

RAM'S HORNS FROM ALDERWASLEY, THE PROPERTY OF A. F. HURT ESQ.^{R.S.}
(a) Three Silver plates upon which a number of names are engraved, commencing with
Mr. Charles Hurt Mayor 1701.
(b) To this part was attached formerly a handle (now broken off) about 4 ft 6 in long.
(c) Tips of Silver.

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL

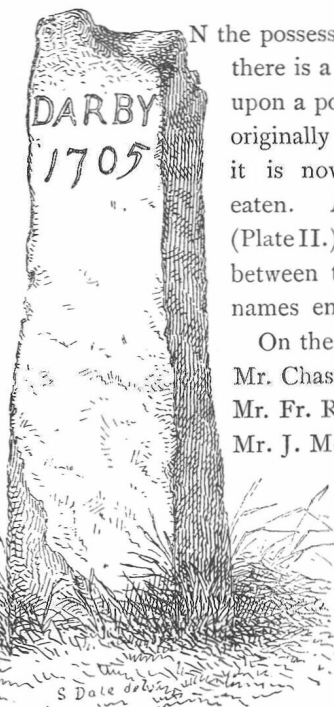
AND

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

On a Pair of Ancient Ram's Horns.

BY WILLIAM WEBB, M.D.

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IN the possession of Mr. Hurt, of Alderwasley, there is a pair of old Ram's Horns fixed upon a pole. This pole, he tells me, was originally about 4 feet 6 inches long, but it is now broken, decayed, and worm-eaten. As will be seen in the illustration (Plate II.) there are three silver plates fitted between the horns, having the following names engraved upon them:—

On the top Plate—

Mr. Chas. Hurt, Mayor	...	...	1701
Mr. Fr. Ridgeway	...	...	1702
Mr. J. Moreton	...	...	1703

* The old stone Guide-post, represented in this initial letter, drawn by Miss S. Dale, is situate at Hopton, about a mile from Wirksworth, opposite to the Sycamore farm. The south aspect is here given; on the north is "Bakewell," on the east "Wirksworth," and on the west "Ashburn." Below each name is the date 1705. The road to Bakewell is now only a disused, grassed-over lane; to Derby by lanes through Callow and Kirk Ireton; and to Wirksworth and Ashbourne by the regular turn-pike road.

Mr. J. Hutchinson	...	...	...	...	...	...	1704
Mr. R. Toplis	...	...	...	...	...	...	1705
Mr. C. Rosell	...	...	...	...	...	...	1706
Mr. M. Burton	...	...	...	...	...	...	1707
Mr. P. Gell	...	...	...	...	...	...	1708
Mr. B. Wigley	...	...	...	...	...	...	1709
Mr. T. Leacroft	...	...	...	...	...	...	1710
Mr. R. Lisett...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1711
Mr. G. Haynes	...	...	...	...	...	...	1712
Mr. R. Burton	...	...	...	...	...	...	1713
Mr. A. Hurt	...	...	...	...	...	...	1714
Mr. F. Trippett	...	...	...	...	...	...	1715
Mr. J. Mellor	...	...	...	...	...	...	1716
Mr. H. Spencer	...	...	...	...	...	...	1717

On the middle Plate—

Mr. J. Leek	...	...	...	...	...	...	1718
Mr. F. Hurt	...	...	...	...	...	...	1719
Mr. H. Travis...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1720
Mr. R. Buxton	1721
Mr. J. Wall	1722

On the lowest Plate—

Mr. Sam ^l Hutchinson...	1723
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Mr. Peter Brown,
 Mr. Robert Leacroft
 Mr. Tho^s Allen
 Mr. Edward Wheatcroft
 L. Masters, Esq^{re}
 Mr. Tho. Hutchinson
 Mr. Charles Hurt, Jun^r

Mayors.

Many of these names have been well-known in Wirksworth and its neighbourhood for generations, as for instance *Hurt*, *Gell*, *Toplis*, *Wigley*, *Leacroft*, *Mellor*, *Spencer*, *Travis*, *Buxton*, *Wall*, *Wheatcroft*; whilst others have become extinct, viz.: *Rosell*, *Trippett*, *Masters*, etc. The last-named must have been a considerable dignity a century and a half ago, for his is the

only name to which is affixed the title of Esquire. These interesting old Horns were exhibited at a meeting of the Derbyshire Archæological Society held at Wirksworth in the autumn of 1884, and the general impression amongst the members was that, as Wirksworth had never been a corporate town, these Horns had probably belonged to a convivial club, which appears to have been one of the institutions of the 17th and 18th centuries in many of our small towns, and the chief officer of this club was probably dignified by the title of Mayor: indeed many villages and unimportant places in the last century formed combinations of individuals resident within them for the purpose of looking after, and, if necessary, protecting what were believed to be their legitimate rights, and the chief officer of these combinations was called the Mayor.

The common at Garratt, a village between Tooting and Wandsworth in Surrey, had often been encroached upon, and a number of the inhabitants combined together to resist these encroachments in the year 1780. The chairman of this association was called the *Mayor*, and as his election took place just at the time of a general election, a law was made that the Mayor should hold office till the next general election, and a new officer be appointed at the time when the constituents chose their member. "The well-known addresses of these so-called Mayors, written by Foote, Garrick, Wilkes, and others, are political squibs and satires." The first Mayor of Garratt was "Sir" John Harper, a retailer of brick dust, and the last, "Sir" Harry Dimsdale, a muffin seller (1796).*

It is very probable that the Mayors, and, perhaps, the ordinary members who joined these combinations were sworn in "upon the Horns," as a custom of this sort was certainly common in many parts of England in the 17th and 18th centuries.

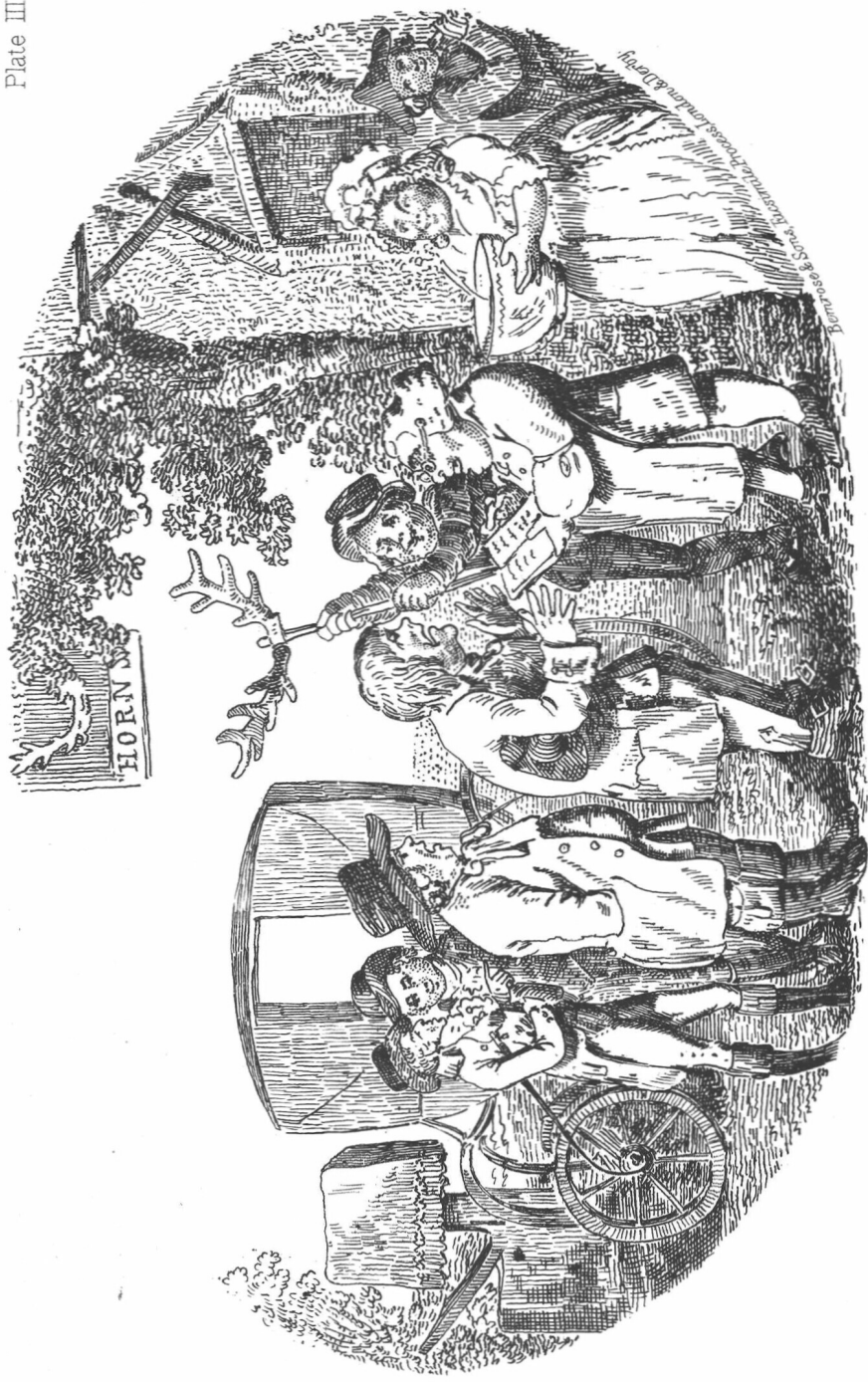
At Highgate, in the north of London, there were no less than nineteen public-houses at which the swearing in upon the Horns was adopted, probably with a view to increase their income; and

* Brewer's Handbook, p. 626.

most travellers from the north entering London by way of Highgate were stopped by the post-boys, and obliged to go through the solemn farce of taking the oath upon the Horns. I have copied an illustration of this ceremony from Woodward's "Eccentric Excursions," published in 1796 (Plate III.), which will explain the process better than any description. The officials, the post-boys, the culprit (if I may so call him) who is taking the grotesque oath, and the old dame coming from the inn laden with a bowl of punch, all indicate a farcical ceremony, followed by an evening of drink. The person who administered the oath was robed in a domino, with wig and mask, and having in his hand the book in which the oath is written, adjusts his spectacles, and goes through the farce. An old inhabitant, formerly an inn-keeper, is reported to have said:—"In my time nobody came to Highgate in anything of a carriage without being called upon to be sworn in. I was obliged to hire a man to do it. I have sworn in 100 to 120 of a day." A century ago, at least, eighty stage coaches passed through Highgate, and of every five passengers three were "sworn upon the Horns." No doubt the ceremony, foolish as it was, brought "grist to the mill," and, therefore, it was fostered by the hosts of the nineteen hostelries then in full work. The passengers alighted from the coach, and then the landlord produced the Horns, which were generally fixed upon a pole five feet long. They were then placed upon the ground close to the person or persons about to be sworn. The oath itself is full of absurdities, and is not worth reproducing.

The custom at Highgate is supposed to have originated from the circumstance of graziers putting up there in going from the north to London. When any new member of this fraternity arrived, an ox was brought to the door of the inn, and, if he refused to kiss its Horns, he was considered unfit to join the society of the graziers already assembled at the hostelry.

Not only at Highgate, but at Hoddesden, in Herts, a somewhat like custom was observed in the 18th century. When any fresh wagoner came with his team to the inn a drinking horn



SWearing on the Horns at Highgate.
A Facsimile from Woodwards Eccentric Excursions 1796.

fixed upon a stand formed of four Ram's Horns was brought out of the house, and elevated over his head. He was then admitted to the privilege, not only of drinking out of the horn, but of paying for a gallon of beer.

Several Horn Fairs were held periodically at places in the neighbourhood of London. At Charlton, near to Blackheath, Horn Fair was held on St. Luke's Day. Heutzer, who visited London in 1598, thus speaks of it:—"Upon taking the air down the river (from London) on the left lies Ratcliffe, a considerable suburb. On the opposite shore is fixed a long pole with Ram's Horns upon it." It appears to have been a regular thing for a procession to go from some of the inns in Bishopgate Street, in which were a king, a queen, a miller, a counsellor, etc., with horns in their hats to Charlton, where they went round the church three times. This was accompanied by many irregular antics, which gave rise to the proverb—"All is fair at Horn Fair."

Fuller also refers to the custom of women going to these fairs. He says—"I remember being there on Horn Friday. I was dressed in my landlady's best gown and other women's attire, and to Horn Fair we went, and as we were coming back all the clothes were spoiled by dirty water that was flung on us in an inundation, and for which I was obliged to present her with two guineas, to make atonement for the damage sustained."*

Mr. Brand says—"That this fair consists of a riotous mob, who, after a printed summons, dispersed through the adjacent towns, meet at Cuckhold's Point, near to Deptford, and march from thence in procession through that town and Greenwich to Charlton with horns on their heads, and at the fairs are sold Ram's Horns, and every toy made of horn; even the gingerbread figures have horns." He ridicules the idea of this fair having originated through a grant from King John.†

The carrying of horns at these fairs is supposed to have originated from the symbol of St. Luke, who is generally figured as sitting writing, with an ox having large horns on one side of

* Life of Fuller, 1703.

† Brand's "Antiquities."

him. Bits of painted glass with St. Luke's ox upon them are still to be seen in Charlton Church, whilst the signs of the Horns at Highgate, Charlton, Kensington, and Hornchurch have reference to a tax imposed upon horned cattle, which tax was collected by a bailiff, who showed his authority to demand it by a staff mounted upon horns.*

The Rev^d Charles Swainson, rector of old Charlton, has given me some very interesting information in reference to the Horn Fair at Charlton. He says:—"The fair was established in 1268 (See Cart. 53, Henry III., m. 13)—*Rex concessit priori de Hermundeseye mercatum per diem lune apud manerium suum de Charleton in comitatu Kancie et unam feriam per tres dies duraturam, videlicet in vigilia et in die et crastino sancte Trinitatis.*" The fair day was afterwards changed to October 18th—St. Luke's Day. Mr. Swainson says "that the processions were put an end to by the lord of the manor in 1871, when the last fair was held."

Horn has ever been regarded by savage nations as an emblem of power. When Charles II. granted to William Penn a grant of land on the Delaware, in America, with power to establish a colony there, he proceeded thither with about 100 followers only. On the Sachums coming to him at the time of the treaty or agreement, the chief of them put upon his head a kind of chaplet, in which was a small horn. When this was done all the savages threw down their arrows, for Penn and his followers were then deemed to be strictly inviolable.

Grants giving great powers to the possessors have been conferred by sovereigns and their chief officials by the giving of a horn, and these powers remain even to the present day. As for instance, the appointment of the coroner for the High and Low Peak districts of Derbyshire by the possessor of what is called the "Tutbury Horn."

* "Northern Heights of London," by W. Howitt.