

# WESTALL'S BOOK OF PANNINGRIDGE.

BY ERNEST STRAKER.

THE Historical Manuscripts Commission published in their 77th Report a description of manuscripts of Lord de Lisle and Dudley preserved at Penshurst. Among these are a good many summaries of the accounts of the ironworks at Robertsbridge and Panningridge, but the editor, Mr. C. L. Kingsford, F.B.A., mentions that several, including the subject of the present paper,<sup>1</sup> have been lost. Some extracts from it appear in Thorpe's catalogue of the Battle Abbey Charters, 1835. It is, however, still in existence in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, U.S.A., and by the courtesy of Dr. Farrand, Director of research there, I have been able to secure a photostat copy.

The blast furnace had only been introduced into this country about the year 1500, and this is the earliest detailed account extant. It contains the complete expenditure for the calendar year 1546, the last year of the reign of Henry VIII.

After the surrender of Robertsbridge Abbey in 1538, the lands were granted to Sir William Sidney and Agnes his wife in April, 1539, and by a corrected grant, in July, 1541.<sup>2</sup> The monks had taken no advantage of their potential mineral wealth, but Sir William immediately set about establishing ironworks. Sir John Horrocke, priest, vicar of Salehurst, as agent for the Sidneys, erected a forge and a furnace at Robertsbridge in 1541, and in the following year "edyfyed a fornace at Panningridge, made yn the

<sup>1</sup> P. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, Vol. XIV., i., 906, and Vol. XVI., 1056 (77).

xxxiiij yere of King Harry the VIII." In all probability the reason for building it on leased land, some seven miles away, was to reserve the woods near Robertsbridge for the supply of the forge. Panningridge was near Ashburnham, in the immediate vicinity of a large extent of woodland. By 1546 the furnace was well established, Henry Westall, being "clerk of the ironworks to Sir William Sydney, at his manor of Robertsbridge," probably made up this book as a fair copy of rougher memoranda; it is very neatly written with the operations classified. A few errors, apparently due to mis-copying, confirm this supposition.

The book consists of 39 pages, 12½ in. by 8 in., five of which are blank, and has for its title:

Westalles booke of Pannyngridge p a <sup>o</sup> R.R. H.VIII.	}	38 <sup>o</sup>
---	---	-----------------

and commences with 150 entries for woodcutting in this form:

Woodcutters. Pd to John Price for xl cordes of wood .. x<sup>s</sup>  
each page being totalled, with a grand total at end.

This work was done in the early months of the year up to April, and resumed in December. No less than 53 names are given, some of these men appear in other capacities later, but the majority seem to have been casual workers. They were paid at the uniform rate of 3d. per cord, except for "old nuts" charged at 4d.

The colliers were only two in number, and worked throughout the year.

Collears xxv die Februarii	pd to Duggyn in full cōtentatiō and payment for the colyng of xxxix lodes of coles at xxij <sup>d</sup> the lode iii <sup>l</sup> xi <sup>s</sup> vi <sup>d</sup> whereof he recevid in cordes of wood iiii <sup>xx</sup> xiiij the whiche do amounte unto in mones xxiiij <sup>s</sup> vi <sup>d</sup> and so pd unto hym in readye mones	}	xlviij <sup>s</sup>
-------------------------------	---	---	---------------------

This shows the ingenious method of checking the woodcutters' charges. The rates are uniform.

Except for one item, the whole of the carrying of coles was done by one man, the rates per load being from Panningridge 4d., Olyvers Wood  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. and Asilden 6d.

These names still exist, Haselden being the more distant.

The next pages show the miners:

Myners	pd unto Adryan in full cōtentiō	} liiis id di
xvi die M'tii	and payment for the diggyng of	
	iiij <sup>xx</sup> v lodes of moyne at vii <sup>d</sup> di	
	the loode	

Of the seven miners employed, four we know to be Frenchmen, and the other three, including "Black Johns," have foreign-sounding names.

The carrying of mine to the furnace was done by one man at  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per load, fifteen bushels to the load.

We now come to the work at the furnace, by two men paid by the founday, i.e. period of six days, at the rate of 8s. for the founder and 6s. for the filler.

ffoundre and the filler	Pd unto Warnett the ffoundre for iiij ffoundes and ij dayes ended the same daye	} xxxiiij <sup>s</sup> viij <sup>d</sup>
xx o Januarii		
	Pd unto the filler for the same iiij ffoundes and ij dayes ended ut sup <sup>a</sup>	} xxvj <sup>s</sup>

The total of the foundays is 52 and half a day. This is a very exceptional number, although slightly less than in 1545 and 1547. Perhaps in these years the furnace was worked on Sundays and holy days, and the supply of water was good. The usual number of foundays for a Sussex furnace was from 30 to 40 per annum only.

There follow here several items for repair of the furnace:

New charge or Repacons.	Pd to Charles for the making of a harthe and the newe dressing of his belowes for his blowing ending the v.th of Februarii	} iiij <sup>s</sup>
	Pd to the filler for the breking up of the same harthe	
		} xii <sup>d</sup>

It is interesting to note that this "Charles" was a Buxted man—there is another entry in the "fforen chargis" later on:

Pd unto a man for his labor in goyng to Boksted to speke unto Charles my m <sup>r</sup> foundre	} iiij <sup>d</sup>
--	---------------------

Evidently the skill of the Buxted founders at that time was well recognised.

The carrying of the sows to Robertsbridge was done by seven contractors at 1s. 4d. per load of two sows, and was a costly item.

The Abbot of Robertsbridge, no doubt foreseeing coming events, had, not long before the Dissolution, granted many leases to various tenants, who probably paid fines to secure them.

One of these, Laurence Derby, was among the sow carriers, and from another, William Spicer, "certeyn oke" was bought to the value of £4 13s. 4d. He was the tenant of Rounden Wood, paying a rent of four loads of lime, showing that the outcrop of Purbeck limestone there was utilised at that period.

The sows had to pass over private land at some points.

Paymente for the libtye of divers mennys grounde for the carrying of my M <sup>r</sup> sowes	Imprimis pd unto Thomas Hawkyne for the libtye of his grounde for the carrying of my M <sup>r</sup> sowes	} ix <sup>s</sup> iiij <sup>d</sup>
---	--	-------------------------------------

The rents and tithe were as follows, paid half-yearly:

ferme and annuyte	Pd unto Mr Chaunceler for the di yeres ferme of his woode at Pannyngrige	} x <sup>li</sup>
	Pd unto the p <sup>son</sup> of Penhurst for the di yeres ferme of the phurnes ponde there due ut sup <sup>a</sup>	} x <sup>s</sup>
	Pd more unto hym for the di yeres tythe of the phurnes there due ut sup <sup>a</sup>	} ii <sup>s</sup> vj <sup>d</sup>

There are a number of items under the heading of "Reparations," repairs, wey butter and grease, making



to mention for your information that I have  
been to the office of the  
residents and to the office for a copy of the  
plan for a water supply  
for the office of the  
~~the office~~

Sir I am very glad to hear

of the success of the  
work

1 Mine carrier.	1253 loads at 1¼d. to 1½d. (15 bushels by the load)	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
		6 17 4¼	
	<i>Total ore</i>		55 13 3¼
2 Furnace-men.	52½ foundays at 14/-	36 9 2	
Furnace repair		1 9 4	
	<i>Total at furnace</i>		37 18 6
7 Sow carriers.	287 loads at 1/4d. =574 sows		19 2 8
	Rent, tithe and wayleaves		21 19 0
	Spicer, for oak		4 13 4
	Making colehouse		9 8 5½
	Repairs and sundries		2 17 11
			<hr/>
			£297 1 6¼
			<hr/> <hr/>

This total agrees with the summary at Penshurst.

At the end of the book are two pages, crossed through, showing sales of produce, sold in many cases to the workmen. Apples and pears bulk largely. The monks had evidently discovered the suitability of the soil for fruit growing, and left behind them well-stocked orchards. The Abbey lands to-day are a sea of apple trees.

The sales of "lent whet," i.e. spring-sown corn, show a curious discrimination against the Frenchmen; they are charged 3s. per bushel, while the Englishmen only pay 1s. 1d. or 1s. 2d. Thorold Rogers gives the market price at Cambridge for that year as 1s. 0½d. For "monge corn," i.e. mixed corn, and "ot malt," however, no difference was made. We can trace several of the men named in the accounts as being Frenchmen, and others with foreign-looking names may have been of French origin, but English-born subjects.

It is well known that French workmen were brought over to start the Sussex ironworks, and this district had its full share before these particular works were established. In the Muster Rolls of 1539, Netherfield Hundred, which consisted of the parishes of Brightling,

Mountfield, Netherfield and Penhurst (in which latter Panningridge is situated) returned only 82 men capable of bearing arms,<sup>3</sup> and probably in excuse for the paucity of the number added the unusual note, "there be 49 Frenchmen inhabiting in the boroughs and towns aforesaid." Five of the Panningridge men were among those granted letters of denisation<sup>4</sup> in 1544, when war with France was imminent, viz.:

Robert Dows or Douce, born at Hounwell in the county of Beauface, came in 1515, his wife also French. (Woodcutter and miner.)

Adrian Hatto, from Normandy, came in 1527. (Woodcutter and finer at Robertsbridge.)

John Margo or Margoyte, from Normandy, came in 1528. (Woodcutter, searcher for mine and miner.)

John Philpot, France. (Woodcutter and miner.)

John Reve, France. (Sow carrier.)

And at Robertsbridge:

Gefferey Totayn, Normandy, with an English wife, came 1536. (Collier.)

Germanus Mitell. (Cole carrier.)

Westall seems to have advanced the denisation fees in 1544, as part were repaid to him.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XIV., i., p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> *Hugenot Society Publications*, Vol. VIII.