



## The History of Hungerford.

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**H**UNGERFORD is generally known to the outside world as the town where somewhat curious customs prevail, and it is remarkable as being the place which has retained the ancient usages of the Hocktide celebrations longer than any other town, and not even the District and Parish Councils Act has been able to affect its old observances or alter its constitution. We see not here a brand new Mayor with his Alderman and Councillors, like other mushroom corporations, but a Constable assisted by a portrieve, bailiff, tything or tutti-men, keepers of the keys of the common coffer, searchers and sealers of leather, a hayward, ale-tasters, and other officers. The inhabitants of this ancient town well merit the approval of all lovers of antiquity, in that they have clung to their ancient constitution, and not sought a new charter, and blossomed out with a Mayor and common councillors. The Constable of this ancient town is its highest officer, who, in the words of the old document, during his authority doth and ought to bear and supply the offices of Coroner, Escheator, Feodary, and Clerk of the Market, and hath all other officers subject to him, and may command every and any of them to be assistant unto him in the execution of every cause or matter. He is duly elected at a court kept and holden on the Tuesday called Hockney-day at the inconvenient hour of eight o'clock in the forenoon. Hocktide for the benefit of the strangers and uninitiated, I may state, is the week beginning with the second Sunday after Easter, and was in ancient times a very popular festival. We find continual allusions to it in the old churchwardens' accounts. We find numerous items under the head of gatherings at Hocktide, derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *Heah-high*, and meaning Hightide or High Festival, the time of Easter. On Monday and Tuesday the men and women alternately with great merriment intercepted the

public roads with ropes impounding passengers in their folds, and only releasing them on the payment of a fine. The ladies always appear to have been more successful than the men on these occasions. The Churchwardens' accounts of St. Lawrence's, Reading, record in 1468, "received of Hok-money gathered by women, 20s.; men, 4s." St. Mary's records in the same town in 1558, give men's gathering, 7s. 3d; women's gathering, 27s. 5d.

#### CURIOUS CUSTOMS.

A woman refusing to pay was liable to a penalty of a kiss from all her captors. This money was a contribution to the Parish Fund. In other parts of the country the memory of the custom was long preserved, and the custom of "lifting" in Lancashire, and of "hocking" in Hampshire subsisted not long ago. The late Bishop of Oxford remembered how in Yorkshire on Easter-day the boys seized the girls' shoes, and on the Monday the girls took off the boy's hats to be redeemed by a present. Some years ago I made special enquiries with regard to the existence of lifting or heaving (which was supposed to be symbolical of the Resurrection), but could find no evidence of its continuance. As late as 1883 a man entered a house at Norton, Cheshire, to "lift" the wife the owner, but the latter objected, summoned the observer of the old customs, who had to pay the cost of the prosecution. Here at Hungerford the tithing or tutti-men, so called from their wands of office being wreathed with tutties or poses of flowers, collect from any person being a householder, and of every journeyman a duty called a Head Penny, and from every woman a kiss. Rumour informs me that the latter toll was abandoned last year, at the same time as Lord Cadogan ceased to exact the customary kiss from debutantes at the Drawing Rooms at Dublin Castle. Whether such toll was abandoned as a relic of barbarism, I know not. It is recorded by the learned Erasmus that the buxom dames and maids of England were in his day very lavish of their kisses, and he gravely advises his learned friends from Germany to come to this country in order that they might enjoy such oscular demonstrstions. But other more serious matters occur at this Hocktide Court. The proceedings commence, I believe, with a water-cress supper at the "John O' Gaunt" hotel, consisting of black broth, Welsh rarebit, maccaroni and punch. On Tuesday the Town Crier blows from the balcony of the Town Hall the ancient horn. At the Court

the jury is sworn, the names of free suitors are called over by the Town Clerk, and the commoners summoned to save their commons for the ensuing year. There is a luncheon at the "Three Swans." The Sandon Fee Court, Sandon Fee being one of the manors of Hungerford (Mr. Money tells us that the word *fee* was added from the fact that Sandon formed one knight's fee held by William de Britnole under Simon de Montfort, in the reign of Henry III.) is held, when the list of Rescients is read, and regulations made for the feeding of cattle on the Marsh.

After another dinner the Court Leet is held, and in the evening the Constable's banquet, when his worship sits in a beautiful old carved ebony chair beneath the shade of John of Gaunt's horn, which is suspended between the two tutti-poles. The last toast of the evening is to the memory of John of Gaunt, which is drunk in solemn silence as the clock strikes the hour of midnight. These are, or were, the usual municipal customs of Hungerford, which form a curious and interesting survival. It may interest the people of Hungerford to know that in one other town in England, at Ratby, in Leicestershire, the same toast, "To the immortal memory of John of Gaunt" is annually proposed and drunk in solemn silence.

#### JOHN OF GAUNT AND HUNGERFORD.

The origin of this time-honoured toast is traced to the fact that John of Gaunt gave to the people of Hungerford the right of fishing in the Kennet from Elder Stubb, above the town, to Irish Stile, below Kintbury, which right is held by ancient horn-tenure, the donor presenting a horn to confirm the gift. This horn tenure was not an unusual form of holding land. Thus in our own county we have the famous Pusey horn, and at York Cathedral there is the ancient horn of Alphas, by which many acres of land are held by the Dean and Chapter. I do not know whether the horn, now under the guardianship of the Constable, is the actual horn presented by John of Gaunt, but such I understand, is the common belief. Its metal is of brass, and has seen some service. The words *Actel* and *Hungerford* are incised on it, and also a star and crescent, a cognaisance of the House of Lancaster. A second horn is in the possession of the town, fashioned in 1634, bearing the inscription:

"John a Gaun did give and grant the riall of fishing to

Hungerford toun, from Eldren Stub to Irish Stile, excepting some several mill pounds.

“Jehosophet Lucas was Cunstable.”

This John of Gaunt was Lord of the Manor of Hungerford, which property he held by right of his marriage with Blanche of Lancaster. This wedding took place in Reading Abbey, so the people of Hungerford owe some thanks to us at Reading, for if we had not so successfully tied the nuptial knot they would not have got their fishing, which Isaac Walton says is a rest to the mind, a cheerer of spirits, a divortor of sadness, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a procuror of contentedness, and moreover begets habits of peace and patience in those that profess and practice it. This right to their fishery the inhabitants have always stoutly maintained. On one occasion, in the time of James I., some good gentlemen of the town were pursuing their wonted recreation, and catching the trout which were accounted the best in England, when oné, Mr. Essex, had the audacity to try and stop their sport. They immediately sent for one of the Constable who sallied forth armed with bow and arrows which were so mightily convincing that Master Essex was satisfied and the fishing was quietly resumed.

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME HUNGERFORD.

But Hungerford had a distinguished history long before John of Gaunt gave the inhabitants the horn. And in order to find out all concerning this I referred to Lysons and other writers, documents in the Record Office, and to the excellent historical sketch of the history of this town, written by Mr. Money, who has done so much to elucidate the history of Western Berkshire. We cannot be too grateful to him for all that he has done in investigating the annals of our county. First, as regards the origin of the name. We may remark that in Domesday the name appears as Inglefol, and Canon Isaac Taylor interprets it as Engleford or Angleford, the ford of the Angles; but Mr. Money connects it with Hingwar, a Danish Chieftain, who was drowned in attempting to cross a ford here in 870 A.D. Hence it should be Hingwar-ford. This interpretation is probably, correct and is confirmed by a passage in the Book of Hyde, wherein the chronicler describes the greatness of the East Anglian Kingdom and the usurpation of the Danes under Hingwar and Hubba after the martyrdom of King Edmund, and concludes “Which Hingwar was drowned as he was crossing a morass in Berkshire, which morass is called to this

day by the people of that county, Hyngerford." This certainly seems to confirm this origin of the name. I find that the word is spelt, as we now spell it, as early as the year 1204. Of the Romans I can find few traces except that one branch of the great Roman road from London to Bath passed through the parish. This road goes through Silchester and Speen, being known here as Charnham-street. This road has been singularly free from such remains as coins, villas, and other Roman relics. Possibly many remain to be discovered.

Of the Saxons we have many more evidences, and it seems probable that the battle of Ethandune, was fought at the Berkshire Eddington, which is a manor of this parish north of the town. Dr. Beke, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, when Lyson was writing his history, was the first to point this out. He says that Alfred collected his forces at Brixton, Wilts, set out at daybreak on a May morning, passed the following night at *Æglea* (which name now appears in the name of the Hundred Kintbury Eagle), and advancing the following day totally defeated the Danes, and pursued them with his cavalry to their fortified camp. As the Professor points out, Eddington in Wilts is far too near Brixton (only 10 miles) to occupy a long day's march, and concludes that Alfred made a long forced march of about 35 miles along the Downs, and that this Eddington must have been the site of the famous battle. As a confirmation of this theory the Professor points to Denford, formerly Daneford, and Inglewood, or Angleswood, and Mr. Money tells us that there is a Danesfield in the immediate neighbourhood of the battle. This Eddington or Ethandune, King Alfred left to his wife, together with the manors of Wanting, his birthplace, and Lambourn,

#### THE MANOR OF HUNGERFORD.

Hungerford appears in the Domesday survey under the name of Inglefol, was held by two Freemen and two Thaners in the time of the Confessor, and was granted by the Conqueror to Robert Fitzgirold and to Robert Fitz Rolf. The Hungerfords who took their names from this place, appear at an early date (1165), as possessors of land here. A long series of illustrious names appear as lords of the manor or holders of land. Amongst others, I may mention Robert Fitz Parnall, Earl of Leicester, a Crusader who fought with Cœur de Lion, and died without children. The Testa de Neville says that Simon de Montfort holds Hungerford of the honour of Leicester. His father married the sister of Earl Roger afore mentioned, and thus held the

Manor. A few words in this document betray the inclinations of the more celebrated Simon, who subsequently fought against the King—*nec facit scutagium*—he does not pay his tax; the scutage was a war tax levied in aid of the King's arms (derived of *scutum*—a shield). There seems to have been some curious tenures here. One Simon Ponchard, held two virgates of land *per serjentsiam hastillarium* by the serjeanty of spears, or as it appears later of *turning spears*. Geoffrey Punsard had a messuage and two bovats by service of providing a hart or deer for the kitchen of the King.

This Manor passed into the possession of the Earls of Lancaster, and in the time of the third Edward it passed to John of Gaunt. When Henry, Duke of Lancaster, became Henry IV. he gave the Manor to Sir Walter Hungerford, who was a mighty warrior, and took his part in the battles of the Lancastrian period. He attained to great honour, was Admiral of the Fleet, steward of the King's household, Knight of the Garter, and lies buried in Salisbury Cathedral. He founded in that Cathedral a beautiful Chantry in 1429 in the nave, now removed to the choir by Lord Radnor, his descendant. The tomb of Sir Walter and his first wife, Catherine Peverell, in the nave, have been shorn of their brasses. His son Robert, Lord Hungerford, followed his father's military career, and fought at Agincourt. He, too, lies at Salisbury; his effigy represents him clad in a superb suit of 15th century plate armour, with the colour of S.S. round his neck, and with his hair polled in the fashion of Henry V. A superbly decorated sword and dagger hang from his jewelled girdle, and his feet rest upon a dog with a rich collar. His widow founded the beautiful Hungerford Chapel, ruthlessly destroyed by Wyatt at the beginning of the last century. But the family suffered grievously with the downfall of the Lancastrians, and the rise of the Yorkists. Robert, Lord Hungerford was taken prisoner at Hexham, beheaded at Newcastle, and buried at Salisbury, and Thomas, his son, soon shared his fate in the market place of that cathedral city. It was a bad time for Lancastrians when Yorkist wolves were out, and soon Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the infamous Richard III. (whom 19th century apologists have scarcely succeeded in whitewashing) appears as the Lord of Hungerford, who gave it to the Duke of Norfolk, slain at Bosworth, and it again lapsed to the crown. Edward VI. gave it to the unscrupulous and ever greedy Protector Somerset, and on his attainder the Manor reverted to the King. Queen Elizabeth gave it to her favourite, Earl of Essex, some of whose private letters to the Queen

found recently in a country house of a friend, I have had the pleasure of inspecting. They are endorsed in the Queen's own handwriting. When the Earl was angry on account of the Queen's illtreatment, she labelled them *malcontent*, and when he was more than usually affectionate, she wrote *D'Amour*. Lysons attributes to him the building of the old house pulled down by Mr. Dalbiac at the beginning of the last century, which had at the east end the arms of Queen Elizabeth, and a room named after her. The modern house was built by Mr. Dalbiac, who sold the property to the Willes family. Amongst other owners were the Boylands, Stonehouses, Renous, and Waters. There seems to have been a mania for pulling down ancestral mansions at the beginning of the 18th century, and an extraordinary number perished. There is one member of the Hungerford family, Sir Robert by name, who died 1354, whose mutilated monument lies in the church, and bears a curious inscription in Norman-French, promising 550 days of pardon, on the word of 14 bishops, to all such as should pray for his soul.

This monument bids me tell of the fortunes of the church. Alas! the old church was demolished in 1811, a most deplorable occurrence, for however beautiful a modern structure may be, it lacks entirely the historical associations of an ancient church. I have not seen any drawing or engraving of the old church. Mr. Money tells us it was a 14th century structure, with a square embattled tower at the west end, a lofty nave with three clerestory windows on the east side, and a large chancel. There was the chantry of the Holy Trinity, founded by Robert de Hungerford in 1325, on the south side of the nave. In Chancery Inquisitiones P.M. 1 Edward III., I find that Robert de Hungerford is allowed to grant premises to John de Pewell, chaplain, in augmentation of the funds of the chantry. Before the commissioners of Edward VI. came to pillage and plunder our churches of the heaps of goods, plate, vestments, and other treasures, which the piety of former generations had amassed, there was a great store of beautiful things in Hungerford Church.

During the Civil War there was some fighting in this neighbourhood as the parish registers tell, several soldiers being buried here. The number, however, is quite small, and probably the fighting consisted only of skirmishing. However, the people knew something of the troubles of war, for here came Sir Henry Gage with a 1,000 troopers who ransacked the barns and stores of Hungerford and carried the provisions to the besieged

garrisons of Donnington and Basing House. The troopers of Charles' day did not always remember to pay for their requisitions as we are accustomed to do in our modern wars. But Hungerford folk were always true to their King, and perhaps suffered willingly the spoiling of their farms and homesteads. So true were they that in the days of Cromwell they joined the famous rising in the West. It was in 1655 when a bold company of Hungerford trades-folk and gentlemen rode out of the town, and joined Colonel Penruddock, their leader, and proclaimed Charles II. king at Salisbury. It was a bold stroke, but it came five years too soon, and these somewhat rash royalists lost their heads, and amongst these John Lucas, brother of the Constable, whose name appears on the horn.

And as we look back and see all the notable men and women who have journeyed hither, I see John Evelyn, who was nephew of Edward Hungerford, Esq., of Cadenham, eating trout at the Bear, which according to him "were catch'd by spear in the night when they come attracted by a light set in the stern of the boat," a most unsportsmanlike proceeding, which will doubtless rouse the anger of every true angler.

#### WILLIAM OF ORANGE AND HUNGERFORD.

But this Bear Inn had once a more distinguished visitor. It was the scene of a great historical event. There, William of Orange received the Commissioners of King James II. Macaulay thus graphically describes the episode :

"On the morning of Saturday, 8th of December, 1688, the King's Commissioners reached Hungerford. The Prince's bodyguard was drawn up to receive them with military respect. Benting welcomed them and proposed to conduct them immediately to his master. They expressed a hope that the Prince would favour them with a private audience ; but they were informed that he had resolved to hear them and answer them in public. They were ushered into his bed chamber where they found him surrounded by a crowd of noblemen and gentlemen. Halifax, whose rank, age, and abilities entitled him to precedence, was spokesman. Having explained the basis on which he and his colleagues were prepared to treat, he put into William's hand a letter from the King, and retired. William opened the letter and seemed unusually moved. It was the first letter which he had received from his father-in-law since they had become avowed enemies. He requested the Lords and gentlemen whom he had convoked on this occasion to consult together unrestrained by his

presence as to the answer which ought to be returned. To himself, however, he reserved the power of directing in the last resort, after hearing their opinions. He then left and retired to Littlecote Hall, renowned down to our own times not more on account of its venerable architecture and furniture than on account of a horrible and mysterious crime perpetrated there in the days of the Tudors." We should much like to hear, if only the walls of the "Bear" could tell us, of that conference between those noblemen and gentlemen. At Littlecote William entertained the Commissioners to dinner. Then followed "the Reading skirmish," the onward progress of the Prince, the flight of the King, and establishment of Dutch William on the throne.

After these stirring times, Hungerford ceases to occupy any prominent place in our national annals. But from its archives and muniments much can be gathered, with regard to its internal life and the habits and customs of the people. The real historian of Hungerford has, I believe, yet to be found, who shall search and transcribe all the records of this interesting town. As doubtless some of you are aware, we are about to publish the great Victorian History of Berks in five large volumes, and as Editor, I must ask for the co-operation and assistance of some historical students in this town in order that the history of Hungerford may be adequately recorded. I have great hopes that Mr. Summers who is a learned antiquary, may be able to do something for the history of the town in which he now resides. I am tempted to glance at some of the figures in your Constable and Churchwardens' accounts, but when I find that a great part of the time of one of your officers was employed in whipping vagrants and strangers, I began to fear for the safety of wandering antiquaries, and was scarcely consoled by the thought of the solatium of 2d., which the Constable used to give to vagrants after their whippings. Your stocks and cucking stool for scolding women were also formerly much in vogue. Your bells rang merrily on the coming of Charles to his own again, and you lighted 100 faggots for a bonfire on his birthday, and when Dutch William came you were all very busy carrying warrants, pressing horses, guiding soldiers, getting bullets and bandoleers, and candles at 4s. 4d., per dozen, and I know not what else.

And then we will go to the "Bear" and watch the coaches

pass along the great Bath-road, and mark that everybody of note in England for over a century passed along by the door, and often stayed and slept here when the snows were deep and they could not gain the usual stopping place at Devizes. We see Lord Chesterfield and Lady Mary Wortley Montague making for scandal and the waters; Walpole riding in his chariot, thinking of his ailments and antiquities; Sheridan running away with his beautiful wife; Garrick posting to Bath in search of new talent for his stage; Lord Byron looking eagerly at the refreshment which mine host of the "Bear" proffers him, knowing that he may only drink soda-water and eat biscuits; Beau Brummell creating a new cravat or waistcoat, and Gentleman Jackson on his way to a prize-fight; Lord Chatham, after staying several weeks at the "Castle" Inn, Marlborough, owing to an attack of gout, and the Princess Ann, at whose passing the bells of Hungerford rang out. These, and I know not how many more we can see, as we gaze from the windows of the "Bear," and hear the merry post-horn sound as they pass.

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## **Berks Archæological Society.**

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### **THE CINERARY URNS AT SUNNINGDALE.**

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THE first meeting of the Winter Session of the Berks Archæological Society was held at the Abbey Gate on November 26th, when an interesting lecture was given by Mr. O. A. Shrubsole, on "An ancient British barrow containing cinerary urns at Sunningdale." Mr. O. A. Shrubsole said the subject of graves and dead men's bones was not an attractive one, but it was a subject which, if pursued reverently and scientifically, was capable of yielding very fruitful results. Remarkable discoveries had been made quite recently in Egypt, in this direction. The cinerary urns—specimens of which were recently found at Sunningdale—showed what a lot of trouble the people took with regard to the burying of their dead. They saw at once there was a great deal of civilization behind it. With regard to the particular urns before them, the body of a person had been cremated, the ashes