

## A STOREHOUSE OF DERBYSHIRE HISTORY.

By EDGAR OSBORNE.

THE widely scattered membership of this society means inevitably that the *Journal* is the main link of association. From its pages, and the necessarily abbreviated secretarial report, must be gathered details of any archaeological or historical research which is being furthered.

If an apology is needed, this must be the excuse for some notes on the work accomplished so far on the ambitiously conceived National Register of Archives. Members will recall the initial meeting held at Bakewell in December, 1946, when the late Duke of Devonshire introduced Lt.-Col. G. E. C. Malet, secretary of the register, from whom came an interesting account of the objects of the scheme.

As a result of this meeting a representative county committee was formed in 1947: this committee was later re-formed as a joint archives committee for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Beyond a preliminary survey of possible sources of material, no calendaring of documents was possible until 1949, when a beginning was made on sorting material at Hopton and Radbourne Halls. Early in 1950 I was able to ask Mr. Francis Fisher who had previously volunteered his services, to undertake the bulk of the registration of documents at Trusley Hall.

At the annual general meeting of our society in 1950 I was therefore able to report that work was progressing satisfactorily, and calendaring is now in a most encouraging position.

A selection from some of the more interesting letters of

Anne Pole to her husband dating between 1652 and 1662 appeared in the autumn number of the *Derbyshire Countryside*: the same issue invited anyone possessing manuscripts of possible historical value to communicate with me. The results have been reasonably gratifying, and it is hoped the effect will be cumulative in encouraging owners and offers of assistance.

It is already evident that this project for locating the original records of Derbyshire will bring forth many new details of value to the future historians of our county. The diverse character of the documents encountered in an old collection can be appreciated only by one who has worked through it, and whilst one does not expect *olla podrida* in the pages of an archæological journal, members may share the writer's view that the following notes of the material so far examined have some value as a record.

The later documents at Trusley Hall, the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. Coke-Steel, to whose co-operation in this work I render appreciative acknowledgment, are now calendared. Largely they comprise a collection of deeds of bargain and sale, leases, rentals and estate papers of value to the student of field-names, genealogy of local families and, somewhat unexpectedly as it may at first appear, to the early history of Pinxton pottery and of coal mining in Pinxton and neighbourhood. The presence of many 17th and 18th century deeds touching on coal leases is due to the Coke family's holding of Pinxton manor from about 1567. The medieval deeds, however, hold the greater prospect of value, and at the time of writing are being examined at the Public Record Office. They were not included in Jeayes' *Derbyshire Charters*, and the ancient and honourable standing which the family has enjoyed in Derbyshire since the fifteenth century is good ground for supposing that much enlightenment of an early period may ensue.

Of a very different character are the papers from Radbourne Hall, the inspection of which has been facilitated

by the generous co-operation of Major J. W. Chandos-Pole, a member of the council of our society. The ancient deeds of this family were calendared by the same compiler as *Derbyshire Charters*, and the work done now has been concerned mainly with an extraordinarily varied accumulation of minor family papers.

It is difficult in a few lines even to indicate the variety encountered in the numerous sheaves examined: perhaps the bulk is made up of estate and domestic accounts, receipts and day-to-day transactions. It would be possible to construct a highly detailed "cost-of-living" scale for almost any year from about 1668 to 1739, bills for everything used in a moderately sized household having been preserved. Entertaining and enlightening to a degree is the reading of these accounts.

Many of these minor papers were carefully filed by Ann Pole to whom I have referred. Much of her incoming correspondence has also been saved, and unexpected items of considerable value are to be found therein. From a bundle of papers relating to Charles Benskin, to quote an example, we learn that he commissioned and paid the sum of twelve pounds for a "pece of Iron Worke and Stone Worke done for ye font in St. Worbor's Church" from Robert Bakewell, the Derby artificer in iron the excellence of whose work has been compared with that of Huntington Shaw. Another detail which is an addition to our knowledge of county ecclesiology is that Bakewell made five lights for the reading desks in the five Derby churches. An investigation into the existence of any of these at the present day would be of interest. Other receipts give details of more of Benskin's benefactions to Alvaston, Barton Blount, St. Michael's and St. Alkmund's churches, and to Larges' Almshouses.

Typical of the vivid sidelights thrown on the times by many of the documents is the following letter from Charles Coke to Madame Pole: :—

London, 30 May, 1696.

“Ever Honoured Madam,

I returne my humble and hearty thanks for all your manyfold favours towards mee, heartily wishing Your Lady<sup>p</sup> a long and perfect health and prosperity, and now I come in obedience to your Lady<sup>ps</sup> comands to give you an account of our journey w<sup>ch</sup> in the maine has been very prosperous, arriving here well between 1 & 2 of the clock this afternoone, when Mr. R<sup>d</sup> Parker met his Mother w<sup>th</sup> a Coach to conduct her Lady<sup>p</sup> to Tistleworth. He told me y<sup>t</sup> ye Lady Parker & his children were well but y<sup>t</sup> his wife has been troubled w<sup>th</sup> a violent cough & defluxion these six months past and y<sup>t</sup> all y<sup>t</sup> while shee has had little intermission unlesse shee took the opiate. They all present your lady<sup>p</sup> w<sup>th</sup> their best Service. He met by chance my Nephew Mundy who was just y<sup>n</sup> going to dine with his Father whom Mr. Nixon tells me is pritty well recovered; this is all at present I can say of y<sup>m</sup>, hoping by the next to give you a more particular account for I am not able being sufficiently tired w<sup>th</sup> my journey to waite on y<sup>m</sup> this evening.

For want of better news I make bold to trouble your Lady<sup>p</sup> with y<sup>e</sup> particulars of our journey. After your Coach had left us at Over Seale w<sup>th</sup>in two hours after our Coach — so I must call it, tho’ a little boy of about our little Squire Pole’s age call’d to his playfellows, “Look, look, a Cart with a Coach behind it.” Was y<sup>t</sup> not an unlucky yett witty expression? Well, lett that pass. Wee embarked, y<sup>n</sup> meeting w<sup>th</sup> an old rich Freeholder and Batchelour of 76 yeares of Botterten in Staffordshire who came up to visit his two Nephewes John and Sampson Salt, both rich Brewers, and a lusty two handed young woman of 21 yeares of Denson in y<sup>e</sup> aforesaid County who came to see her Brother, a Cane-chair maker, w<sup>th</sup> severall bundles and butter potts. Wee was packed up and sett forward for Hinckley, a short but a very rough road w<sup>ch</sup> shook us so much y<sup>t</sup> your Sister was e’en at y<sup>e</sup> end of her patience and was almost resolved to have walked on foot, but with gentle persuasions her Lady<sup>p</sup> held out.

The next day wee were freed of our bundles and butter potts, and had in y<sup>e</sup> roome a Marchants wife with a little sonne of about 9 yeares.

So wee sett forward for Weedon, the roads proving a little easier y<sup>n</sup> ye preceding day. Our entertainment there was much like wee had last yeare onely my quarters was a little mended, for I lodged in y<sup>e</sup> Parlor where I had a bed and an old woman and widdow daughter w<sup>th</sup> a little child of 12 weekes old tooke up another bed. Ever and anon when the child cryed (which

happened very often) y<sup>e</sup> old woman wakened her Daughter to give the Baby a pap.

W<sup>th</sup> six feet little creatures I was not troubled, but instead of y<sup>m</sup> I found some marks on my hands of another little black creature, which I show'd y<sup>e</sup> Landlady in y<sup>e</sup> presence of her maid, who roundly sd y<sup>t</sup> wee had brought y<sup>m</sup> with us, so I had her Rowland for my Oliver. Th<sup>e</sup> following day wee proceeded but mett with exceeding rough way especially between Stoney and Venny Stratford. The next morning wee went on, having for 3 or 4 miles a shaking way, but y<sup>e</sup> latter end of y<sup>e</sup> day proved more easy and very dusty. This morning wee came on the road proving easy enough tho' very dusty. One thing your Sister and I tooke notice off y<sup>t</sup> all along wee mett with no person of quality's Coach, only w<sup>th</sup> one and y<sup>t</sup> within six miles of London.

Pray pardon this Scribble and for Your Selve and Neeces be pleased to accept the best respects from

Your Lady<sup>ps</sup> Ever thankfull and most obedient servant

CHARLES COKE

I humbly beg the favour to adde now my cordiall love and service to my Coz Pole and his family etc.

The 1st day's journey from Over-Seale to Hinckley — 11 miles was performed in 8 hours.

The 2nd day's journey from Hinckley to Weedon — 20 miles was performed in 11 hours.

The 3rd day's journey from Weedon to Venny Stratford — 19 miles was performed in 11 hours.

The 4th day's journey from Venny Stratford to St. Albans 18 miles was performed in 11 hours.

The 5th day's journey from St. Albans to London — 20 miles was performed in 8½ hours.

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88 miles

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49½ hours

On all these dayes journys your Sister never stirred out of the Coach, and where she was placed in the morning she continued till night without any inconvenience as far as I could perceive, and held out as well nay rather better than any of y<sup>e</sup> passengers for y<sup>e</sup> three middle dayes. We all except her Lady<sup>p</sup> were out for a quarter of an houres refreshment.

Both your Nephew Mr. Parker and Nixon told me y<sup>t</sup> your Brother Mr. Newdigate were directly gone for Sussex this afternoone.

(Endorsed 'For Madame Pole at Radbourne')

In another category are the documents and letters relating to the dispute between the Pole and Every families c. 1712-1730 over the right of presentation to Egginton Church. The almost unparalleled intricacy of this affair was touched on by Dr. Cox in his account of Egginton Church.

A valuable and curiously assorted collection of parish papers is also among the notable features of the muniments. There is a number of detailed assessments, for instance, for the re-building of Ashbourne Church during the years 1708-1711. A long account of monies disbursed "given in 1697 towards the losses of y<sup>e</sup> poor Sufferers by y<sup>e</sup> late fire" — 79 names appearing — seems to indicate a catastrophe of some magnitude not hitherto noticed in histories of the town.

Radbourne Overseers' Accounts for the years 1718-1724 contain so many items of interest that they may justify a separate article in these pages at a future date. More than usual light is shed on the problem which pauperism presented to a small township in the 18th century.

Here must be left any further notes, and their discursive nature will perhaps be excused by the reader seeking more tangible and detailed treatment of county affairs. It is the hope of the writer that they will be of service in stimulating interest in the work being carried on for this national work of registration. In conclusion a word may be added on the use which may be made of this growing mass of history.

It is aimed to have prepared calendars which give sufficient detail as to render reference to the owners unnecessary for minor points: the description of documents includes all essential information for the student, and in many cases full transcripts are given of the more interesting documents. A copy of the completed calendar for each collection is being retained in the County

Library, where reference may be made by prior arrangement with me. The generosity of owners making possible this collection available for registration does not imply that time can be spared for answering queries, or for permitting further inspection.