their assemblies. Supposing that there was a connection between these, then Col-Arbor-lows might intend a chief place at which, near to some raised mound or monument, the ancient bards of the Cymri, in remote ages, held their meetings; and if so, then we have here, within a very few hundred yards of each other, three names probably indicating the

4 The worship of the serpent (Coluber) was common to the ancient Scandinavians and other nations. Pliny, when speaking of the Druids, alludes to their stories and charlatanery about the serpent’s egg.—(Lib. xxix. cap. 3.)

5 Lowe, loe, comes from the heap, or hill; heap, or barrow; and so the Gothic hlaiw is a monument or barrow.—(Gibson’s Camden.)—Todd.

6 Mr. Pegge (Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 140), in speaking of the ancient British “Lows,” and especially of the “Arbour Lows,” near Bakewell, alludes to the Arbour-Low-close, near Okeover, in Staffordshire (Plott’s Staffordshire, p. 404). Pegge thinks that the name is derived from the British word warar, a hero, and low, a mount or tumulus, and he concludes (Ibid. p. 147) that the monument in question must either be a sepulchre or a temple, and that the probability is that Arbour-Lows must have been a temple—a holy enclosure, not to be profaned or defiled.
former presence of heathen worship; viz., Woden, Col Arbour, and Halige.\(^7\)

Some writers have contended that "Cold Harbour" merely means a very cold place, or harbour \textit{against} the cold in the exposed places in which they are often found. There are several objections to this explanation, such as that the name occurs in sheltered situations, as in "Cold Herberge" in London, and that the name is too common, too widely dispersed throughout the island, and that it is found even on the continent. A writer in the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} for May 1856 has perhaps said all that can be urged in favour of the literal interpretation.

But that it is an error to conclude that "Cold Harbours" are always in cold or exposed situations, was not long since remarked by Mr. Benjamin Williams, F.S.A., in a letter read before the Antiquarian Society, January 16, 1851, in further illustration of the etymology of Cold Herbergh or Harbour. In corroboration of this, he observes, that according to Ihre's \textit{Dictionarium Suio-Gothicum} there is, or rather was, the Swedish word \textit{kol} signifying fire, the very opposite of \textit{cool}; in that sense, however, there are various dialects of Germany and the North in which the word \textit{kol} is used as denoting heat.

The name of "Cold Herberghe," I find, is known in Germany. In an ancient itinerary between Aix-la-Chapelle and Treves (starting from the former place), the name thus occurs:—

\(^7\) The Druid order of priesthood was divided into three essential classes:—viz., the \textit{Bardd Braint}, peculiarly the ruling order; \textit{Derwiddl} (hence our word Druid), or religious functionary; and the \textit{Ovydd}, or literary and scientific order. The principal doctrines of the order were—the belief in one God, the creator and governor of the universe, universal peace and good will.—(Owen's \textit{Llywarch Hen}, quoted by Davis in his Derbyshire, p. 583.)
"Ad S. Corneliam ... ... i mil.
Roryng ... ... \( \frac{1}{2} \) "
Rusteyne ... ... ii "
Cald Herberge... ... dim. mil."

The same place appears in the map given in Murray's Handbook of Belgium under the orthography of Kaltenherberg.

But let me not omit to note the existence of that old trackway which passes in a southerly direction by Cold Harbour, and which, in all reasonable probability, the early Britons made, and their Roman and Saxon conquerors afterwards used. If we wend our way up this lane from Cold Harbour, we soon arrive at the commencement of that portion of it where it is considerably sunk below the surface of the adjacent ground, and when we are nearly arrived at Beggar's Bush it joins the "Mear Bank," or ancient raised ridge, now dividing the parishes of Croydon and Beddington; here, there is little doubt, were placed the old Saxon mear or markstones, once commonly set up to mark boundaries. Thence, descending the hill to Foxley gate, this old road (which from a remote period has here formed the boundary of Croydon and Beddington parishes\(^8\)) leads the way to the remains of other ancient trackways, dykes, and banks. The ancient British Ermyn Street, in fact, appears to have extended in this direction from Pevensey on the Sussex coast, passing near Croydon, to London. The "Stane Street" of the Romans, which extended from Chichester to London, passed through Coulsdon. At the entrance of Far-

\(^8\) The very fact of this road forming the parish boundary would indicate its antiquity. Since we may fairly conclude that this way was in existence when, in A.D. 636, parishes are said to have been first formed by Archbishop Honorius.
thing Down are traces of three dykes; on the hill ascending from Smitham Bottom are several small barrows; on the top of Riddlesdown, just beyond the sheep-pond, on the right-hand side as we proceed from Purley oaks, are the remains of two ancient banks and double ditches; the direction of these points to the similar works at the entrance of Hoolley Lane from Smitham Bottom. (Manning's Surrey, vol. ii. p. 448.) Our Cold Harbour Lane, too, leads towards "The Oaks," at Woodcote, a place which disputes with Croydon for the site of Noviomagus, the chief city, according to Camden, of the Regni.

From a retrospect, then, of the natural temptations which this district would assuredly offer to the early visitors of our island, we should anticipate that it would be selected by them for the site of their habitations; and when we consider the number of places around the town with names of apparently Celtic origin, we may perhaps fairly conclude, that here dwelt, from the earliest periods when mankind inhabited our country, a well-placed population and a numerous and influential pagan priesthood. The mere faint "casts" (as the geologists would say) of their foot-prints I have endeavoured to detect, with the hope that my imperfect attempts will excite my hearers to extended inquiries, and to far more satisfactory results.