

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS RELATING TO SUSSEX.

FROM THE YEAR 1678 TO 1771, WITH NOTES
AND OBSERVATIONS.

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Some years ago, I purchased, from a London stall, a book containing "Cuttings" from newspapers of various dates, chronologically arranged. Some of them are very curious and interesting, though for the most part only so to Sussex people. This book I have sent to our Hon. Curator for deposit in the Museum Library.

Here, as on former occasions, I must apologize for the introduction into the "Collections" of matters not strictly archæological. I am convinced, however, that it suits the tastes of many of our members to have put upon permanent record things of comparatively recent date, as well as those antiquarian matters which relate to Celtic, Roman, and Medieval times. I consider the *history of Society* to be one of the principal aims of the retrospective philosopher, and whether he describes the life and manners of a century or two ago, or those of twenty centuries past, he is pretty sure to obtain the attention of many readers.

Sussex, though now rather overstocked with newspapers, did not possess one of those useful conveyances of information until 1745, when the Lee family commenced the publication of the "SUSSEX ADVERTISER;" a paper which continues to hold its own most vigorously to these days. To this have succeeded various county and local papers of more or less importance. Before 1745, advertisements and scraps of Sussex news were sent to the London papers, and were read

a week or ten days afterwards, by those interested in them, with as much *gusto* as our morning papers containing last night's debates are perused daily at every breakfast table in these days of rapid motion.

My first extract is from a London paper (title not given), dated 1678:—

“A reddish roan Mare, lately lent to one *Robert Browne*, aged about 50, from the *Turks-head* Inn, in Lewes, in the County of Sussex, the 11th instant; she is about 14 hands; six years old; has a white blaze down her face; three white feet; with a white speck on the stifle bone on the far side, and a white streak on her near side from the flank downwards—trots all. Whoever discovers the said Person or Mare, and gives notice to Mr. *John Tooke*, at the *Turks-head*, in Lewes aforesaid, shall have 20s. reward.”

Horse stealing was a crime very rife in Sussex in those days, and long after.

“Stolen, on Wednesday or Thursday last, out of a ground at Handcross, Cockfield, in Sussex, a Sorrel Mare, 14 hands high, with a star, having a wound with a prong in the heel of her near foot, and all her paces, by a short man, with a mist-coloured camlet coat, lined, having a scar on his right eye-brow, his hair black, and something straight. (One guinea reward.) July, 1683.”

Sheep stealing was also frequent, and that upon a wholesale scale, as witness the following advertisement, dated Dec. 1, 1683:—

“These are to give notice that there is taken, and Committed to the County Goal of Sussex, one who sometimes goes by the name of Thomas Robison, at other times by the name of Thomas Voke, who had in his custody 26 Sheep, which are suspected to be stolen; he is a short, thick man, about 27 or 28 years of age, who, with some others, about the latter end of the last summer, were questioned upon suspicion in the Forrest of Ashdown, near Eastgrinsted, in Sussex, at which time they made their escape, and left six cows, which still remain in the hands of the Lord of the Manor there. If any person can claim either Cows or the Sheep, they may be better informed of the same by William Butching, at the sign of the Crown, in Eastgrinsted aforesaid.”

Smuggling was, as we have seen in many previous volumes of these “Collections,” a great snare and a grievous curse to Sussex. The following is from the “Daily Post”:—

“London, September 19, 1721.

“They write from Horsham, in Sussex, of the 13th instant, that

Lieutenant Jekyll, of Brigadier General Grove's Regiment, with a party of Grenadiers, near Burwish (40 miles from that place)—[something omitted]—the chief Ringleaders of the Owlars, nam'd Gib. Tompkin; and pursuing one Jervis, another noted Owlar,* with several of his accomplices, came up with them; upon which Jervis fired his pistols, and retired with his men to a wood; whereupon, some of the Grenadiers were order'd to fire likewise, but the Smuglers being very well mounted, got off, and Lieutenant Jekyll continued to pursue them all that day and night, and the next morning surrounded a lane at Nutly, where he took Robt. Serjeant, Wm. Blackman, Wm. Kemward, and Thomas Highsted, with five Horses, and all their Ropes and Running Tackle,† which he carry'd with him, and the Men were committed to Horsham Goal."

My next extract is more strictly archæological:—

"London, June 20, 1723.

"They write from Chichester that, in digging the Foundation of a House in that City, some Time since, a large stone, 6 foot long and half as broad, was found pretty deep in the ground, with a Roman Inscription on it, importing that a Temple was erected there in the reign of *Claudius Cæsar*, dedicated to *Neptune* and *Minervâ*; but the workmen very unhappily erased near one half of the Letters, by cutting into the Stone with their Pickaxes before they could take it up."

This, of course, is the well-known Roman relic now preserved at Goodwood.

"On Monday the Assizes ended at Lewes for the County of Sussex, when one Person, Richard Eldridge, was convicted capitally for horse-stealing; two were burnt in the Hand, but none were order'd for Transportation. There were sixteen Causes try'd on the Nisi Prius side. (July, 1730.)"

The revellings at Halland in the days of the great Duke of Newcastle, have been noticed in vol. xi. of these "Collections." The following announcement of one of these is given in a London paper of August, 1731:—

"To-morrow, his Grace the Duke of Newcastle will set out for his seat at Hallend, in Sussex, and will keep three publick Days, during his stay there, for the Entertainment of the Freeholders, and his Tenants and others."

In March, 1759, we have the following:—

"Tuesday morning, Thomas Ansell, known among the smugglers by the name of Surry Tom, was carried from the New Gaol in Southwark,

* *Owler*, a smuggler. See Halliwell, *in. voc.*

† *To run* meant, in Smugglers' phrase, to land a cargo of contraband goods, and this "running tackle" was part of the smugglers' stock in trade.

to Horsham in Sussex, guarded by a party of General Hawley's dragoons, he being to be tried next Monday, at East Grinstead Assizes, for the murder of Thomas Cole, a dragoon, on Slendon Common, in November 1757, for which murder, it is said, two men were convicted and executed last Sussex Assizes."

The following "Extract of a Letter from Chichester," dated Jan. 20, 1748, shews the awful depravity incident to smuggling in this county, less than a century and a quarter ago:—

"Yesterday, about three quarters after two o'clock in the afternoon, the six smugglers and murderers were executed at the Broil, about a mile out of Town. At coming out of the Hall, young Mills talk'd very merrily, and said 'we shall have a very jolly Hang of it,' and at the place of execution, he said it was very bad to be refused a Pint of Beer, which he had ask'd for. The Father would have smok'd from the Gaol to the Gallows, but was prevented. They were attended by a Minister from the City, to whose Prayers and Exhortations all but the two Mills's gave great attention, and shew'd great marks of their Penitence; but the old man and his son (who neither kissed, spoke to, or took the least notice of each other) seem'd quite harden'd and insensible of their wretched state. The Executioner employed on this occasion was a disbanded Marine, who, not being expert in the Business, having provided them with Halters too short, fresh ones were sent for, which occasioned a Delay of about an Hour. Young Mills amused himself most of the Time in looking up at the Executioner, who sat across the Gallows, endeavouring to make the Halters do which he had provided, and smiled several times, as is suppos'd, at the Hangman's going so awkwardly about his Work.

"Tapner and Carter were very devout, and gave a great deal of good advice to the spectators; the former recommended, in a very strong manner, to the Dragoons and soldiers who attended the execution, to be very vigilant in their endeavours to take one Richards, who he said was one of the worst of the gang, and the principal cause of his coming to so shameful an end. They are to be hanged in chains.

"As Jackson died before the time appointed for his execution (to the great disappointment of the people (!), who hoped he would have lived long enough to have received the just reward of his execrable villainies), it was judged proper to hang him in chains; but it is said he is to be buried under the gallows, a monument of infamy to be erected over him, and to be enclosed within very strong iron rails, to prevent its being defaced or taken down by any of the gang."

Next we have another piece of archæology proper, but without a date. It is as follows:—

"Last week, on pulling down an old house that stood at the east corner of St. Martin's Lane, in the Borough of Lewes, belonging to Mr. Paine,

tallow chandler, the workmen discovered under the hearth of the kitchen, in the chalky soil, a hole about four feet square, filled with wood ashes and light mould, which excited their curiosity, and led them to its full gratification by emptying it, and finding at the bottom, 15 feet deep, a silver ring, ornamented with a heart beneath a rose, or some other flower, and the mouldering remains of the coffins of two children, which, as the building was ancient, it is presumed must have been there deposited several centuries, and probably thus deep for the more effectual concealment of some atrocious murders. On removing the rubbish from other parts of the premises two silver coins were found—one of Edward and the other of Elizabeth.”

This building was probably the site of the Church of the extinct parish of St. Martin, now incorporated with that of St. Michael. The depth of the grave is not easily accounted for; but the supposition of murder is not borne out, for it is not likely that a murderer would cast a silver ring into the victims' resting place.

(Oct., 1751.) “A few days ago, as the Rev. Mr. Hincliffe was passing over the South Downs, on his way to Lewes, he was attacked by two ruffians on foot, who pulled him off his horse, and took out of his pockets a Common Prayer Book, a guinea, some silver, and a ring off his finger, his hat and wig; and then pulled a cord out of their pockets, and tied him by the neck to a stump, and then left him. The robbery was committed between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, where the unfortunate gentlemen continued bound till five in the afternoon, when he was released by a poor shepherd, who happily came by, and, like the Good Samaritan, carried him to his hut and gave him what refreshment his cottage afforded; he afterwards sought his horse, and after putting him on it, wished him a good journey, desiring him to remember Tom Cordwell, the poor shepherd, and his wife Mary, and his two Barns, Billy and Molley, in his prayers. Mr. Hincliffe told him that he would not only remember them in his prayers, but as soon as he got to Lewes he would send them a proper gratuity for their kindness and hospitality, as he did not know but it was (under God) owing to him that his life was preserved.”

There are several advertisements of land, &c., for sale, which are not to our present purpose. The following paragraph, relating to another execution, is less displeasing than those before related:—

“Lewes, April 21 (1760.) On Saturday last was executed at Horsham John Bullbeck, for forgery. He was conveyed in a single horse chair to the place of execution, with a cart drove before him. When he came to the gallows he took his leave of the gaoler, and stepped into the cart with a book in his hand; and, after taking off his hat, he stood up and prayed for near an hour. He professed himself to be a Roman Catholic, and died penitent.”

The following account of a "canine repast" is of about the same date as the foregoing, and appeared in the "London Evening Post":—

"To those who wish for a compleat literary surfeit, we recommend the following *morceau* from an evening paper:—*Probatum est.* On Sunday, the 11th inst., a man, followed by a Newfoundland dog, entered a public-house called Half-Way Bridge, in the neighbourhood of Petworth, where four young men from that town were in company, one of whom by accident hurt the dog. Of this the traveller complained with some degree of warmth, which provoked another of the company to tell him 'that if he did not quietly put up with the affront they would eat his dog!' The proprietor answered they were quite at liberty to do that, and he would give them half a guinea's worth of drink to wash it down, provided they would forfeit 6s. each if they failed of eating his carcase *clean up.* The conditions were agreed to, poor Cæsar was slaughtered, and actually devoured by his four brethren in human shape!!!"

I do not know whether the following accident is traditionally remembered at Billingshurst. It occurred in May, 1766.

"On Monday, as some workmen were repairing the spire of the parish Church of Billingshurst, near Horsham, in Sussex, the tackling by which two carpenters were coming down gave way, and falling to the ground, they were killed on the spot."

Now for a note on some archæological wine—

"As some labourers were cleansing a fish-pond at a gentleman's seat near East Grinstead, in Sussex, they found a bottle covered with mud a yard thick. On it were inscribed these words—'New canary; put in to see how long it will keep good, April, 1666. R. Wilson.' The mouth of the bottle was waxed over; the wine was excellent, though the cork was almost decayed." (1771.)

My book of cuttings is not exhausted; but the remaining articles are of too modern a date for archæological readers. A hundred years hence they may become archæology!
