

## ADDRESSES AND EXCURSIONS, 1937.

Owing to the illness of the Society's prospective host, the first of the excursions of the season, provisionally arranged by the Council, had to be abandoned for the time being, the first actually achieved being a very enjoyable visit in pleasant weather to Croxall and Walton in the south of our region. The former, though of old a Derbyshire parish (and still in the diocese) is, since 1894, now within the borders of Staffordshire.

The date was the 28th July and happily, after a very reluctant summer, the day was genially warm with a soft sunlight pervading the quiet air, conditions pictorially ideal for the pastoral landscape of the youthful Trent.

The company assembled at Croxall Church under the cordial and effective leadership of the chairman, Brigadier-General Godfrey Meynell, C.M.G., J.P., supported by the organiser of the arrangements, the Rev. R. F. Borough, M.A., the hon. secretary.

The interior of the small building is rather startling at first sight, very clean and tidy and obviously recently 'done-up,' after a period of gross neglect and dilapidation. The Chairman introduced Captain and Mrs. Charlton, who obtained possession of the adjacent hall and estate within half a dozen years or so and to whom the church is indebted for its restoration to an efficient and decent condition. They gave the company an outline history and description of the fabric, necessarily involved in the history of the manor, from the Conquest associated with our local family of Curzon.

In the second generation from the Conquest, we are told, a Curzon held this manor with Edinghale, Twyford and Kedleston. His grandson, Richard, the elder of two

brothers, took this and two other of the family manors and from their holder descended the long line—fifteen generations—of Curzon of Croxall, which included a distinguished cardinal, and a martyr—Joyce, burned in 1557 for her religious opinions, at Lichfield. A Sir Robert de Curzon gave the church and its revenues to Repton priory in 1297, and with them it remained until the dissolution of the monasteries. For a short time after this the presentation was held by the manor, but it passed back by some means to the Crown under Charles I, and about sixty years ago from the Crown to the Bishop of Lichfield. In 1894 a rectification of boundaries transferred Croxall to Staffordshire but the parish still remains for ecclesiastical purposes in the diocese of Derby.

The building now consists of a west tower “Early English” and “Perpendicular,” an aisleless nave and chancel, the whole interior covered with rough-cast plaster, entirely obscuring any historical features it may possess. It has a south aisle, probably destroyed in 1619 to save costs of repairing and the old aisle windows of decorated style were inserted in the built-up arcade. The chancel seems mainly of the lancet or E.E. period, later extended eastward and there is a plain low-side window in the south wall. There are late (Tudor?) windows in the nave and the tower contains one bell, uninscribed but apparently mediæval.

The special interest of the church is the fine series of incised memorial slabs, four to the Curzons from 1485 to 1514 and (among others) to Horton-Curzons to 1605. These Hortons were of Catton, the hall passed but not visited by the company, with whom the Wilmots of Osmaston-by-Derby, became merged in marriage.

From the church the company passed to the beautiful old hall in soft red brick, claimed to be in part from Tudor times, not improbably, for the twisted chimney stacks suggested that period. It was extended in Elizabethan

days and in the last century became a farm, in part ruinous, and towards the century's end was repaired, but subsequently again permitted to lapse into dilapidation. About half-a-dozen years ago it came into the possession of the present owners and once more was put into thorough repair and in its present condition is one of the finest examples of the brickwork of its period. Further it is also a perfect treasure house of antiquities and objects of virtue. The whole delightful dwelling was thrown open to the assembly without reserve, the host and hostess supplying a running commentary.

It is claimed that Mary Stewart stayed here a night, journeying from Tutbury to Chartley, a roundabout journey difficult to reconcile with local topography. Queen Henrietta Maria, Charles I's consort was here, probably during one of the sieges of Lichfield, and Dryden, poet and dramatist, was a visitor on various occasions.

General Meynell, with appreciative humour and aptness thanked the kind hosts and the party thence sped on thro' the pastoral charm of Catton park to Walton, where, lunch having been taken the church was visited.

Here the rector, the Rev. F. C. Fisher, met the company and, following the leader's introductory remarks, proceeded to describe the fabric. We should premise at starting, that the rector is an amateur craftsman of outstanding capacity, carver alike in timber and stone of noteworthy achievement, and much of the beautiful screenwork in the church is his work.

The church consists of E.E. chancel (without arch) beautiful chantry built as a south transept (1336), Norman nave with south aisle, the arcade being transitional c. 1200, outer walls decorated, with reused Norman base-course, and tower of the early 15th century, probably built by the de Ferrars of Groby, whose arms with those of Gresley and Wasteny adorn it. The church was badly

mutilated in alterations of 1827-8, but recent restorations have done much to bring it back to its original form.

Two windows by the late Mr. A. Thompson, placed in the north wall are a successful attempt to put in work which cannot possibly falsify and which yet shall harmonise with the surroundings. One is filled with good modern glass representing four modern laymen "Saints," selected by the rector: Thomas More, Izaak Walton, Samuel Johnson, William Wilberforce—certainly an original selection. There is an effigy of the founder of the chantry, Richard Waleys (1336) and a fine brass of Robert Morley (1392) in the act of consecrating the Host, a rare attitude, and there are some incised slabs and Disbrowe memorials.

Thence by the kind invitation and under the guidance of Colonel Disbrowe-Wise, the party proceeded to Walton Hall, a treasure-house of autograph letters, historic mementoes of royalty, diplomacy, with civil and military missions and portraits of national interest. Cromwell and his brother-in-law, Major Sir John Disbrowe, a distinguished parliamentary officer, among many. The hall in its exterior is very plain brick with stone quoins (1710-15) but in the interior is a sumptuous yet true comfortable home of England. Space limitations forbid descriptive detail. Across some fields are the stables, and adjacent cottages which embody fragments of the older brick hall, apparently of the early seventeenth century.

Here, with General Meynell's appreciation of Colonel Disbrowe-Wise's generous treatment of his invaders, a very successful excursion ended.

The concluding excursion of the season took place on the 1st September, the study of the remains of bronze age man, mainly in the vicinity of the fine gritstone uplands about Stanton Moor being its primary object. Various tumuli, standing stones, etc. were examined *in situ* and the objects recovered from them afterwards inspected at the private museum of Mr. J. C. Heathcote in Birchover.

The organiser of the excursion was Mr. J. P. Heathcote, M.A. with the collaboration of his father Mr. J. C. Heathcote, acting as guide and expositor. Considering the specialized interest of the subject, necessarily a subject for the open, and that the proceedings began in the rain there was a surprisingly good muster. Happily the rain cleared later and the company were rewarded with beautiful and extensive views from the lofty sites of the objects visited.

Harthill- or Hartlemoor- farm was the place of assembly and after the Chairman's brief introduction, Mr. J. P. Heathcote led the members to the earthen circle or camp behind the farm, which he said was probably of the early iron age, though the apparently interrupted vallum or bank had been interpreted as of neolithic times. It is a spacious circle with an inner wall, vallum or bank (on which the modern field-wall is raised) a well defined ditch fosse and an outer bank, all very obvious. It is cut in the underlying grit and known as Castle Ring. Mr. Hanbury considered this cutting was beyond the capacity of stone age man. Mr. Walton asked, if that were so, what about the fosse and vallum of Arborlow, usually attributed to that early period? He found it difficult to believe that well over a thousand years separated the two structures. Mr. Hanbury thought the more readily laminating surface of the limestone would explain the difference.

The party then passed over a couple of wet fields to the so-called Nine Stones, really four, with a fifth nearby as a gatepost—the remains of a stone circle behind Robin Hood's Stride, on Mock Beggars' Hall. Mr. Heathcote attributed the period of the original circle to about 800 B.C. and detected some sort of parallel with the Avebury stones—those however are near on a thousand years earlier. From here a short walk brings one to the summit of Cratcliff Tor, where a dry stone wall recently has been detected and assumed as part of an early fortification, but to my thinking may be comparatively recent. At the foot

of this fine bluff is a famous hermitage cell with a well-proportioned carved crucifix.

Mr. Heathcote, senior, described it, then called on Mr. Walton for his comments on the style of the sculpture, which both agreed was of the Early English period, austere, well proportioned and the work of a genuine artist. Cars being re-occupied, a run to the Birchover-Stanton road was made, whence, past "The Twopenny Loaf Rock," the company proceeded to the stone circle and attached barrow in the Doll Tor plantation.

Obviously the circle-barrow (as I believe it to be) was the earlier structure, the later and rather larger area of the irregular attached barrow being fitted up to the circle. This was disturbed in the early '50's' of last century by Bateman, but hardly excavated before the Heathcotes fully opened it out. The circle has two [broken and repaired] standing stones, and some others prone which appear to have been connected by a rough stone curb. Three cinerary urns have been recovered and fragments of others. There seem to have been about half a score cremation interments and from the rather degenerate form of the pottery the leaders assumed they were approximately of the 8th century B.C.

A short walk brought the party to Stanton Moor, a bright cleared sky with shining cloud patches compensating with delightful prospects for the earlier greyness and damp. Here a selection only of the interesting items was possible. Mr. Heathcote intimating that his father and he had opened near on thirty barrows in the region. The first visited is familiar to wanderers over the moor and is labelled 25. A very fine exposure it is completely visible in section and base. As is invariable in this district the contents were cremations with good earthen cinerary urns, estimated as of c. 1000 B.C. A smaller example, just in process of opening, about S.W. of the above, is a good object lesson, but to the time of visit cinerary or skeletal remains had not been recovered.

Finally, after 5 p.m. a large disk mound of which the surface only has so far been removed was visited. The outer vallum and probable entrances were indicated. It is one of three so far identified, all very low and amid the heather easily overlooked. But they may be early, and their investigation supply new elements and evidence as excavation proceeds.

A return to the Druid Inn for tea followed where General Meynell thanked the leaders heartily for their arrangements and information, and the proceedings concluded by a visit of the members and friends to the private museum of Mr. J. C. Heathcote, consisting almost entirely of the 'finds' resulting from the numerous local activities of which the company had seen the outstanding examples.

The first lecture of the Winter Session was delivered in the Assembly Rooms, Derby, by Dr. Elizabeth L. Ashby, on 15th October, the subject being, "The Stone Carvers of the Lesser Midland Churches," profusely illustrated by beautiful slides, the speaker being an expert amateur photographer. There was a good attendance, the Chairman Brigadier-General Godfrey Meynell, C.M.G., being in charge.

In introducing Dr. Ashby, General Meynell expressed the hope that the Society would more frequently enjoy the pleasure of her company and assistance in the future, Dr. Ashby evidently being a master of her particular subject. This was soon demonstrated, exposition and illustration being equally of outstanding character and indicating also a wide acquaintance with the principal authorities on her rather special subject. She opened with a disclaimer of any special study of the early pre-Norman work, dealt with so recently in Mr. Routh's admirable study of the early crosses of the county, but she could not altogether ignore this work, particularly that at Breedon first publicly recognised by Mr. Clapham some

ten years ago as Anglian. She illustrated the unique examples until quite recently on the exterior of Breedon church porch, now rightly transferred for protection inside, as well as the figure of the saint built into the later tower.

Passing beyond our area she illustrated the angels in the chapel of St. Aldhelm at Bradford-on-Avon, originally dated c. 705 A.D., but later attributed to the 10th century, she preferring the earlier date from liturgical indications. A mutilated capital at Ault Hucknall with degenerate decoration such as adorns many early crosses was shown and attributed to Saxon rather than Norman workmanship.

Early Norman work at Tissington, Bradbourne and Parwich and in considerable detail Steetley with running comments, and the familiar incomplete cap. at Canterbury—to which might be added some from Melbourne—were shewn in support of her theory that the carving was executed *in situ*, a debatable point on which I can find evidence for the bench-work theory.

She also attributed these crude early carvings to the village mason and held that carver and mason (cementarius) were one—again debatable.

Much characteristic Norman carving having been dealt with, the beautiful interior of Attenborough, Notts., was shown on the screen, a late transitional example c. 1200, still retaining the thick cylindrical columns and massive square caps, but with much refinement of finish and excellent carving of the adapted volute, anthemion and simplified Corinthian foliage characteristic of Norman and French Romanesque work.

For most of her thirteenth century foliage carving Dr. Ashby had to go beyond our county borders. She stated that some observers did not like the stiff-leaf foliage of this period, objecting it was too formalised—wrongly she thought. For refined grace and architectural propriety it seems to this recorder that at its best it has never



been surpassed—if equalled—since the classic days of Greek decorative foliage carving! The fourteenth century or Decorated period followed in review, and was illustrated from Tideswell among other sources. The square and Tudor flower being noted, attention was then given to choir and parclose screens, the stone screen of Ilkeston, a rare and local example being dealt with. And so to tombs and effigies often very ornate work but largely from stock—the great workshops of Purbeck for the thirteenth century, where a dark grey marble constituted the material with later a rather uninspired freestone. She believed these last were originally covered with gesso a fine hard eggshell-like plaster, adorned with gilding and colour, which would redeem them from the dullness which is their present characteristic. While this undoubtedly was done in some instances, it seems doubtful whether it was general.

She concluded with a finely illustrated study of the beautiful work on tombs, screens and reredoses in tinted and gilt alabaster which rose into popularity with the opening of the fourteenth century and must always be identified without our district. Chellaston—whose earlier work seems to have spread even beyond our English shores—Nottingham, and Burton with which Tutbury may have been associated, sent their material, and apparently the products of their fine craft over a very wide area and throughout a long stretch of time, retaining a merited popularity long after mediæval architecture had merged into later forms.

A concluding eulogy of the pleasures of hunting out and recording by photography these artistic glories of our past found an obvious response from a thoroughly appreciative audience.

General Meynell thanked the speaker alike for discourse and illustrations, and the company then gathered in friendly debate about the tea tables.

On the 26th November, under the same chairmanship and at the same place, Mr. Ethbert Brand, M.B.E., an active member of several Yorkshire archæological societies, etc. gave an address under the title of "English Country and Town Life in the Fourteenth Century" which in effect was an elaborately illustrated and supplemented running comment on the decorative vignettes of the famous Luttrell Psalter.

This wonderful manuscript was prepared c. 1340—probably in the Eastern Counties—for Godfrey Luttrell of Hooton Pagnall and various other manors and its little illustrations of contemporary domestic life are without parallel. Students of English social and economic conditions for the period are familiar with reproductions from this marvellous record, which having long lain at Irnham manor in the south of England then passed to the family of the ducal house of Norfolk, became a special treasure of Langwith castle, and quite recently came into the market and was purchased at a cost of £30,000, we were told, by a number of friends of the British Museum, where, happily, it now reposes, a precious possession of the nation.

The volume was stated to measure about 9 inches by 14 inches, and, as Mr. Williamson pointed out at the end of the lecture the tiny panels in the exquisitely foliated border could only be about two inches or so in diameter, yet when magnified by the lantern to expanses of several feet, they came out with marvellous clearness and expression.

Here may be found delineated all the agricultural processes as practised at the time; ploughing (with oxen), hoeing or breaking the clods with heavy stone mattocks, harrowing, sowing (by hand, of course) weeding, largely by female labour, cutting, with the sickle, binding, carrying, stacking and finally threshing. The lecturer paralleled each of these operations with modern examples. He

showed that even yet there was a manor in Sussex where, by deed the farm must be ploughed at least once annually by a team of oxen.

The wheat (and some barley) must be converted into flour and so we find an illustration of a windmill of the post and tail type where the whole can be levered round to the set of the wind. Other MSS. like the Smithfield decretals and a story or 'lay' of Alexander were hauled in to supplement the main source, and in that last quoted, dated c. 1275, the earliest known representation of a windmill (same type) was shown. I might add as a parenthesis that while the windmill is supposed to have been introduced to England by the Crusaders I have recently come across a reference to an Anglo-Saxon deed of date 833 A.D. naming a windmill, which, if trustworthy involves a revision of our opinion on early windmills . . . Barley, of course goes to the ale-house, dominated by the ale-wife, and duly indicated by the bush or the pole—but we know that good ale (or wine) needs no bush !

The pictures now introduce us inside the simple habitations, with the clay-built oven for baking the bread, the roasting of poultry on a spit before an open fire, and the boiling in a huge outside cauldron of the soup, stock, or seethed meats. This series culminated in a presentation of the high-table at which Sir Godfrey presides, with his wife (to the right) his confessor next and the chaplain beyond, and honoured guests on either side and the servers kneeling as they offer the meats. Each person carries his own knife (forks only appeared in England nearly two and a half centuries later). Spoon dish and slab of bread—on which the knife was cleaned from time to time—were part of the table furniture, and fingers carried the food to its natural destination !

The lady now decides to go a journey (probably to another of her lord's manors) and Sir Godfrey to depart for the military rally or a tournament. The great coach,

something like an ancient carrier's cart, very long, with high tunnel-like hood or cover, but of rich tapestries, pierced by unglazed windows and costing the equivalent of a thousand pounds in present day money, is drawn out by a team of dapple-grey horses which except for their hue can be recognised as allied to the excellent cob of the present day: conspicuously down-arched back, massive wide shoulders, deep strong neck and shortish but light legs—the 'Suffolk Punch.' The wagon wheels represent something near six feet high, the rim, crossed with bands of iron at intervals to bite on the extremely rough roads of that day appear exactly like cogwheels, probably correctly for the same feature appears in the dog-drawn cart of a cottager. The knight's steed, is shown draped down to its heels . . . .

What might be seen in her progress from Dame Luttrell's coach or tented wagon followed in illustration: the wayside cottar, feeding her chickens at which a hawk stoops and is driven off, by a stone from a boy's sling; the bee-man with a butterfly net capturing some bees—presumably an escaped swarm; boys scaring rooks, etc.; wayside jugglers; dancing bear; blind beggar with a wicked boy sucking through a straw from said beggar's basin of milk; a returned pilgrim with his scallop-shell of St. James; maids in the sheep-pens milking the ewes; a fair in the walled city's narrow streets—all these graphic and usually humorous delineations of the ancient illuminator were reproduced on the screen and described *con amor* at times with genuine gusto.

Mr. F. Williamson commented on the almost microscopic detail, as well as the sheer beauty of the famous MS. and after a few questions General Meynell very heartily thanked Mr. Brand for his entertaining address and illustrations, and the company then distributed themselves in pleasant causerie about the tea-tables.

W. H. WALTON.