

PAPER ON THE ENTRENCHMENT IN BULSTRODE PARK.

BY THE REV. BRYANT BURGESS.

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WE are assembled in a very ancient park of some eight hundred acres, of which it has been said that not an acre is level ground ; but this is not true of the space within the entrenchment. Sir Bernard Burke says :—“ It was a park in the Saxon era ; the same park now ; aye, and one of the most beautiful in the kingdom ;” but the ground on which we stand takes us back, or at least makes us think, of earlier times still. This oval entrenchment contains as much as twenty or twenty-one acres, and whenever it was made, it must have been a work of great labour, energetically done, for a fixed purpose. It has been called a Roman camp, but I think the Bucks Archæological Society will not consider it so ; nor again a Danish camp, except that it probably belongs to the era of their incursions. It reminds us of the earthworks at Cholesbury and Maidenbower, near Dunstable, and also of those at Whelpley Hill, Hawridge, and Desborough. In viewing that remarkable spot last year we had the benefit of Mr. Downs’s views as to the period and object of its construction, and I think they may help us to something more than a conjecture as to the camp before us. It is on record that in January, 1010, the Danes left London and passed through Chiltern to Oxford, and if, as has been supposed, the fortification

of Desborough was made by the Saxons in its present form to resist an attack by the invaders as they passed along the road below, the position of this camp at Bulstrode more than suggests that it had a like origin, situated on the high tableland, so near the way from London. Whether or not there may have been a stockaded British village on the same site, it is impossible to say; but it must strike one as agreeing with the well-known description of Cæsar's suggested by the camp of Cassivelaunus, with its large number of men and cattle within the enclosure (De Bello Gallico, v. 17)—*Oppidum Britanni vocant, quum silvas impeditas vallo atque fossa munierunt, quo incursionis hostium vitandæ causa convenire consueverunt.* The vallum appears to have crumbled away very much on the western side. The oaks, standing high in air upon their arched roots, show that the ground was higher in their young days. There appear to have been six entrances. A portion of flint wall, apparently part of a gateway, remains at the northern entrance. The name of Bulstrode is said to have had its origin in a very remarkable circumstance, of which the history is given by Sir Bernard Burke, in his "Vicissitudes of Families." The original name of the Bulstrode family was Shobbington, and this their chief seat was in the family for several ages before the arrival of the Normans. The Norman Conqueror, however, granted the estate to one of his nobles; but the head of the Shobbingtons resolved rather to die upon the spot than part with his possessions. In this resolution he armed his servants and tenants, whose number was very considerable, upon which the Norman lord obtained of the King one thousand of his regular troops to enable him to take possession of the estate by force. Whereupon Shobbington applied to his relations and friends to assist him, and the two ancient families of the Hampdens and Penns, illustrious in the annals not only of Bucks, but of England and America, took arms, together with their servants and tenants, and came to his relief. All the Shobbington party having assembled, they cast up entrenchments, and the Norman, with his forces, encamped before them. Now, whether it was that the Saxons wanted horses or not is uncertain, but the story goes that having maneged a number of bulls, they

mounted them, and, sallying out in the night, surprised the Normans in their camp, killed many of them, and put the rest to flight. The King, having intelligence of this, and not thinking it safe for him, while his power was yet new and unsettled, to drive a daring and obstinate people to despair, sent a herald to them to know what they would have, and promised Shobbington a safe conduct if he would come to Court, which Shobbington accordingly did, riding thither on a bull, accompanied by his seven sons. Being introduced into the Royal presence, the King asked him why he dared to resist when the rest of the kingdom had submitted to his government. Shobbington answered that he and his ancestors had long enjoyed that estate, and that if he would permit him to keep it he would become his subject and be faithful to him. The King therefore granted him the free enjoyment of his estate, upon which the family was from thence called Shobbington, *alias* Bulstrode. But in process of time the first name was discontinued, and that of Bulstrode only has remained to them." Sir B. Burke adds, "The earthworks in the park are said to be the remains of the entrenchments thrown up by Shobbington." Had they existed previously, no doubt they would have been utilized at such a time, and if the Shobbingtons had been equally plucky sixty years before, it is highly probable that they would have resisted the Danes, and Sweyn, passing on his way to Oxford, and having been successful against Danish invaders, they would have been encouraged, by the prestige of their family, to hold their own against their Norman foes. The manor of Bulstrode was in possession of the Abbey of Burnham, founded in 1265 by Richard Earl of Cornwall, King of the Romans. The Abbey had license to alienate it to William de Montacute, Earl of Sarum, who in 1338 gave it to the Abbey of Bisham, but after the Reformation the Bulstrodes were in full possession again. Their names, with those of their relatives the Whitelocks of Fawley Court, appear in the history of the times of Charles I., the Commonwealth, and Charles II. Sir James Whitelock, who married Elizabeth Bulstrode, was an eminent judge, and father of Lord Keeper Whitelock. Sir Richard Bulstrode, a learned lawyer and author, a brave soldier and good man, followed the fortunes of the Stuarts through good

and evil report. When nearly eighty years of age he accompanied James II. to France, and died at the Court of St. Germain's shortly after he had completed his hundred and first year. The manor was bought by the infamous Judge Jefferys, of Sir Roger Hill, M.P. for Wendover. He was Chief Justice—a sad misnomer—of Chester. In the patent of his baronetcy, dated 1681, he is called Sir George Jefferys of Bulstrode. He built a mansion here in 1686 of reddish brick, "blood-stained, as the people declared it to be in Jefferys' time." This was burnt, it appears, and he then removed to the Grange at Chalfont St. Peter's. The property was sold by the son-in-law of Lord Jefferys to the Earl of Portland, who had had the chief superintendence of the expedition which placed William III. on the throne. The King visited him at Bulstrode. Brasses of the Bulstrode family still exist in Upton Church, and in Hedgerly Church is a very curious Palimpsest brass of Mrs. Margaret Bulstrode, who died in 1540. The marriage register contains the following entry — "William, the son of Sir Thomas Stringer, and Margaret, the daughter of George Lord Jeffery, Baron of Wem, and Lord High Chancellor of England, married by my Lord Bishop of Rochester, Oct. 15th, 1687. Henry Paisley, rector." The second Earl of Portland was raised to the dukedom by George I. in 1716. The third duke married in 1734 Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, only daughter and heir of Edward Earl of Oxford and Mortimer. She collected a famous museum at Bulstrode, and was the owner of the well-known Portland Vase. The collection was sold after her death in 1785. Mrs. Montague's letters describe the life at Bulstrode in the time of this the great Duchess of Portland, when the Grotto was the scene of the Duchess and Mrs. Delany's chatty tea parties. She entertained on these occasions many celebrities of the day, the eccentric Duchess of Queensberry, Edmund Burke, Dr. Young, Sir Joseph Banks, Dr. Solander, Pennant, Garrick, etc. The Royal Family during their residence at Windsor were frequent visitors, coming over of an evening with flambeaux. Mrs. Delany mentions the comet of 1769, when "Mrs. Anne says that the tail is as long as the gallery at Bulstrode." Horace Walpole, in one of his letters, writes—"Bulstrode is a melancholy

monument of Dutch magnificence" (he was, by the way, very fond of the word "melancholy," for when he visited Latimer's he called that "melancholy"), "however, there is a brave gallery of old pictures, and a chapel with two fine windows of painted glass. The ceiling was formerly decorated with the assumption, or rather presumption, of Chancellor Jefferys, to whom it belonged; but a very judicious fire hurried him somewhere else." During the premiership of the fourth duke the road to London was constantly traversed by despatches rushing from Westminster to Bulstrode. When the manor was sold in 1814 it became the property of an older ducal family—the eleventh Duke of Somerset. Part of the old house, the Gerrards Cross wing, supposed by some to have been the Orangery, for a time adjoined the new mansion, but it has been pulled down. It was let for a long time to the Misses Reid, who built the church as a memorial of their brother, General Reid. The park, that was long without a suitable mansion, has regained its former cheerfulness, the present Duke of Somerset having built it anew. The present ivy-clad tower has been constructed with old materials. It is related that the last Duke of Portland who lived at Bulstrode directed in his will that the fine herd of deer in the park should be killed and buried. The executors faithfully carried out this extraordinary direction; but it is almost needless to add that the venison was dug up again before it had become high.

Our thoughts have been led back to very different times from our own—to what some would call the good old times; but with all our faults—and they are many—the days in which our lot is cast are far better. We have no ravaging Danes, no Norman conquerors slaying and confiscating, no Lord Chancellor Jefferys. Never, I believe, was there more prosperity and safety and comfort in this England of ours, more peace, and true religion. When we look at the new church and the many admirable institutions, and the general appearance of prosperity at Gerrard's Cross, we rejoice to know that there are in England many who, like the Miss Reids, whose names will ever be held in honour here, delight to devote their wealth to the good of their neighbours and to the glory of God.

* "Sheahan's Bucks." *Victoria Magazine*, Oct. 1867.