BEVERLEY IN THE OLDEN TIMES.[1]

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At intervals along the eastern foot of the Yorkshire Wolds, which formed the coast line of a pre-glacial sea, springs of water, finding their way from the chalk, unite to form streams locally known as Becks. Most of these become tributaries of the river Hull, which is the natural effluent of the district, and carries its waters to the Humber. Near certain of these Becks, in early times, settlements were formed, of which, whilst some never became more than villages, others, *e.g.* Bridlington, Driffield, and Beverley, developed into towns of more or less importance. It is of the last mentioned that I am about to speak, hoping that a sketch of its position and history may add to the interest of the visit of your society to the capital of the East Riding.

Beverley stands like the two other towns I have mentioned, embayed in a nook at the foot of the Wolds, almost at their south-east corner. The position and form of the *old* town were determined by the existence and course of the streams which, finding their origin in springs issuing from the ground on the west side of the town, joined to form Beverley Beck. Most of these streams have been lost sight of from various causes; in some cases by alterations in the ground level: in others from exhaustion of the natural chalk drainage, or by the diversion of the supply by well-sinking operations. In illustration of the last named mode it may be mentioned that at Anlaby, about seven miles from Beverley, the water which turned a watermill, was lost through the supply being tapped during the boring at Spring-head, to obtain water for the town of Hull. Others have been covered in and used as sewers. But some of the springs may yet be seen at certain seasons supplying their quota

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to Willow Row in Westwood near the chalk pits. This water finds its way down Walker Beck, which, although now covered in, follows a course well known and shown on the Ordnance map. Another of these old water-courses made its way down the Market-place. Both of them were no doubt originally streams such as may be seen meandering through village streets in many parts of the country, serving at once for an easily obtained water supply, and also as sewers to receive the outcastings of the town.

The configuration of the *old* town was no doubt due to its founders having, in forming the streets, followed the windings of these tributaries of Beverley Beck.

The conditions which resulted from these circumstances would be conducive to a collection of water such as is supposed to have given the site of the town its name "Beverley," a word which most authorities consider to mean the loch, pool, or lake of beavers. Whether a lake, according to our present understanding of that word, ever really existed is I think uncertain, but, however that may have been, the site was undoubtedly a hollow swampy place, intersected by streams, and at certain periods of the year liable to have its lake-like character increased by the overflowing of the neighbouring river, or by the backing up of its waters by the river's tides. So far as I am aware, no authenticated remains of beavers have been found at Beverley. That they were, however, denizens of the district we know, because Mr. T. Boynton found their bones in the lake-dwelling at Ulrome in this riding.

From a consideration of the facts which I have related we may, I think, picture Beverley in mediæval times as a town whose traffic was very largely carried on by water, through whose streets ran rivulets, and which on its eastern side was approached by boats, at any rate in winter or during wet seasons. Indeed as late as the early part of the present century, before the drainage of the district was carried out, people from the "Carrs" (as the lowlands on the east side are called) still came as far as Norwood in their Carr-waddles, flat bottomed boats which floated in a few inches of water, and were propelled by poles. A ditch which was part of the passage, though now dry, still exists near Swinemoor Lane.

That the authorities were desirous at an early period

to improve the state of the town we learn from the town records and accounts. Henry III. granted them the right to levy tolls on conveyances bringing articles to the town for sale, as well as upon the articles themselves, for pavage purposes. An enumeration of some of these will give an idea of the articles of commerce dealt in at that time; they consisted amongst others of wine, woad, ashes, wool, sheep, goats, wood, salt, salt and fresh herrings, pike, etc.

It was, however, in the fourteenth century, between 1344 and 1366, that work was carried out which I believe very materially altered the condition and appearance of the town. During that period the town accounts show that immense quantities of "white stone" (chalk) were brought from Westwood, and used in raising the streets to a higher level, probably to the level of the banks of the streams which ran through them; possibly higher, for some of the houses at any rate are built on made ground.

The names of the streets into which the "white stone" was carried are given in the accounts; they are Lathegate, Walkergate, Crossbridge, Hengate, Flemingate, Aldgate (this was perhaps the present Highgate), Barleyholme (not now known), Corn Market, Eastgate, Keldgate, Toll Gavel, Fish Market, Minster Moorgate, and the Dynges. All these streets, with the exception noted, still remain. This work no doubt put most of Beverley's water-courses entirely out of sight; all, perhaps, except Walker Beck which was open until some seventy years ago.

I was much interested in watching the exposure of this fourteenth-century work, during the excavations which were made in all the streets for the drainage works carried out a few years ago; and in noting how the "white stone" had been used in combination with timber, etc. From notes taken at the time, I am able to describe what I saw.

First it will be well to state that, on a substratum of boulder clay or marshy gravelly silt, every street in the town has been raised more or less. The depth filled in varies from four or five feet in some parts, to twelve at the east end of the Minster. Then, in order to avoid being tedious, I will describe what I saw in Highgate,

the street which leads to the north porch of the Minster, as it is typical of the rest. A trench was cut down this street, which at the south or Minster end was 7 feet 3 inches, and at its north end 6 feet 9 inches in depth. From the present street level to the greatest depth excavated, the soil is all "made," the natural surface being but barely reached at any point in the whole length of the trench. When found it appeared to consist of black peaty material, with leaves and hazel-nuts still distinguishable. In order to make a good foundation on this bog, branches of hazel had been laid on the surface always with their length across the street. Upon these and lying in the same direction young trees were laid side by side, in some parts close enough to touch, in others 12 or 18 inches apart. Next in order a layer of chalk and occasionally pieces of waste building stone were regularly laid. The chalk and stone were in large regularly cut blocks, so shaped that each one fitted with its neighbour; indeed the workmen displaced them by inserting a crowbar or pickaxe into the joints, except in cases where they were too large to be so dealt with, and had to be broken up with heavy hammers.

The materials already named formed strata about two feet thick. The rest of the depth had been filled in with clay, earth, chalk rubble, bricks, sea-rolled pebbles—indeed everything which goes to form "filling in."

Some soles of the pointed shoes such as were fashionable at the time the work was carried on, pieces of mediæval glazed pottery, iron nails, and a large number of small horse shoes, together with the tusks of boars and other odds and ends, were the chief relics turned up.

That the work had in all cases been continuous, and the filling in done at once, was shown by the fact that the chalk layer, which I examined carefully, showed no signs of wear, as it would very speedily have done had it been used as a road.

At different points on the outskirts of the town where excavations have been made, the boulder clay is found close to the surface, only covered with road metal, and I have no doubt if proper observations were made it would be possible to define the limits of the lake-like depression which forms the site of Beverley.

Beverley Beck, a stream about 1½ miles long, was of such importance as one of the main approaches to the town that at an early period, probably in the reign of Edward II., its course was altered, the channel being deepened and straightened, and rendered capable of allowing vessels to pass up and down. The more winding and indirect stream is still represented by a ditch which runs into the north side of the Beck. This Beck was the waterway by which merchandise was conveyed to Beverley.

The articles still carried by way of the Beck to or from Beckside, as that part of the town is called, are chiefly coals, bricks, chalk, leather, linseed, timber, tannery materials, whiting, etc. These are conveyed in vessels called by the old Norse name keels, which, in many ways are not unlike the old Viking's ships in form and rigging, as well as name.

Owing to the communication which Beverley had with the Humber and the sea by the river Hull, it was in mediæval times treated as a sea port, and had to furnish from time to time vessels for the King's use. Edward III. requisitioned "The Godale" of Beverley to carry provisions to his garrison of Berwick-on-Tweed, paying £2 14*s.* for wage.

Let us now consider the question—who were the first inhabitants of Beverley?

There are, on the common pasture of Westwood, several round barrows like those which are plentifully scattered over the wolds. Canon Greenwell considers that these were raised by a pre-Roman British people of the early iron age. In one he discovered the two wheels of a chariot, and what was almost certainly an iron bit for a horse; no bones of either men or beasts were found, but the nature of the soil might account for this fact.

At Arras, on the Wolds between Beverley and Market Weighton, there were upwards of a hundred barrows, many of which were opened in 1816–7 by Messrs. Clough and Stillingfleet. Amongst other things found in them were portions of chariots, horse trappings, hand mirrors, etc. In 1877 another of the same group, which had been overlooked, was accidentally opened by some workmen; it contained the skeleton of a woman with whom had been interred the wheels of a chariot, a bronze mirror, two

bronze bits for horses, and several other portions of harness. There is, I think, not much reason to doubt that the builders of the Beverley barrows were closely connected with those of the Arras barrows, whose mode of interment and worldly possessions appear to have been quite similar.

With regard to the period of the Roman occupation of Britain, although fragments of Roman pottery have been accidentally turned up during agricultural operations about 1½ miles to the west of Beverley, there is no evidence, direct or indirect, to show that that people had any settlement in or near Beverley, neither did any Roman road come there.

It is not until Anglo-Saxon times that we get any historical notice of the place. John, bishop of York, afterwards known as St. John of Beverley, who was born at Harpham on the Wolds, during his episcopate founded a monastery, "Inderawood," on the site subsequently named "Beverley." When he resigned his bishopric he retired to that place and died there. From that time Beverley has had a history, and the simple Anglo-Saxon church, renowned for the possession of the shrine of so famous a wonder-working saint, increased in importance ecclesiastically, and in architectural beauty developed into the lovely minster which you are to study to-morrow.

Around this church the town of Beverley gradually grew, becoming in course of time one of the important mediæval towns in the country. At the time of the dissolution of the collegiate church its population was greater than that of Kingston-upon-Hull.

In mediæval days Beverley was several times visited by royal persons, who came to worship at the shrine of St. John of Beverley, to seek protection or aid in enterprises which they had in hand, or to render thanks and homage for favours already received.

Athelstan, when on his way to Scotland on an expedition against King Constantine, worshipped at the shrine, vowing to confer benefits on the church if his expedition were successful, leaving his dagger on the altar as a pledge of his fidelity, and taking with him the banner of St. John. Having returned victorious he bestowed lands on

the church, made it a collegiate establishment, and conferred upon it and a portion of the adjacent country the privilege of sanctuary. The limits of the sanctuary were marked by crosses. The base and part of the shaft of one of these still remain in a hedge on the road to Skidby, a village south-west of the town. Others were placed, one at Molescroft to the north, on the road towards Cherry or North Burton, and near Killingwoldgraves on the Bishop Burton road another shaft remains.

St. John's banner was again carried for King Stephen, with those of St. Peter of York and St. Wilfrid of Ripon, to the battle of Northallerton, with good effect. At a later period, however, neither the banner nor the fame of St. John's shrine served to protect Beverley when, as Holinshed tells, the "Scotch under Bruce having defeated Edward II., after they had spoiled the monasterie of Rivale and taken their pleasure there, they passed forth into Yorkeswolde destroieng that countrie even almost unto Beverlie, which towne they ransomed, receiving a summe of monie for sparing it least they should have burned it, as they did others."

Stephen is said to have visited Beverley in 1149, and fined the inhabitants for having given shelter to Henry Murdac.

In 1290 (November 24th) Edward I. was entertained for three days by the Collegiate Society of St. John, and in 1300 he came again, accompanied by his queen and eldest son. It is probable that he paid a third visit in 1306, as certain documents witnessed by him are dated from Beverley.

After the battle of Agincourt, on the day of which battle the tomb of St. John is said to have exuded oil, Henry V. did not fail to come and render thanks there for his victory.

The town was for a time the head quarters of Charles I., during his fight with the Parliament. Tradition says that he lodged in the room over the North Bar, or in the house adjoining it on the west side.

Was Beverley ever a fenced town? This is a question which cannot be with certainty answered. It had in mediæval times five gates called Bars, of which but one, the North Bar, a very fine specimen of probably fifteenth-

century brickwork, remains. With the exception of the portcullis this Bar is complete in all its parts. The other Bars were Norwood Bar; South Bar adjoining Eastgate near Friars' Lane; Keldgate Bar; and Newbegin Bar. These had all disappeared by the commencement of the present century. In Edward II.'s, and again in Edward III.'s, reigns, there are references to the state of the town's defences, which appear to have fallen into decay.

When Leland visited the place during his tour of inspection for Henry VIII. the condition of affairs is thus described by him:—"The toune is not wallid: but yet be there many fair gate of brike. North Barre, Newbigyn bar by west, and Kellegate Barre by west also." After a second visit, he says, "Beverle is a very larg town, but I cowld not perceyve that ever hit was waulled, though ther be certen gates of stone portcolesed for defence."

Probably the correct view with regard to its fortifications is that at an early mediæval period the Bars were connected by an earthen rampart outside which was a ditch. During the Civil War the ditch on the west side of the town was made broader, the gates were closed at night, and a watch set from sunset to morning.

During the struggle between Charles I. and the Parliament, the town was alternately occupied by both forces, and there was a great deal of street fighting, but neither party found it capable of being permanently held. When the west doors of the Minster were repaired a few years ago, several round lead bullets were taken out of them, which very probably found their billets there during the street fighting I have mentioned.

Amongst the religious orders which had houses in Beverley, were the Dominican and Franciscan friars, and the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, whose house was where the railway station now stands; part of its moat remains. There were, too, several hospitals, the site of one of which, St. Giles', is still known as St. Giles' Croft, and also Leper houses and Maisons de Dieu. All these have, however, disappeared except part of the Black friars with a portion of its enclosing wall; the site of its old pleasaunce still bears the suggestive title, Paradise.

With few exceptions all the old streets in Beverley are

called "gates." The prefixes have reference to the position of, or some peculiarity connected with, the street, *e.g.*, Eastgate from its position: Keldgate, the street of the the spring. Flemingate was no doubt the locus of a colony of Flemish weavers dyers or fullers who made the red cloth for which Beverley was famous.

Aldgate, or Highgate, was at one time called Londoners' Street, because the London dealers who attended the annual fairs exposed there the various wares they brought for sale, and patronised the inns which were situate in the street. Friar's Lane, now absurdly re-named Chantry Lane, led to the house of the Dominicans and their "Paradise." The Fish-market would be supplied by both sea and river. Butcher Row was peculiar to the Fleshewers. Adjoining it is Toll-gavel, which seems to be a compound name, the component parts of which have a common meaning. Lurk Lane to the south of the Minster is a corruption of Lort Lane. Mr. A. F. Leach tells me the same word designates a locality connected with Winchester College. By Butt Lane we pass from Keldgate to the locality where the archers had their practising ground. On several occasions, Beverley bowmen had to take the field.

When viewed from the Tower of St. Mary's Church, it is easy and interesting to trace the limits of mediæval Beverley, which are clearly defined by the extent of the picturesque red-tiled roofs of the winding streets, for although some of the houses have slated roofs, the former still greatly preponderate giving a sense of warmth and colour very grateful to the eye, especially when as at this time of the year the trees which grow plentifully in and around Beverley form an appropriate background.

So much more could be said on the subject, that I feel that this sketch of Beverley in the olden time is very inadequate. You will, however, I hope, excuse its shortcomings, and allow me to express a hope that your visit to Beverley may be one of the pleasantest excursions in your programme.