

On Earthworks at Mileham.

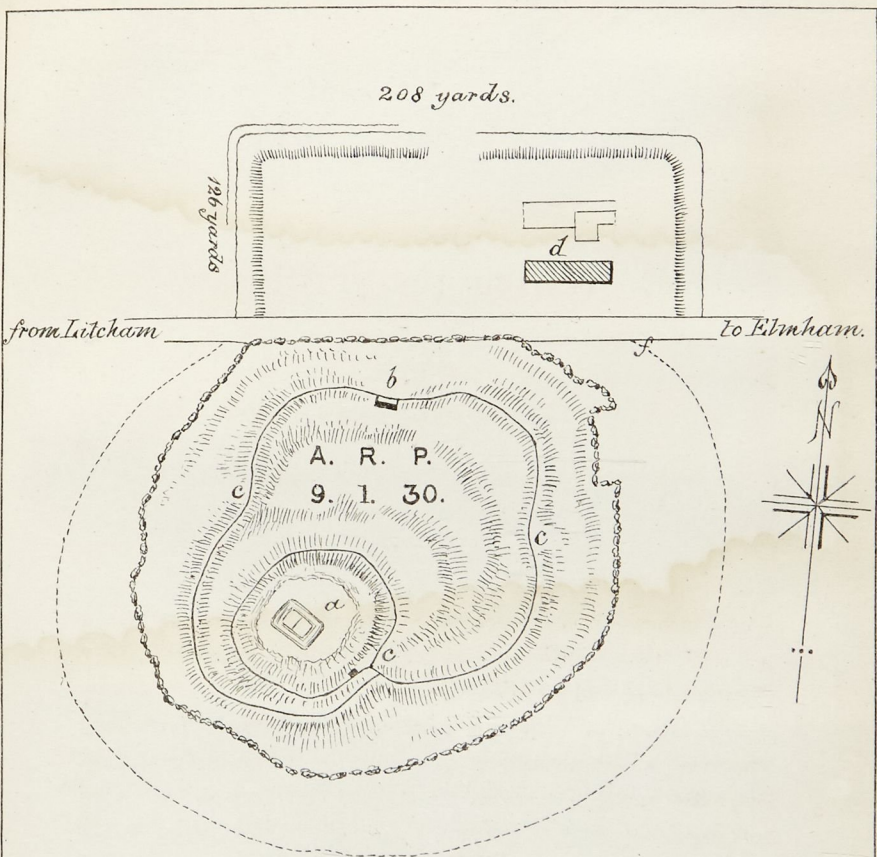
READ BY

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AT A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY AT MILEHAM IN 1871.

HERE is not much to be seen, but what there is is calculated to invite the attention of the inquirer into the early history of this island and its inhabitants.

This is one of those pre-historic mounds, with horseshoe outworks, which abound in this and the adjoining counties. By what race of men and at what era raised we have nothing but theory to guide us. I believe it may be safely said that they are earlier than the Roman occupation of the island, because the Romans have in some instances taken possession of them, as may be seen by the rectangular additions made to them. It is well known that the Roman encampments were rectangular; the British, circular. Now, in this case we have not only a circular mound, protected by horseshoe-shaped earthworks, but there are indications of straight embankments as well. We may therefore draw the conclusion that the Romans, finding these Celtic works convenient for their purposes,—possibly to keep up their communications, for there are traces of their occupation, at Castleacre on one side, and at Elmham on



- a. Mound and remains of Keep.*
- b. Fragment of wall, probably site of Barbican.*
- c. Modern drains.*
- d. Farmhouse.*

PLAN of EARTHWORKS,
at MILEHAM

the other,—occupied and strengthened them by the addition of embankments in their own mode of construction, which are still to be traced on the other or north side of the road, and, I fancy, to the east. Not far south of this mound there was, not many years since, a line of earthwork, a vallum and fosse, laid down on the Ordnance Map as the “Devil’s Dyke,” but described in old records as *quoddam magnum et antiquum fossatum vocatum Laundicke*, from which the hundred derived its name.¹ I take it these works must have had some connection with each other. A few years ago there was a find of bronze celts in Longham, not far from the Dyke.

The fact of Roman occupation is evidence that this mound and banks were not constructed by the Saxons; indeed, they do not appear to have been raisers of these sort of works, although they doubtless made use of them for the purposes of defence, by erecting stockades of timber; neither are they supposed to have constructed any buildings of stone before the intercourse of the Normans with the island in the time of the Confessor. The Normans were great castle builders; and, after the Conquest, when the estates of the dispossessed Saxon nobility were given by the Conqueror to his followers, they generally availed themselves of these mounds, and erected castles upon them. These castles were of two types. They were either strong square keeps, like those of Norwich and Rising, or a shell encircling the top of the mound, as at Castleacre.

At the time of the Conquest this and the adjoining parishes were the possessions of Archbishop Stigand (who was also Bishop of Elmham), and were his private estate. On his disgrace they were seized by the Conqueror, and at the time of the Domesday Survey were in the king’s

¹ *Launde*, “a plain among trees”—“a parke, a huntynge place”—“a wild untilled shrubbie or bushy plaine.”—*Promptorium Parvulorum*, note s. v. *Dyke*, a bank.

own hands, under the charge of William de Noiers or Nowers. King Henry I. granted them to Alan son of Flaald. I cannot tell you the date, but it was about 1100; and either he or William Fitz Alan, his son, probably raised this castle, for the purpose of protecting his newly-acquired territory, or overawing the Saxon population. Blomefield speaks of it as being of an oval form; but he means the entire area, which he describes as "containing about twelve or thirteen acres, surrounded by two deep ditches or trenches, and in the south part was the keep, with another ditch, where are ruins of walls that crossed the ditch, and the north part was the barbican," and the entrance to have been on the west side.

From a small ground plan and elevation in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1819, it appears that the form of the keep was square. It must have been dismantled at a very early period, for there is no mention of a castle in the records relating to the manor or its possessors. It does not seem to have become the residence of the Fitz Alans, for after John Fitz Alan married the heiress of Albini, temp. Hen. III., they had the castle of Arundel in Sussex.² Mileham continued in the Fitz Alan family until 1559, when the then Earl of Arundel sold it to Sir Thomas Gresham, after whose death it was sold to Sir Thomas Cecil, and by his son exchanged with the Barnwells for an estate in Northamptonshire; and in the Barnwell family Mileham Castle remains at this day, although in a distinct branch from the manor of Mileham and Beeston.

The Lordship of the Hundred of Launditch accompanied this manor until the sale to Gresham, when it was excepted. During the ownership of the Fitz Alans their territorial possessions were several times forfeited to the Crown, by

² Mary, widow of William, Baron Fitz Alan, who died seized in 1215, had Mileham in dower, and I find her called in one record Mary de Melham, which looks as if she did reside here.

the attainder of the earls, and granted to others; but in the course of time restored. In none of these grants, as I have previously remarked, is there any mention of a *castle*. These banks and ditches are described in the title-deeds as the "Hall yards."

The road from Norwich to Lynn is cut through the northern portion of the embankment, and the land on the other side now belongs to the Coke family, but is copyhold of the manor of Mileham. The farm-house opposite is shewn as the birth-place of Sir Edward Coke, but is a modern erection, the manor house of the Cokes was in the wood beyond, called Burgh Wood, where the moat is still to be seen.

I have delayed the delivery of the foregoing paper to our printing committee, considering that it would be unintelligible to a reader, and fail in its purpose, in the absence of a Plan. After many disappointments, I have succeeded in obtaining that given on the opposite page, but I have not had an opportunity of testing its accuracy by personal inspection on the spot. I know that, owing to the carting away of the banks in some places, and the cutting of drains, the surveyor has found a difficulty in laying down the irregular horseshoe-formed entrenchments with perfect accuracy. Of the rectangular work the remaining traces are slight but quite distinguishable. Their extent from east to west is 208 yards, from the north-west angle to the road 126 yards. The plan, referred to as given in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1819, Part ii. p. 513, shews an extensive fosse, which, proceeding from the point *f*, in the present plan, encircled the whole of the works, south of the road, but it is not visible now. See dotted line.

About 230 yards to the north of the north-east angle of

the Roman work I am told there is a pit or basin called "Our Lady's Pit." I have not seen it myself, but it is described to me as a complete bowl, about 22 feet in diameter.

On some Customs in the Manor of Mileham and Beeston.

It may not be considered impertinent to a description of the ancient castle and head of the Honour of Mileham, to notice here some peculiar manorial customs, derived from a *Custumariam*, in Latin, which, although written in 1616, was evidently copied from one of much earlier date, when Richard, son of John Fitz-Alan, was Earl of Arundel and Lord of this Honour, 1272—1301. Such customs tend to exemplify the social condition and usages of "long ago."

There was in every manor an officer called by the English name of *Heyward*. This word has two significations; one, the common herd-ward of a town or village, who overlooked the common herd; the other, the heyward of the lord of the manor, who was regularly sworn in at the court, took care of the tillage, paid the labourers, and looked after trespassers and encroachments.¹ It is the latter official, in the *Customary* called *Messor*, in an English translation *Heyward*, I now treat of.

There were in this manor two Messors, one for Mileham, one for Beeston, whose duty was to collect the rents of assize and attend the courts; and on each court day were to dine with the steward, or receive from the lord three-

¹ Bishop Kennet's *Glossarial Collections*, referred to in *Promptorium Parvulorum*.

Heyward, agellarius, abigeus, messor.—*Ib.* s. v.

Refare, hervystman, messor.—*Ib.* s. v.

pence, viz., one penny and a halfpenny each,—the price of a good dinner at that time. They were chosen at the Lete by the homage, but by the custom of the manor the choice was to be made from the tenants of the greatest ability and knowledge,—*qui optime possunt et sciunt*,—without regard to quantity of tenure, but only to the person, being always a tenant, and never by rotation of the tenements, as in most other manors; and the rent of the messor *pro tem.* was remitted in consideration of his service.

The messor of Mileham was to overlook the mowers of the lord's hay and the spreading it out, and help to make it, and for so doing was entitled to as much hay as on the foot of each haymaker² could be inclosed within a hayband of the length of one ell and the half of a quarter of an ell. He was also to overlook the reapers of the lord's corn in harvest, and always to sit at table with the lord's bailiff at dinner, and have for his wages two shillings; and he was to have all the herbage within the lord's growing corn in summer time, in the ways, fences,³ pits, and ditches.

The customary fine payable on a surrender by a copyhold tenant was only one ploughshare, and the same was given upon every admission to a copyhold estate; but whenever a surrender was made upon a sale, the person nearest in blood to the surrenderor in hereditary descent was entitled to the pre-emption, and on payment of the purchase-money and fulfilling the conditions of the agreement between the vendor and intended purchaser, to be admitted to the tenement; and if he had not notice of the proposed alienation before the court, he was to have time until the next court given him for payment.

² *Tantum feni in pede cujustibet tassatoris.* *Tassator* appears to mean one who tossed hay upon the cock, or pitched it on the stack.

³ The word is *divisis*,—probably the mire-balks or grass ridges dividing lands in the common field.

Copyhold tenants having daughters dwelling with them, were not allowed to marry them out of the manor, without the lord's leave, or making redemption; and if any tenant would take a wife out of the manor, he must have license from the bailiff. Rather hard this!

If the heir of a deceased tenant was a minor, he was to be placed in charge of the next of kin of the deceased, who was not in the line of heirship. The reason of the exclusion is obvious.

These appear to be the only customs worthy of notice. Respecting the fine: those of our members who were with me in Beeston church in 1871, will remember the *plough-share* painted upon a boss in the roof over the entrance, and may read in Blomefield that it was formerly accompanied by a quatrain,—“This share doth shew the manor fine,” &c.; which was concluded by “Lord Barnwell, see thou keep it:” and the same implement carved in one of the spandrils on a panel of that exquisite screen.

G. A. C.