

Sussex Collections.

ON SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY,

READ AT THE MEETING OF THE SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, AT THE
TOWN HALL, BRIGHTON, SEPT. 25, 1846.

By W. H. BLAAUW, Esq., HONORARY SECRETARY.

THE first meeting of the SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, at Pevensey Castle, having been attended with so many evidences of ready welcome, and of the extended interest created in the county by the attempt to make the examination of its antiquities an object of united efforts, it may not be uninteresting at this second meeting (though, in fact, it may properly be considered the first held to carry out the purposes of the Society) to make a few general remarks on the Archæology of Sussex, and to point out in what direction, and by what means the Society may best exert its energies.

The establishment of such a Society may well seem to have been called for by the active spirit of the times, so willing to adopt things new, but yet so resolute to maintain the old, when worthy of its veneration. Within a very few years we have seen in this county the gradual decline of other opportunities of social meeting, which attracted the crowds of a previous generation; while, on the other hand, the first invitation to form this Archæological Society was, within one month, met by the accession of 130 members of all classes of society, willing to co-operate in the study and elucidation of the history and antiquities of the county. As chemistry proves to us that nothing in nature is annihilated, and that, though matter is seen to decay and escape from our notice into thin air, yet, in fact, it only assumes a new, perhaps a more spiritual form,

so we may hope that this new Society may absorb to its own uses, in a transmuted form, the zeal and activity which hitherto animated those other associations for pleasant purposes, which seem no longer to satisfy the requirements of the age.

It is well known that in England the State has never assumed any care of the historical monuments of the country, and has left to private exertion what in almost every other country has been considered the duty of the State. In France, very recently, the minister has established a medal to be given to those who help to preserve the national monuments; and in Prussia the king exerts, in every direction, his influence in the same spirit. Every one knows with what a catholic spirit he, a Protestant king, promotes the completion of Cologne Cathedral; but it may not be known to all, that he, a military sovereign, is at the same time removing the barracks from the vast ruins of Constantine's palace, at Treves, and about to restore its great hall, so as to establish a Protestant church in the very building once occupied by the first Christian Emperor.

In England numerous societies have sprung up to supply the office abandoned by the State; and, while some have stretched their sphere with great advantage over the whole country, there have also arisen in many counties societies on a more limited scale, similar to our own, enabling its members to act no longer as insulated observers, but as organized members of one body—ready, by mutual help and communication, to advance with greater facility the knowledge of the antiquities of the county. There have been good and earnest labourers before us, working individually in the same pursuit, but without this benefit. One name of a great antiquary has been, indeed, held in esteem in Sussex for two centuries; and many a pilgrimage to the lowly birthplace of John Selden, at Salvington, has kept alive the local memory of one of the greatest men who ever devoted his learning to the study of antiquity, though without any special application to his native county.

Contemporary with him was John Rowe, perhaps the earliest investigator of Sussex antiquities, whose valuable collection of manorial rights and customs is yet referred to as a standard authority; and it may not be ill-timed to remark, that one of the first practical effects of the zeal of the members of this

Society has been to rescue from the earth, into which it had sunk, the tombstone of this John Rowe, who died at Lewes in 1630.

Passing over many others, it would be impossible, even in this hasty notice, not to allude to the diligent and long continued exertions of the late Sir William Burrell, whose voluminous materials, of the greatest interest and value relating to Sussex antiquities, were so liberally bequeathed to the British Museum. This collection has ever since been the storehouse to which all Sussex antiquaries have resorted with gratitude, and from it, within the last few months, many of the drawings of old Sussex mansions have been copied and published by Mr. E. B. Lamb. From the MSS. of Sir W. Burrell, and those also of Mr. Hayley, have been principally constructed the well-known histories of the Western Rapes, by Dallaway and Cartwright, and the comprehensive work of Horsfield, the only history of the whole county. These are excellent contributions, and are most useful foundations on which may be placed the additions which this Society is well adapted to make.

The field of antiquities, even within the limits of a county, is so wide, that all antiquaries must feel, when consulting these meritorious volumes, that much remains to be done in full elucidation of the civil and ecclesiastical history, topography, and ancient buildings within the county.

The most cursory glance will suffice to prove this, and that many points of the early history of the county remain in obscurity.

Are there any traces left here of that wide-spread system of the Druids, which so long influenced the minds of men? Are there on the surface of our Downs, or elsewhere, any of those simple mounds or colossal stones which spoke to them with awe, and to us with mystery? A few years ago a vast mass of breccia, well known under the name of Goldstone at Hove, and referred to by the Rev. S. Douglas, F.S.A. as connected with a circle of similar stones, was deliberately buried in a pit dug on purpose. Our distinguished member, Dr. Mantell, who has long paid as much attention to the antiquities as to the geology of Sussex, has noticed this and other large stones of similar character. Are we to suppose that, in our vast forests, the Druids found at once temples and dwellings? After the

rude natives had given way before the civilized invaders from Rome, have antiquaries well ascertained what traces these mighty colonists have left? Can we know whether, with their usual policy, they incorporated into their religious system any objects of former veneration among the conquered people? Among the mosaics of Bignor, some have thought they perceived a Druid, shrouded in his cloak, and holding a sacred branch. It is worth inquiry how soon and to what degree did the Roman customs prevail among the British? We see many of our hills capped by deep intrenchments, outlasting, like all earthworks, nearly all their cities. Has the connexion of these scattered points been well considered, so as to throw light on their system of military occupation, and the numbers of the garrison by which they kept their hold against an adverse population? Were their summer forts all on the hills, and none on the more pleasant plains? Their great lines of communication, those wonderful roads, so bold, so enduring, from what ports did they issue, and to what cities did they lead? The journeys of the Romans might be compared, as a matter of curiosity as to their route, with those of King John in after times, who seems often to have traversed the county at the rate of 35 to even 50 miles a day, a speed which seemed so marvellous to Matthew Paris, that he doubted (*citius quam credi fas est*) its possibility. His resting-places were Battle, Malling, Pagaham, Ludgarsh, Seaford, Bramber, Cansted, Hasel, and especially Crap and Audingbourn.

The situation of the Roman towns still remains a problem to be solved by renewed inquiry. Where was Anderida, that city so strong, so fiercely fought for, and so utterly effaced? There is scope for the vigour of a fresh mind to decide this long-disputed question, either by the production of new evidence, or the more careful scrutiny of the old, tested by the physical features of the country. Nor, indeed, have the other cities and stations of the Roman itineraries been well determined; and the Roman origin of the broad tiles and brick-pounded mortar of Pevensey has been unnecessarily questioned. We know what changes have been made on our coast by the uncontrollable action of the sea; have we considered in what state the ports were in the time of the Romans, compared with their modern condition? One hundred and fifty years

ago was published a posthumous work of the learned antiquary, William Somner, 'On the Roman Ports and Forts in Kent.' The same task would well employ some skilful hand in Sussex. There is no collected account of the coins found, though their evidence might often be of importance. At Bignor, there can be no doubt that Sussex possesses one of the most beautiful specimens of a Roman villa, with its luxurious baths and fanciful mosaics, already investigated by Lysons. By fresh inquiries, a map of Roman Sussex might ultimately be produced, similar to the elaborate one of Roman Yorkshire, constructed lately by Mr. Newton, of the British Museum.

A similar extent of inquiry lies open to the researches of the Anglo-Saxon scholar to lessen the obscurity in which whole centuries of Sussex history have been wrapped. To what age are we to ascribe those fine armlets of pure gold, and to what casualty those extraordinary gold coins with Mahomedan inscriptions of the 8th century, lately found near Beachy Head? The history of Ella and Cissa, and others, who established their sway here, should become better known to us. It is difficult to explain why Sussex, so open to continental intercourse, should be among the last parts of the island to receive Christianity. Its introduction by the energetic Wilfred is well known; and there seems nothing improbable in the story of his teaching the rude fishermen of Selsey to make nets, when it is considered that, at the present time, the natives of Australia, though skilled in catching fish by other means, have no knowledge of the use of nets.

Perhaps among the converts of this remarkable man was one named Lewinna, the earliest Christian lady of Sussex whom history has recorded; unless, indeed, we consider Mr. Hay to have proved the Claudia mentioned by St. Paul to be identical with the Claudia of Martial, and Pudens, her husband, to be the Pudens of Chichester, according to an inscription found there. Lewinna must have acquired considerable renown by her virtues; for after she fell a sacrifice to the cruelty of the Pagans, her bones were long preserved at Seaford near high honour as a virgin martyr and saint; and when, in the eleventh century, her remains were piously carried over to Belgium, they were paraded through its towns, in order to spread the

miraculous efficacy imputed to them. Her history may probably, on a future day, be brought before you by a member of this Society.

One singular monument of wood has been preserved by the mud of the river Arun, at North Stoke, to the present day, and the British Museum now, by the liberality of the late Earl of Egremont, exhibits this, perhaps the oldest boat in existence. Another very ancient vessel was found in the Rother at Northiam, in 1822, supposed to belong to a Danish fleet of the ninth century. The wooden churches of the Saxon period have long perished, but it would be interesting to ascertain, if possible, their number and situations, or to bring forward any instances of stone churches prior to the Norman conquest.

It may be worth mentioning, at Brighton, that though only one church is mentioned in Domesday, yet very soon afterwards there is proof that Brighton was considerable enough to have two churches, the gift of which by John de Keynes to Lewes Priory was confirmed by the second Earl de Warrenne.

The scholar may point out to us the possessions, perhaps the dwelling, of the great Alfred among us, and may enable us, by the testimony of his companion Asser, and by the particulars in Alfred's will, to linger with increased interest on the spots he visited.

It may be permitted here to caution antiquaries from drawing too hasty conclusions from similarity of names. This has led Horsfield to claim for the Sussex locality of Ashdown Forest the scene of the interesting battle fought by Alfred against the Danes in 871. An attentive reader of the vivid description of Asser, as an eye-witness of the "single low thorny tree" around which the contest raged on the open breadth of Ascendun, with all the accompanying circumstances, will be convinced that it took place on the chalk hills of Berkshire, at a place of the same name.

It is quite enough distinction for Sussex to have been the undoubted witness of two of the most important battles in British history, at Hastings and at Lewes; the one changing the dynasty of the sovereign and disturbing all the social relations of the inhabitants, the other prelude to the most momentous change in the constitutional government of this kingdom.

The recent visit to Pevensey must have explained to many present the nature of the shore on which the Conqueror landed, and there is every probability that he had given out a general description of its appearance as a guide for his fleet, inasmuch as some of his ships mistook the very similar position of Romney for the point intended, and landing there, were killed by the fierce inhabitants (*fera gens*), who were afterwards so cruelly punished for resisting the invaders.

Why Sussex alone should have been parcelled out into Rapes, each with a port and a castle, a division of land only known elsewhere in Iceland, and what the word imports, awaits explanation, and here it may be remarked in reference to one of the objects of the Society, the genealogy of families, how steadfastly some Sussex names, as well as many provincial words, have adhered to the soil from very remote times, amid all the revolutions of the state, and in this number are still found some noble, as well as many names of humbler station. This subject has already been ably treated, it is well known, by a member of the Society, Mr. M. A. Lower, in his 'English Surnames,' and as we have many members eminently qualified to collect genealogical information, they will perhaps turn their attention to an enlargement and more methodical arrangement of Sussex genealogies than is found in Berry's volume. In such a vast field, it would probably be wiser at first not to attempt to bring down the pedigrees below the time of Queen Elizabeth, or the Revolution of 1688, or some such limit.

There is one striking circumstance relating to the ruined buildings scattered over England, in contrast with those found in most parts of Europe. Destruction there has been the work of foreign violence, principally indeed of one single nation,—France; but in England, and even in Sussex, though its coasts lie so exposed to foreign attack, and have been in fact frequently subject to it, we cannot point out one building ruined by an invader. We cannot shift off to others the charge which lies upon ourselves—English ruins have been self-made, and have unfortunately been the work of English hands. The deliberate violence of civil wars, the over-hasty zeal of religious changes, the tasteless neglect of accumulated property, such causes, wholly English, have effectually converted so many of our castles, our mansions, and our churches to their present state.

Though some have been entirely destroyed, yet we have the remains of many castles still left within our bounds; among the forms of which the gradual development of society may be watched, from the earth intrenchments which scar our Downs to the Roman masonry of Pevensey, and the feudal strength of so many others—Arundel, Bramber, Lewes, Hastings—each in itself deserving a history, to the moated defences of Bodiam and Scotney, and the palatial fortresses of Amberley and Hurstmonceux, till we come down to the coast forts, erected by Henry VIII. An interesting document bearing on this subject, though previously printed, has been again brought to your notice by a member, Russell Gray, Esq., and many will be glad to see the list of those men of Sussex who came forward with their ample subscriptions, in the year of the Spanish Armada, to contribute to the national defence. In this roll will be found honorably recorded many a name still dwelling among us—both among the rich and noble, or fallen among the lowly. We may rejoice that, at the present happier time, we have less need of builders of fortresses than of calm antiquaries to examine their ruins; but already has Arundel, Bodiam, and Pevensey each attracted its historian, in works by members of this Society.

We must not think slightly of the beauty and variety of the houses of prayer which, whether in ruins or in use, adorn the county. From the shingles of Selsey, where the beacon of Christianity was first erected, the light of religion found for itself many noble resting-places here, some now only to be traced by scanty ruins, as in the monasteries of Sele, Tortington, Warbleton, Lewes, Robertsbridge, and others, while some have preserved better their stateliness of old, as at Battle, Winchelsea, Bayham, Boxgrove, &c. It would be desirable for the Society to procure and embody all the information possible on these points, before the work of destruction advances. Within a very few years the fine old gateway of Lewes Priory has been removed, and partially destroyed; indeed nothing but the interference of one of our zealous members, John Hoper, Esq., prevented its total demolition.

I by no means wish to offend in charity towards other societies similar to our own, but I must take the opportunity

of noticing the strange example set by the Cambridge Camden Society as to Sussex antiquities, which it is to be hoped our own members, in their search after novelty, will not follow. In No. 4 of their Monumental Brasses is a copy of the brass at Cowfold of Thomas Nelond, Prior of Lewes, and in the text annexed to it that Society has published a long letter, regularly dated—"atte Lewes, the ffeest of Seynt Austyn, 1433," and signed by the Prior's brother, Peter Nelond, a London goldsmith, giving a detailed description of his funeral and procession to his distant grave, without a word to indicate that the whole letter is purely fictitious, the mere creation of a modern writer's imagination. This may possibly have been a well-intended fraud, but as it might get mixed up with genuine Sussex history, and has not before been openly exposed, though in print some years and not disavowed by that Society, I trust its mention here will be excused.

Besides the conventual ruins, we have many churches, which are among the most curious specimens of their styles, including the round towers of Piddinghoe, &c., evidently designed for better defence. We have, above all, the Cathedral of Chichester, which is every year resuming its old beauty and acquiring fresh ornaments under the anxious care of those who have it in charge. Besides the numerous windows of stained glass contributed by private feeling, a beautiful instance has recently occurred in the restoration of the tomb of Bishop Richard de la Wyche, afterwards canonized by Rome, a prelate highly interesting from his connexion with Sussex history, and who must ever deserve respect for the firmness with which he asserted his rights under oppression, and dared to speak truth in the palace of an angry sovereign with as much freedom as in quieter times he reproved the nobles around him. The sculptor, Mr. Richardson, employed to effect the restoration has dealt with it as a labour of antiquarian love as well as with the skill of an artist.

The now almost universal practice of rubbing brasses will render easy the acquisition of a complete set of all those remaining in the county, and it is to be hoped that a stop will be put to their removal. Within a few miles of Brighton, on a visit to a church lately, I found that a brass inscription had been carried off to a neighbouring farmhouse, with the view

of sending it to a Sussex nobleman, whose tenant the farmer was : I doubt whether it has been replaced to this day. A member present, the Rev. C. Boutell, who is preparing an elaborate work on the subject, will give us the benefit of some remarks on brasses, which may guide others in their collections of them. I will only observe that Sussex contains as good a collection as most counties.

The great churches of Shoreham, Steyning, Rye, and Arundel are too interesting to be unknown ; and at Sompting, we have a remarkable example of a spire with pediments, very uncommon in England, but the type of which is very common in the churches of the Continent, especially near the Rhine, as may be seen by some bas-reliefs of German churches on the table. The frescoes at Preston and Battle are among the most curious that have been of late rescued from the white-wash of churchwardens.

The county perhaps was never rich in painted glass, but even of our little we have been occasionally plundered, as in the case of the two portraits said to be those of Henry III and his Queen, which found their way out of Hoo church into the museum of Horace Walpole, and were lately sold at Strawberry Hill.

The mansions of ancient architecture in Sussex have been fine and numerous, but as they are necessarily at the uncontrolled disposal of their proprietors, the number is constantly diminishing. On Mayfield Palace a paper will be presently read to you ; but mere fragments are now left of Brambletye, Halland, Slaugham, Chiddingly, Laughton, and others. Even last year, half of the fine mansion of the Culpepers, at Wakehurst, was pulled down, without any record being taken of its spacious rooms and elaborate ceilings. There still remain, however, besides others, the mansions of Parham, Wiston, Danny, and Glynde, all so curiously similar in their situations under the shelter of the Downs.

With one more subject only will I trouble the Society—that of the former manufactures of the county, which once formed its main occupation, and of which so little is now known. How interesting would be an account of the great iron-works, of which there now only remain a few names to recall the memory locally where the cinders were heaped or the hammers of the forge were worked. Many of the gentry of the

county owed their wealth to this source, and a late member of the county, John Fuller, Esq., recorded his gratitude by inscribing near his house "carbone et forcipibus." The first maker of cannon in Sussex was John Owen, in 1535; but one of the most curious pieces in the Tower of London, a flat cannon with three tubes, beautifully adorned with the badges and titles of Henry VIII, bears on it the maker's name, "Petrus Baude Gallus operis artifex," who established his foundry at Buxted in 1543, with Ralph Hoge, the latter of whom still gives a name to "the Hog House" there. A servant of Baude, John Johnson, is said to have "succeeded and exceeded his master," making his cannon cleaner and more perfect, in 1595. There were other manufactures, so entirely extinct that they are forgotten, and yet it is certain that some of the Flemish cloth-weavers, whom Edward III encouraged to come over, settled in Sussex; and in 1423, in the time of Henry VI, an act passed forbidding, except by way of Calais, the export of "les sleightes laines de Sussex," as they are termed, implying some particular merit, the memory of which has passed away.

Many notices, too, exist of the glass-works in Sussex, though they seem not to have produced the best quality. In 1557, Thomas Charnock says, in some rude verses,

"As for glass-makers they be scant in the land,
 Yet one there is, as I do understand,
 And in Sussex is now his habitation,
 At Chiddingsfold he works of his occupation."

Another notice says, "Neither can we match the purity of Venice glasses, and yet many green ones are blown in Sussex, profitable to the makers and convenient to the users thereof." Camden refers in similar terms, and Evelyn also, as to Sussex being the only county for glass-works. A severe proclamation of James I forbade the "melting of glass with timber, or wood or fuel made of the same," but as the glass-works increased subsequently, this was probably disregarded. Wisborough Green is the only locality known to me of these glass-works.

In the inquiry as to the value of the different parishes for the purposes of taxation in 1342, the return, which is signed, among others, by John de Mitford, says of Greffham, that

“the rector has the easement, to the value of XIId. from men who make there earthen vessels.” A pottery in good repute exists there at the present day.

It would employ some members fond of statistics to calculate the population at different periods and its means of producing food. By a paper on the table it appears that in 1738, upwards of 45,000 quarters of wheat were exported from the ports of Sussex, under the artificial impulse of a bounty upon such export.

I have endeavoured thus to indicate to others these various points of inquiry, hoping that much illustration might thus be gained upon the social condition of Sussex in former times by diligent research, and though we have no medal to reward them, there is ample occupation ready for all the labourers which this Society is likely to send forth; but in order to effect this, I would earnestly invite the members to form themselves into local committees, each in his own neighbourhood, or in the division of Rapes, under the direction of some local secretary, who might methodize their exertions, and distribute to each member some appointed duty, such as his own inclination would select, so that every one might be found working at once and in concert with all. One might undertake to collect brasses, another the genealogies, another the plans and descriptions of churches and other buildings, another might consult MSS., and draw up histories of these objects, another might make catalogues of the prints and drawings relating to the district, as a guide to their future collection by the Society, another might keep a jealous watch over any threatened destruction or injudicious alteration, until in a few years a complete body of information might be collected, enabling some future antiquary to complete in a worthy spirit the history of the county.

In suggesting these topics of inquiry, it is not necessary to explain that truth only is sought for, and not controversy, especially on religious or political subjects, which is expressly forbidden by our rules; and if, in communications from members, any expressions of individual opinion should be accidentally used, liable to offend others, the Society must distinctly disclaim all responsibility for such, though the good feeling of the

members will assuredly lead them to avoid any such occasions for offence, and each will respect in those who differ from him that liberty of private judgment which he himself assumes and exercises. With these sentiments, so encouraged by the enlightened activity of the present age, the Society cannot fail of success, after having enlisted in its favour so much of the noble, the learned, the pious, and the enterprising zeal of the county of Sussex.
