

Sussex Archaeological Society.

PENHURST:

BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS IRON WORKS, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH, &c.

(The substance of a Paper partly read at the Annual Meeting of the Sussex Archaeological Society at Penhurst, on Thursday, Aug. 19th, 1886.)

BY THE REV. ROSE FULLER WHISTLER, M.A.,

Of Emmanuel College, Cambridge; Vicar of Ashburnham and Rector of Penhurst, Sussex, and sometime Rural Dean.

PENHURST is thus referred to in Domesday:—

In Peneherst, which Osbern holds of the Earl of Eu, the Abbot has half a hide, and there are two villeins with 2 ploughs and one acre of meadow and wood for 2 hogs. It is worth 15 shillings.¹

The name Penhurst is formed of *Pen* (British) *Hurst* (Saxon), which two words combined rightly describe the parish as the "Head of the wood," and serve to convey a very just idea of a locality in which every third acre is woodland, and the remainder so intersected by broad hedgerows, studded thickly with trees, that from many of the little eminences in which it abounds there is in the distance very much the appearance of what we may suppose the Weald of Sussex to have been, wild forest land, with here and there a clearer and more open space, giving sufficient land for cultivation by the inhabitants

¹ "Domesday Book in Relation to Sussex," IV., 6-33. Terra Ecclesiæ de la Bataille, in Totenore Hundreda. "In Penehest quod tenet Osbernus de comite de Ow habet abbas dimidiam hidam et ibi ii villani sunt cum ii carucis et una acra prati et silva ii porcorum. Valet xv solidos."

to supply the wants of its small and scattered population. A writer in our "Collections" remarks: "Pen, a head, in Penhurst, accurately describes the head or eastern extremity of the great wood of Andredes-weald,"² and with reference to its position and local tradition there are not wanting those³ who are bold to conjecture that the much disputed site of Anderida itself may possibly be claimed for a ruined cluster of habitations, the *débris* of which are still to be found in a wood, named from them "Town Creep." The undulations of the district are considerable, and through each little valley there trickles a streamlet, well stocked with trout, which eventually finds its way to the Ashburn, the insignificant river, or rather rivulet, that gives its name to the neighbouring village of Ashburnham.

The population of this isolated district, barely numbering a hundred, has been remarkably stationary, owing probably, among other causes, to the extremely miry nature of the lanes, which are almost impassable in winter, to the ample provision of garden ground attached to the several cottages, and in most cases to the convenience of the few adjoining acres which enables the inhabitants to keep their cow, and thus to enjoy some degree of home comfort, which is certainly one of the most permanent sources of local attachment.

In 1886 a new road was made from Ashburnham to Penhurst, to enable the parishioners of Ashburnham, on the closing of their own churchyard, to convey their dead to that of Penhurst, then enlarged by special arrangement for their accommodation.

This road, which passes the old forge, was made at the sole cost of the Earl of Ashburnham, and will materially alter the character of this part of the country.

In the valley extending from the ridge of hills between Dallington and Netherfield to Ashburnham Place, there was in former days a series of lakes, varying in width from 50 to 300 yards or more, formed by damming back the streamlets which flow to the little river Ashburn. At the lower end of each of these artificial

² "S. A. C.," VIII., 5.

³ Notably the Rev. E. Tatham.

sheets of water was a huge wheel, which served the various furnaces wherein the local iron works were carried on. Of these works among the most notable were the Penhurst Furnace and the Ashburnham Forge, situated about a mile apart, and still retaining traces of their arrangement for the working of this now extinct Sussex industry.

The names, too, of the neighbouring woods and fields help to preserve the recollection of the pursuits of the inhabitants, and the dark hue of the lanes is the evident result of the free use for repairs, of the scoriæ, the ejecta of the various furnaces. In the immediate vicinity of Penhurst Furnace the following names are still in use:— Hammer Wood, Mining Field, Mine Pit Field, Hammer Hill Field, Hammer Brook, Blackland, Mine Piece, Furnace Field, Forge Meadow; with many others of like character.

In a house adjoining the furnace there died in August, 1883, the last surviving labourer at Penhurst Furnace, who had wrought there as a boy, and continued his work until the last fire was blown out in 1811. A very short time before his death he looked up, in an out-house, the model of a fire back still in fair condition, and the only one in use at this furnace, I believe, which had been preserved, and he then explained how the process of casting was carried out. A writer⁴ in a local journal gives the following particulars of the death of the last of the Sussex iron workers:—

On Sunday last, at his pretty cottage near the extinct furnace at Penhurst, there passed peaceably away, in extreme old age, one of the last surviving labourers, if not quite the last, in the Ashburnham Iron Works. A shrewd and observant individual was William Hobday, and many a tale could he tell of a local industry, now a thing of the past, but which still possesses for many a lingering and fascinating attraction. Not many months ago he brightened up as he told a chance visitor⁵ how, when a boy, he had seen the last fire extinguished in 1813, after the casting of the last fire backs, the same which are still in use in the Manor House at Penhurst. "Will Rummings cast them," he said; "and the mould was made in the sand which was dug near William Lovell's house." . . . "You have heard tell of St. Paul's: Well, about fifty or sixty of the bars round it, were cast here." He then pointed out the

⁴ R. F. W.

⁵ The Rector.

position of the furnace, and described the mode of working, telling, with native pride, how "there was more myne in our soil than in that in any other county." With no little satisfaction, he next bustled about, and after some little searching among the rubbish of a wood lodge at length produced one of the very few remaining oaken models (an exquisite one), which, when pressed upon the sand prepared for the purpose, formed the mould into which the molten iron was poured. The mention of a sad and tragic incident concluded the old man's gossiping recollections, and his voice sunk low as he recalled the fate of his fellow work boy. "There were six of us there when the fire was blown out, two furnace men, two upper fellows to feed the furnace, and two boys. I was one of them. After it was out the boy Jones, from Robertsbridge, drank a whole bottle of gin. We sent for the doctor; but it was no good, he died before he came." These are but samples of the stories Hobday loved to tell. His last has now been told. For many years he has lived as a pensioner on the bounty of the Earl of Ashburnham. His failure has been gradual, but evident, and he has now ended his days near the scene of his labours, in the picturesque and comfortable home which the generous care of his patron had provided.

The accompanying engraving from a sketch by the Rev. C. W. Whistler, and made to a scale of $\frac{1}{8}$, will convey an impression of this curious work of local art. It is supposed to represent St. Michael overcoming the Dragon; and to be illustrative of the following texts:—"In that day the Lord with His sore, and great, and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Is. xxvii., 1. "Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces." Ps. lxxiv., 14.

This interesting relic, which was unfortunately missing, and could not, therefore, be inspected by the members of the Society on their visit, has since been recovered, and is now in the possession of Lord Ashburnham.

From the testimony of two or three other inhabitants, who though not engaged in the works had opportunities of observing them, we gather the following facts:—When the works were abandoned there were two fires, a larger and a smaller; to serve these there were two pairs of bellows blown by means of wheels turned by water power, the current of which may still be seen. The lower furnace was much the larger, and there the ore (brought from the neighbouring woods) was smelted, and poured into moulds in which it was shaped into such



C.W. Whistler delt.

WOODEN MODEL OF FIRE BACK

from the Furnace .

PENHURST .

now in the possession of the Earl of Ashburnham.

form as might be required. Here were made fire backs, brand irons, and sometimes cannon and shot of various sizes; but, as a rule, the molten iron was shaped into pigs for general purposes.⁶ At the upper and smaller furnaces, near the present water gate, the guns were bored, and afterwards tested by the discharge of balls, many of which are still from time to time dug from the banks of the opposite wood in which they had been embedded.⁷

In the workshop near the upper furnace there is still to be seen an iron vase of excellent design and in perfect preservation, 16½ inches high by 24 inches in diameter at the top of the bowl. This beautiful specimen of Sussex iron work, probably unique, is said to have been used as a punch bowl, and to have been filled for the workmen at the successful conclusion of any casting of unusual magnitude or consequence: it is now (1888) in the possession of the Earl of Ashburnham.

A large mound formed of scoriæ, now overgrown with thriving young trees, was, in 1884, drawn upon largely for the repair of the neighbouring roads; sufficient, nevertheless, still remains to show that the works carried on in this furnace were of somewhat extensive character. There are other similar mounds near at hand, the largest of which is upon the glebe land near Pannynrydge,⁸ where

⁶ A specimen pig, from Buxted, is now deposited in the Society's Museum at Lewes Castle.

⁷ Several of these were exhibited at Penhurst at the Annual Meeting in 1886.

⁸ Upon this word "Pannynrydge," Lord Ashburnham remarks: "Pandridge, or Pannynridge. I have always heard this name pronounced and seen it written 'Pannelridge,' but I merely mention this for your information . . ." Pannelridge is the form adopted in the Ordnance Survey, but the old use is retained in this article in accordance with a quotation which we here give from "Westalle's Book of Pannynrydge, A^o. Regis Hen. VII., xxxviii, 1546," quoted by Thorpe. It contains the accounts of some iron master, and exhibits the expenditure in carrying on an extensive concern during that year. "Sums paid for carrying Coals out of Pannynrydge Olyvers Wood, and Asylday, at fourpence and six-pence the load." "Moyné digged out of the Pannynrydge." "Paid unto Black Jack and others for digging of loads of moyné, at seven-pence the load," &c. "Sums paid for carying of lodes of Sand from Pannynrydge unto my forge at Robertsbridge at xv^d the lode." "Sums paid Mr. Chancellor for the farm of his Woods at Pannynrydge: sums paid to the Parson of Penherst for the farm of the Phurner (furnace) pond there; as also for the tythe of the Phurner there," &c.

The compiler of this article here desires to express his thanks to the Earl of Ashburnham, to whom it has been submitted, and by whom it has been revised, in order to avoid any errors in the various allusions it contains to places and matters connected with the Ashburnham property.

also there was formerly a furnace, and where the position of the wheel may still be traced. This bank was of sufficient importance to give its name to the copse in which it stands, called the "Cinderbank" in the Glebe Map of Penhurst, dated 1679, and still extant. Here it may be mentioned that in "Thorp's Catalogue of Battle Abbey Charters" there is a record of a payment to the Rector of Penhurst, for the use of the Pond, where there may now be seen one of the most thriving hop gardens in the district.

Of the adjoining forge there are not many remains, and, as already remarked, the new road will alter the quiet sylvan character of the lovely spot. It was worked for some 14 years after the furnace was closed, and there are many who can remember the working and who still speak of the sound of the hammers. It was carried on by the Earl of Ashburnham, under the superintendence of his steward, Mr. Pennington. There were some eight or ten men employed there, who migrated to America when their work at the forge was no longer needed. The mill pond was drained and the bed planted with hops. The work-buildings were partly converted into cottages and partly pulled down.

Mention has been made of the old glebe map, now in possession of the Rector. A reference to it would seem to prove that the boundaries of farms and fields may have remained unaltered through a very long course of years; few things, indeed, in this changeable scene, are so changeless as the boundary marks of remote country districts. With the exception of the mill pond, which is now a hop garden, and the closing of a lane at the side of the property, the fields all remain as they were when the map was drawn, and so they may have been for ages before then. The map, which is upon parchment, and curiously decorated, bears the following inscription:—

A map of a Parcell of Land lieing in the Parish of Penhurst, in the County of Sussex. Known by the name of Glebe-land; Belonging to y^e Rectory of Penhurst. Now in y^e possession of John Bowyer Rector

of Penhurst above said. Now also in the occupation of Mr. John Plummer of Ashburnham.

It contains	{	Plaine land and pond...	...	a.	r.	p.
		Woodland and shaws...	...	38	3	28
			...	15	3	0

By George Ridgway 1679.

In 1811 the Rectory of Penhurst was consolidated with the Vicarage of Ashburnham, and this consolidation is thus noticed by the late Rector in a note deposited by him in the parish chest of Ashburnham:—

The Living of Penhurst was united to that of Ashburnham. The Deed signed by the Bishop of Chichester bears date June 10th, 1811, and is deposited in the Chest of the Parish of Ashburnham. Mem. I could find no deed of this kind in the Ashburnham Register Chest on my induction in 1840.

JOHN READ MUNN, Rector.

The Manor of Penhurst is now the property of the Earls of Ashburnham, into whose hands it passed in the 16 Geo. III. It had formerly belonged to a family synonymous with the parish,⁹ and at one time to Joan, the widow of Thos. Gyles, Rector, who subsequently married Colonel John Busbridge, of Haremare, who, as a Lieutenant in "Col. Tillard's officers of foote," was taken prisoner in 1645, at Naseby.

From the Manor to the Manor House is an easy transition, and from the Manor House, or as it is now called the "Church House," to the church is but a short step; they stand within bow-shot of each other. The accompanying extract from a local paper will give a very fair description of both, and of their relative position, while it makes mention at the same time of the repairs which the latter has lately undergone:—

This church was re-opened on Christmas Day,^{9a} after extensive and thorough repair, without special service or ceremony. The building had gradually become so dilapidated and decayed that it would soon have become useless for Divine worship had not this reparation been at once taken in hand; indeed, the whole of the north side of the roof of the

⁹ In the Parish Church of Yalding, co. Kent, there is (or was) a monument in memory of Thomas, "son of Sir Thomas Penhurst, of Penhurst in Sussex."

^{9a} This was in 1881. R. F. W.

nave had given way, and the tiling had fallen *en masse* into the church-yard. Penhurst is so little known, and its population so small, that public attention is seldom attracted to it; nevertheless, the church is of great interest, and possesses features which would well repay the visit of the antiquary. The approaches are in winter so remarkably bad that it is then almost inaccessible, but in the summer months it would be difficult to find a prettier spot, or a more delightful road leading to it, than is afforded by the route through the undulating lanes, lying as they do between the noble old deer park of Ashburnham on the south, and the wooded hills which bound the landscape to the north. As the church is approached a single dwelling near it attracts the eye, standing out boldly in all the simple grey beauty of an early English manor farm-house, its lofty gables and picturesque chimneys appearing and disappearing with the rise and fall of the hills. Immediately behind, and close to this conspicuous building, stands the little church, perhaps as little altered from what it was ages ago as any that may be found; for the work now completed has been of the nature of a thorough repair rather than of what is called "restoration," and the noble windows, the well-proportioned chancel and lower arches, the oak screen, the hagioscope, the piscina, and other points of great ecclesiastical interest remain in all their original beauty. One noteworthy alteration has been made it is true, but this has merely been the substitution of an ancient carved oak pulpit (brought, it is believed, from Long Melford Church, in Suffolk) for the modern deal structure which had for some few years disfigured the interior; the new pulpit being the special gift of the daughter of the Rev. J. R. Munn, the late Rector, by whom, immediately before his death, the chancel had been restored. The cost of the repairs has been mainly provided by the Countess of Ashburnham, the patroness of the living, and her family, and by the friends of the late and present Rector. Very opportunely a picture of Penhurst Church has just appeared in the "Architect" of December 10th, where, also, the following brief description of it occurs: "This church presents a very picturesque appearance, and, with its square tower and shingled spire, is thoroughly typical of an ancient Sussex church. It has lately been carefully restored."

Of the house adjoining the church very little is certainly known, although from its importance it must have a history. There are no parish account books in existence, of sufficient age, to verify its earlier possessors or inhabitants, and for the last century, at least, it appears to have been held by the tenants of the adjoining farm. There is a tradition that it was built of materials brought from "Town Creep," but the sand-stone of which it is built appears to be similar to that used in the church, and it may have been procured from the large but now disused quarry near at hand in Ashburnham Park. The building is extremely picturesque, standing



C.W. Whistler del.

FIRE BACK.
in the Manor House
PENHURST.

boldly from the ground, and having gables, chimneys, porch, and chamber over, of unusually striking design and proportion. The date may be about the earlier part of the 18th century.

Within the house there is little to command notice. The rooms are of good size, with deep windows and corresponding window seats. In the larger living room there is a good old chimney corner, and there are preserved two interesting fire backs, said to have been the last, or nearly the last, which were made at Penhurst Furnace. Upon the authority of old Mr. Hobday, they were the work of Will Rummins, who certainly wrought at Penhurst, and who would probably be of the family mentioned in the "S. A. C.," Vol. II., p. 196.¹⁰

The accompanying sketches of these fire backs were made in 1883 by the Rev. C. W. Whistler, Vicar of Theddlethorpe, All Saints.

The coronet on the first is certain evidence that it was made on the Earl's estate. The design is a strange blending of heathen mythology with Holy Scripture, and it is at once apparent that we have Phœbus Apollo as the representative of the rising sun, and the lion passant as an illustration of the beautiful picture of returning day in the 104th Psalm, v. 20-22:—

Thou makest darkness that it may be night wherein all the beasts of the forest do move.

The lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God.

The sun ariseth and they get them away together.

Prayer Book Version.

The shape of the plate and the pattern of the border are, it will be observed, almost identical with those of the model to which reference has already been made.^{10a}

The subject of the second plate is clearly derived from Virgil's "Æneid," II., 705, 710. Our designer was, perchance, a classical scholar, or he may have been the happy student of Dryden's translation. He has given us his

¹⁰ The Manor House has for many years been the abode of the Lovell family, and is now occupied by Mr. Thomas Lovell, by whose courtesy the members of the Society were permitted to inspect the fire backs on the occasion of their visit to Penhurst in 1886.

^{10a} See illustration at page 4. This model is now in the possession of the Earl of Ashburnham.

idea of the pious care of Æneas in carrying his father, Anchises, from the burning city Troy.

Et jam per moenia clarius ignis
 Auditur, propiusque cæstus incendia volvunt
 Ergo age, care pater, cervici imponere nostræ
 Ipse subibo humeris, nec me labor iste gravabit.
 Quo res cumque cadent unum et commune periculum
 Una salus ambobus erit . . .

Almost all the objects of interest in Penhurst Church are still to be seen, although the whole building has at three several times undergone complete repair, and probably some alteration. About thirty years since the nave was reseated, as it is now seen, at the sole cost of the late Earl of Ashburnham, then the patron of the living. In 1879 the chancel was put into its present order, by the then Rector, the Rev. J. R. Munn, the expense being met by general subscriptions. The third and last instalment of this thorough renovation was completed (as has been mentioned) only a few years ago. The oak throughout the building is of home-growth and of excellent quality.

We look in vain for the inscription in Roman capitals "Ecce Homo," which was, we are told, formerly upon the cross-beam.¹¹ We can still, however, notice the hook upon which the crucifix was probably suspended. We miss also the legends which were on either side of the chancel arch; on the right hand, "Venite benedicti in regnum patris mei;" on the left, "Ite maledicti in ignem æternum." Otherwise there is little change. The arms of the Pelhams, so often to be found in honourable connection with Church architecture, are to be seen in the east window as of old, in token, perhaps, that they were, and are, lords paramount of the Manor. The remains of painted glass, as noticed by Sir William Burrell, have been carefully preserved. The hagioscope and piscina are perfect. The screen is unaltered. The altar rails, possibly introduced by order of Laud, retain their position. The only internal changes lately made have been the removal of brickwork from the beautiful west window,

¹¹ See Horsfield, Vol. II., page 561.



C.W. Whistler del.

FIRE BACK
in the Manor House .
PENHURST.

by which the light was obscured, and the repair and cleaning of the noble tower arch.

Externally there has been no alteration. The picturesque porch, with its time-worn moulding, still resists the wear and tear of time and weather; the roof has been removed, repaired, and replaced; the coping stones have been renewed where needful, and the symbol of our faith has been placed where we may suppose it originally to have been.

In the churchyard there has been a considerable alteration. An addition from the waste and the adjoining cattle yard has very recently been made in order to provide space for the burial of the parishioners of Ashburnham.¹² To effect this a clearance of worn-out hedges was made, and the effect has been that the little church has been thrown open to the road, thus displaying to advantage a picturesque object which was formerly greatly obscured.

As to the style of architecture and probable date of the building, I may quote the remarks of Mr. Arthur A. G. Colpoys, by whom a survey of the church was made in 1878, and who writes:—

This is unmistakably of the 15th century, and unlike most Sussex churches is *complete* in that style. By careful examination of details I should date it from 1440 to 1460.

The chief points of architectural interest are its completeness in one style, and yet the very superior quality of workmanship and material in the tower to the rest of the church. The tall, elegant arch into tower, which has not the usual gallery to disfigure it. The tower carried up just to clear the arch, and then stopped short (evidently, I think, on account of its foundation giving way soon after or during its erection), and roofed with a most interesting centre-post roof. The staircase to the tower, with its elegant little quatrefoil light, and entrance from the south-west corner of the nave. The timber porch, much decayed, but still showing signs of handsomely-carved bay-board and side panelling. The chancel screen with its door and grooving at top and round the arch from the road. The bell, probably that cast (according to the "List of Bells in Sussex")¹³ by William Chapman in 1781, no doubt to take the place of the one of 1686, "broken." The barrel roof of the chancel, with its moulded ribs and carved bosses.

The iron slab now resting against the chapel wall was removed from the chancel floor, near the priest's door, in

¹² See *ante* page 2.

¹³ "S. A. C.," Vol. XVI., page 220.

1878. It is of local make, and in memory of Peter Gower, who died 1703. One memorial tablet only is to be found within the church. On the south wall of the chancel there is a brass, placed there in memory of the late Rector, bearing this inscription :—

His friends and neighbours lamenting their loss place this memorial
to their late Rector,
The REV. JOHN READ MUNN, B.A.,
Who, after 38 years of ministerial usefulness among them,
died in peace December 9th, 1878.

The Penhurst Registers are well kept, and contain many interesting entries; they are continuous from 1559 until now. Horsfield, who says these Registers date from 1692, is in error, and Lower, following him, makes the same mistake.¹⁴ On the fly-leaf may be found a complete list of Rectors from early days; and there are several memoranda which will repay perusal; among others a list of collections, after briefs, with their objects. Extracts will be found subjoined. We only note here that with reference to the mention by Horsfield of a bequest of £10 made by Mr. John Giles, patron, to employ the poor, the present Rector has had the opportunity of tracing its application until April 3rd, 1796, when it was last recorded in an account book, furnished by Mr. Ashby, C.B., of Ninfield. The following was the last entry, and the Charity Commissioners now pronounce the legacy irrecoverable :—

1796. Jany 11.
Rec^d. of the Earl of Ashburnham due Michs : last for
Mr. Giles's Annuity £2 0 0

The list of Rectors is very complete, and appears to have been compiled by Mr. Richard Thornton, after whose resignation successive incumbents have sometimes written their own names, the particulars of their relinquishment of the benefice being added after their death or departure.

It occurs on the last page of the register, which begins in 1692, and is as follows :—

¹⁴ "History of Sussex," Vol. I., 561.

SUSSEX.

The Names of the Rectors of Penhurst since the Reformation and the use of Registers.

Mr. James Wilkes Rector buried 1585 on February the 4th.

Mr. John Stile succeeded him and was buried August the 21st 1618 continuing Rector upwards of 44 yeares.

Mr. Nathaniel Goodaker succeeded him in 1618 and *lost it* in 1646—continuing Rector about 28 years.

Mr Bushnell sometime Rector he went to Nenfield.

Mr. Francis Allfray about a year or two he was buried february 1652.

Mr. Thomas Smith succeeded him in 1652 and was buried May 1660.

Mr. John Bowyer succeeded and continued Rector from the 14th of May 1661 to the 11th February 1662 and then was inducted into Nenfield being about a year and three quarters.

Mr. Thomas Adam succeeded Mr. Bowyer who was inducted Augt. 1 1663 and buried October 15th 1667.

Mr. John Hamond succeeded and was inducted about May 5th 1667 and resigned it for Catsfield in March 1677.

Mr. John Bowyer holding his Living of Nindfield was inducted the 2nd tyme Rector of Penhurst Aprill the 4th 1678 and was buried October the 28th 1681.

Mr. John Mason succeeded him and was inducted December the 19th 1681 and resigned it in January 1689.

Mr. Richard Thorneton succeeded him and was inducted on the 29th day of May Anno Dni 1690 and resigned it for Dallington in June 1707.

Mr. Edward Stapely succeeded him and was inducted on the 6 day of August 1707 he being that day 30 years old.

Mr. John Sorsbie succeeded him and was inducted on the 13th day of April 1721.

Mr. Joseph Wise succeeded him and was inducted on the 2nd December 1764. He died Dec. 7th 1810 aged 74.

William Trivett succeeded Mr. Joseph Wise.

The Revd. Edward Warneford succeeded the Revd. Wm. Trivett in 1830.

The Revd. E. Warneford died January 15 1840 and was succeeded by Revd. John Read Munn Jany. 1840 who (memento mori J. R. M. Sepr. 1840) died 9 Decr. 1878 and was succeeded by

The Revd. Rose Fuller Whistler, who was inducted 31 May 1879.

Mr. John Mason left the following entry in the old Register Book, in his own handwriting :—

Joannes Mason Richardi Mason de Leicestrîa Collegii Jesu Apud Cantabrigiensa Socii Medicinæ Doctoris et Emmæ, Joanni Oneby Armigeri et Juris Consult : filiæ natus primogenitus, Scholâ Etonensi educatus, aulæ Clarensii in Academia Cantabrigiensi Alumnus, in Artibus Baccalaureus Ecclesiam Parochialem de Thurby et Staughton in Comitatu Leicestrîæ Curatus Gulielmi Boothby de Ashbourn agro Der-

biensi Baronetti a sacrâ domestica Ecclesiam de Grindon in Comitatu Staffordiæ, de Kinnersley in agro Salopiensi Sandridge in Comitatu Hartfordiensi, de Brastead in agro Cantiano, de Herstmonceux in Comitatu Sussexiæ Curatus, demum ad Ecclesiam hanc de Penhurst juxta Battel per Honorabilem virum Johannem Ashburnham de Ashburnham Armigerum præsentatus, a Reverendo in Christo patre Guidone Domino Episcopo Cicestrensi ultimo die novembri Institutus, per reverendum Amicum Joannem Eldred Ecclesiæ parochiali de Watlington juxta Battel Rectorem inductus, undevicesimo die Decembris ultimo præterito Anno Domini millesimo sexcentissimo octogesimo primo.

JOANNES MASON.

This laborious record (anticipating the modern Crockford) mentions two well-known names, those of John Ashburnham, the grandson of the Cavalier and the first Baron Ashburnham, and of Eldred, of Watlington, presumably a lineal descendant of the Saxon Thane, whose possessions in this district are mentioned in the Domesday Survey.¹⁵

The Revd. Richd. Thorneton has also left a memorandum, dated May 1, 1708 :—

Memdm :

That the Barn belonging to the Parsonage of Penhurst and which was blown down in Mr. Hammond's time was new built in 1702 by Ri Thornton Rr. and the Parsonage House then repaired.

This little Rectory is, indeed, a type of that which Goldsmith describes; and of the early Rectors who probably resided there perhaps Mr. Joseph Wise as nearly resembles the Vicar of Auburn, as any who can be found. Here in this little low-roofed thatched cottage, standing absolutely alone in the midst of the glebe, and

¹⁵ The possessions of Eldred, one of the fifteen large landowners in Sussex at the time of the Domesday Survey, are thus described :—

“Page xxviii. Sudsexe.

“Terra Odonis et Eldred. In Esborne (Ashburnham) hundrede Aldred tenet de Rege Epinges.

“Oualet tenuit de Rege E. Tunc et modo se defendebat pro iiii hidis. Terra est iii carucarum. In dominio est una caruca et viii villani et ii bordarii cum ii caruca. Ibi v servi et unus molinus de iiii solidis et iiiiior denarii et iii acra prati.

“Silva de xx porcis et quadraria de ix solidis et iiii denariis. Una haga de xxti denariis De Circet. xl denariis.

“T.R.E. et modo iiii labras. Cum recepit iiii libras.”

The only descendants of this Saxon Thane who appear to be still traceable in the district are the members of the very ancient local family of Watts, of Battle, who trace through Relfe of Ashburnham, and Longley of Hooe, to the last survivors of the Eldreds, who for many generations lived at Hooe.

surrounded by lovely woods overlooking then the series of mill ponds which supplied the furnace, we may picture to ourselves the good old man occupying the learned leisure of his declining days in the studies which he loved. "The date of his death," says Horsfield, "is unknown."¹⁶ He was living out of the world, and ended his studious days, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," only recorded in that register, where of predecessors and successors alike, it is written "and he died." But he had a history, nevertheless, since from the following extract from Hutchinson's "History of Cumberland," quoted by Horsfield, we learn:—

He was the son of a respectable yeoman of Holm Culham in Cumberland. After a common-school education he was articled to two eminent attorneys successively; but not liking the dull drudgery of that profession he went to London in full confidence that his talents, which were of no mean order, would be appreciated and rewarded there; but he was mistaken, and after a variety of adventures found himself in the humble occupation of usher in an academy. While in this situation he wrote many pieces for the booksellers and several small articles for the "Westminster Journal;" also a preface and notes for a Bible which was to have been printed in numbers. About 1759 he entered into Orders, and marrying soon after a relation of Bishop Law, of Carlisle, he obtained through him the small living of Penhurst, in Sussex. This is all the preferment he ever enjoyed, and the pittance it produced was barely sufficient for the maintenance of nine children. In 1775 he published a vol. of poems by subscription. He also published "An ode on the Marriage of George III. and Queen;" "The Coronation of King David;" "Providence," a poem, 1769; "An Exposition of the Apocalypse;" "An Essay on Sacrifice;" "Strictures on the Prophecies;" "An Essay on Moral Nature and Decay;" "Nadir," a tragedy;" and "The System," an Ethic poem, with Notes, in five books.

Let us hope these labours were fairly remunerative. The value of his benefice was barely a hundred a year!

The Penhurst Registers are unusually perfect, and contain very full entries of much interest. From 20th February, 1559, to 13th January, 1613, they appear to have been as usual compilations from some earlier source; the handwriting is the same throughout, and the same order of entry is observed. Henceforward the successive Rectors may be traced in the changes of style.

¹⁶ "History of Sussex," Vol. I., 562. Horsfield should have consulted the Registers.

There is a gap from 1648 to 1651, but with that exception the record is continuous.

As usual, the perusal of them reveals marks of various epochs in history; we also find local names lingering in spots where we should expect to find them, accompanied by chance allusions which throw light upon local history in those earlier days. For instance:—

1638. Richard Osborne } were married the nineteenth day of
Dorothy Vinton } April.

In the “Domesday Book in Relation to Sussex,” page 5, we read:—

The Earl of Eu holds Francewelle & 6 knights hold it of him . . . of this land . . . Osbern (holds) 2 rods . . . So also, in Penhurst which Osbern holds of the Earl of Eu. . . ¹⁷

Was this Osborne a descendant of that historic personage?

1640. Elizabeth Elfick widdw y^e mother of John Atkin Senior was buried 19 July.

Was this the widow of an Elphick who would be of a family mentioned also in Domesday? ¹⁷

1652. February 3. Francis Allfray Rector buried.

1653. John Giles Clerk and Mrs. Joan Allfray married March y^e 5th.

1654. Novr. 8 John Giles Clerke Patron of Penhurst, Peasmarsh and Nenfield was buried who died Novr. 5 1654.

1655. July 30. Colonell John Busbridge and Mrs. Joan Giles married.

This good dame, married twice at short intervals, is thus associated with three well-known Sussex individuals—Allfray,¹⁸ Giles, and Busbridge¹⁹—either of whom, his position considered, might be instanced to disprove Lord Macaulay’s erroneous description of the status of the country clergy in Stuart days, for each left his mark by which he may still be identified as a person of some importance.

1663. John, son of John Peen and Sara his wife, bap.

¹⁷ Sussex Domesday Book, IV., 6, 33.

¹⁸ Vide “S. A. C.,” XI., 226; XXI., 140; XXIV., 278.

¹⁹ Vide “S. A. C.,” XV., 292; XIX., 92; XXV., 186.

Here is one of the many instances in which the name survives in the property, Peen's Wood and Peen's Farm being now well known portions of the Ashburnham Estate.

1624. Thomas y^e sonne of Thomas Kidder bap. octr. 17.

The name does not elsewhere appear in the Register. Can we trace here a connection of Bishop Kidder, of Bath and Wells, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who with his wife was killed in his Palace by the fall of a chimney stack while asleep in bed in 1703.²⁰

Of curious surnames we have our share, *e.g.*, Crutchman, Sweteman, Crackbone, Gringo, Summoner, Furminger, Markquick; and in Christian names we can show the working of Puritan leaven, which prevails to this day, in the descendants of those who bore them. We have—Zealous Harmer, God's Blessing Bell, Repentance Wenall, Patience Goodman.

Many notices of Burials in woollen are duly entered and certified.

There is one marriage in which the Justices took part, but the entry does not show that they actually officiated —

Seen & allowed

N. PELHAM
J. H. FREWEN

Married Georg Soan of Penhurst
and Mary Sargeant of Penhurst
June y^e 10. 1684.

The scattered notices of briefs have been collected into one page, where they are tabulated with a statement of their several objects and the amount of the resulting collections.

They begin in 1691 with —

A collection for East Smithfield in Middlesex ... 0 2 6

And end on Oct. 17th, 1725 —

Collected for Darlastone Church in Co. Stafford ... 0 0 3

²⁰ From the Index Book, Diocesan Registry, Wells, "Bishop Kidder dyed in the night between the 29th & 30th Novr: 1703. He and his wife were killed by the fall of a stack of chimneys blown down in the hurricane which beat down all before it into the hall."

They were issued at irregular intervals, and for very various objects. In 1691 there were five such collections; a like number in 1692; no less than seven in 1693; five in 1694; three in 1695; one in 1699; then there is a gap until 1725, when there were three; and afterwards no more.

The result of these appeals in so small a parish was necessarily inconsiderable. On one occasion only does the response appear to have been hearty, viz., in 1699 —

Collected for y^e Vaudois and French Refugees 0 17 0

a large sum in those days from so poor a place, and an evident token of the sympathy which was generally felt for our persecuted co-religionists, and an earnest of the welcome they were to receive in the land of their adoption.

An allusion to "Town Creep" will exhaust our subject.

There is a large and beautiful wood called Creep Wood, sloping southward and overlooking the valley of the tiny river Ashburn. Half-way down the slope, upon an independent hillock, there is a space of some two acres, whereon are to be found scattered building materials. The plateau upon which these stones lie has always been spoken of as the ancient abode of a people who were driven from their home by invaders at a time anterior to the Norman Conquest; and from this traditional cluster of buildings, the whole wood has been named "Town Creep."

From time to time desultory diggings have been made, but there does not appear ever to have been any systematic examination of the spot. Certainly the tradition with respect to this locality appears to have been continuous and constant, while the position of the "Town" is one that might have been selected for a Roman outpost, commanding as it does the greater part of the valley which leads from it towards Anderida (*Pevensay*).