



Notes and Queries

RELATING TO BERKS, BUCKS AND OXON.

Communications are invited upon all subjects of Antiquarian or Architectural interest relating to the three counties. Correspondents are requested to write as plainly as possible, on one side of the paper only, with REPLIES, QUERIES and NOTES on SEPARATE SHEETS, and the name of the writer appended to each communication.

Notes.

ST. EDMUND'S CHAPEL.—By the kindness and generosity of the President of the Berks Archæological Society some excavations have been made on the site of the old chapel, but nothing of importance has been found.

GOD'S HOSTELS.—On page 59 of your July Journal, your contributor, Mr. Sieveking, has fallen into error. "Not far from Quainton, etc." Quainton is 20 miles West from here, and Chenies four miles East. Moreover, these almshouses were pulled down quite twenty years ago, and not a trace remains. I wrote to the papers at the time, but it was too late to save them.—J. W. WELLER, The Plantation, Amersham.

LETCOMBE REGIS.—With regard to the paper by Mr. Keyser on Letcombe Regis Church, in *The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal*, I was wondering whether the following would be any use. I have before me "Monumental Brasses" by the Cambridge Camden Society, 1846, in which is an account of John Tame, Esq., of Fairford, Gloucestershire. Edmund Tame, Esq. (grandson of John Tame who built Fairford Church) died without issue, leaving three sisters co-heiresses; Margaret, married to Sir Humphrey Stafford; Alice, married to Sir Thomas Varney; and Isabel, the wife of Lewis Watkin, Esq. Leland had foreseen the speedy extinction of the Tame family, and says: "Tame that now is at Fareford hath be married a xii yere and hath no child. Wherefore be likelihode Sir Humphre Stafford, son of old Staford of Northamptonshire, is like to have the landes of Tame of Faireforde. For he married his sister; and so the name of the Tames is like sore to decay," and again about the elder branch "Mr. Horne, of Oxfordshire, dwelling by Langeley, hath married this Tame's daughter and heir, and shaul have by her a 80 li Lande by the yere." I see no mention of the family of Langeley. John Tame, who built Fairford Church, married Alice Twynihol. His son Edmund, afterwards knighted, finished the church. According to a MS. Visitation in the Harleian MSS. 1543, John Tame had two sons, William and Sir Edmund, Knight, who married Agnes daughter of Sir Edward Grevill, Knight. He was married a second time to Elizabeth,(?) Tyringham. Her name is not given on her monu-

ment, but from the arms the name of Tyringham is assigned to her. Edmund Tame the second was married to Catherine daughter of Sir William Dennis. She survived him and was afterwards married to Sir Walter Buckle, and still later to Roger Lygon, Esq.—HARRY CLIFFORD, Brizes Park, Brentwood, Essex.

THE NAME OF THE TOWN OF MAIDENHEAD.—In looking through some old books I came across a reference to this, and though it has not the charm of novelty, it occurred to me that perhaps the extract might be of interest to your readers. To those who wish for information as to the historical facts on which the legend is based, Baring Gould's "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages" contains a very interesting chapter, from which I give the following extract from the book entitled :—

"The Church History of Brittany (Britain) from the Beginning of Christianity to the Norman Conquest

under { Roman Governors
British Kings
The English Saxon Heptarchy
The English Saxon (and Danish)
Monarchy.

x x x x x x x

By R. F. S. Cressy, of the Holy Order of S. Benedict.

x x x x x x

Printed in the year 1668.

Permissu Superiorum & Approbatione Doctorum."

Chapter XXII. is devoted to the Story of the Martyrdom of the Eleven Thousand Virgins at Cologne, after which in Chapter XXIII. is the reference to Maidenhead, which I quote in full.

K. Vortigern. "The Church History of Brittany under British Kings, IX. Book. XXIII. Chap.

A.D. 453.

XXIII. Chap.

1, 2, 3, &c. The names of these Holy Virgins : Their Sacred Relicks dispersed all the world over. Names of Churches where they are Venerated.

1. x x x

2. x x x

3. Neither did *Brittany* long delay to testify her veneration to these her blessed country women. A witness whereof is a well known Town called *Maidenhead*. For thus writes *Camden*: *The Thames*, saith he, *winds back to a little town formerly call'd Southlington, but afterward Maidenhead, from the superstitious reverence there given to the head of I know not what holy Virgin, one of the Eleaven thousand Brittish Martyrs which under the conduct of S. Vrsula returning from Rome into their country, were martyred by Attila, call'd the Scourge of God, near Colen in Germany.* Thus he censures the piety of a world of devout *Emperours, Kings, Princes, Bishops, and Doctours of God's Church* in all ages."

EDWARD MARGRETT.

NOTE ON A MAIDENHEAD THICKET LEGEND.—A story is current, and generally credited, that when a monk from Hurley Priory crossed Maidenhead Thicket to undertake the duty at the Chantry Chapel at Maidenhead, an escort was provided to protect him from the robbers who infested the Thicket. This statement is originated in an article on Berkshire in *The Quarterly Review*, No. 211, and is quoted by Mr. Kerry in his *Hundred of Bray*. It runs thus:—

“Maidenhead Thicket lies a mile or two to the west, a wild district still, though harmless enough; but in former times of so bad repute that in the Act of 39 Elizabeth C. xxv., passed ‘for enlarging the statute for following the Hue and Cry,’ the Hundred of Beynhurst, in which the Thicket stands, was specially exempted from penalties where there had been no voluntary default; and in the same reign the Vicar of Hurley who served the cure of Maidenhead, was allowed an extra salary for the danger of passing the Thicket.”

There is nothing to show that the Vicar of Hurley ever served the cure of Maidenhead. Mr. Gorham in his *History of Maidenhead Chapel* tells us that, when in the year 1352 John Hosebond, Citizen and Corndealer, bequeathed £100 for the benefit of Maidenhead Chapel, an arrangement was made with the Prior and Convent of Hurley to provide a Chaplain, who was to be a secular Priest and not a Monk; but that pending the appointment of a Chaplain the services should be undertaken by one of the Monks. At the dissolution of the Monastery the funds from which the Chaplain’s stipend was provided were confiscated. In the year 1557, there being no Chaplain, the inhabitants of Maidenhead elected one and petitioned the Government for assistance towards his maintenance on a plea that the Crown had been benefitted, amongst other revenues belonging to the late Hurley Priory, by the £100 which Hosebond had bequeathed. This application was so far successful that it resulted in a Crown grant of seven marks, or £4 3s. 4d., yearly towards the payment of a Chaplain. And as thenceforth Maidenhead Chapel again had its own Chaplain there could have been no need for the services of any Hurley vicar during Elizabeth’s reign, and consequently no need of the extra salary for passing the Thicket.

Colonel Cooper King in his *History of Berkshire* (p. 249) says what is even less likely:—

“Even as late as Elizabeth’s day the Vicar of Henley [*Henley*] who served the cure at Maidenhead, was allowed an extra salary to atone for the danger of passing through the Thicket.” And he adds, “The robbers were not respecters of persons, and like Robin Hood robbed a fat priest as well as a lean layman.”

Mr. Kerry tells us (p. 147):—

“Some idea may be formed of the nature of this dangerous road in the time of Henry the Eighth from Leland’s account of his journey from Maidenhead to Twyford. For two miles the road was *narrow and woody*; dangerous enough; then came the Great Frith [*Brit. Frith a Wood*] three miles long; altogether *a wood infested with robbers five miles in extent*! And then he says to Twyford, a praty tounlet a two miles. Twyford was undoubtedly a charming spot after a route so long and tedious.”

Possibly from a jumbling together of Leland’s description of the country to the west of Maidenhead with the connection that Maidenhead Chapel had with Hurley, was evolved the hybrid myth of the extra salary to the Vicar of Hurley. It is somewhat disappointing when a popular tradition proves to be altogether

inaccurate; and so, though the story of the extra salary to the Vicar be a fable, the misfortune befalling a fat monk, in earlier days, may still be looked upon as a by no means impossible fact.

Why the services at the Chantry Chapel of Maidenhead fell to Hurley can, I think, be accounted for by business relationships that had existed between Cookham and the Prior and Convent of Hurley. These appear in the *Fine Roll*, 25 Hen. III., of which the following is a translation:—

“The King has sold his corn in Cookham to the Prior of Hurley, Thos. son of Ivo and Geoffrey Blund for 49 marks. It is commanded the bailiff there that having taken security from the aforesaid for the above sum to be paid at the Exchequer in the octaves of St. Michael, they permit them to have the said corn.”

And again 35 Hen. III.:—

“It is commanded Godfrey de Lyston that by the oath of good and lawful men he cause to be appraised the corn in the King’s Manors of Cookham and Bray at the next feast of Pentecost, and at the same price he shall demise the said corn to the Abbot of Westminster [Hurley Priory was a cell of the Abbey of Westminster]; keeping in the King’s hands so much as he shall judge necessary for sowing and the keep of the servants and ploughs of the said Manors, till the new grain.”

STEPHEN DARBY.

NORTH-HEATH.—AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY.—On the brow of a hill in a field on North Heath farm, occupied by Mr. G. Baylis, the well-known agriculturist, at an elevation of about 430ft., a little above a tributary of the Winterbourne brook, which flows in wet seasons, one of the farm-hands noticed that the top soil of sandy loam had caved in, disclosing a circular opening of considerable depth. This aperture, about 1ft. 6ins. in diameter, and which just admitted a man, was found to lead by a sloping entrance-passage, carefully hollowed out of the chalk, to a pear-shaped pit, gradually enlarging downwards from the surface for a distance of some 14ft., the bulbous end being about 7ft. in diameter, and the depth about 7 to 8ft., the roof being carefully rounded off. Unfortunately, owing to the passage and dome-like chamber being partially choked with soil, a careful inspection was not possible when we visited the pit, and it is difficult to give a decided opinion as to the purpose of this singular excavation. But the remarkable assimilation of its shape and structural affinities to what are known as “Deneholes,” which, either in isolated pits scattered singly, or in groups, abound in certain parts of the chalky districts of Kent and Essex, generally on high ground, and have been found at Perborough and other places in our own neighbourhood, afford some clue to its identification. The excavation of hollows in the chalk for the storing of grain, is a method of the greatest antiquity, and is a common practice over the whole world. The modern grain pit of Central Asia is a hole in the ground with a narrow orifice just wide enough to let a man descend, and not too wide to admit of being well secured by cross stakes or boards, so that when the sods are replaced nothing can be seen above, and the plough can pass over the pit. Besides the distinct assertion of Diodorus, that corn was preserved in pits in Britain, there can be little doubt that this method, which Tacitus says was employed by the Germans (the ancestors of the Belgæ and other tribes of Northern France), was also used by some

of those tribes who migrated to Britain. If the Britons if such they were, who quarried here did so for the purpose of obtaining chalk, they knowingly and wilfully concentrated their efforts of every kind so as to ensure the least and worst possible return for their labour—a thing which no people ancient or modern, ever did or will do. The pits most probably extend along the whole brow of the hill, as in many other places where they have been discovered. In the course of a cursory examination, several flint-flakes, cores, and a well-worked scraper were picked up, scattered over the surface of the brow of the hill, bearing testimony to the occupation of the site by the flint folk who here pastured their flocks and grew their corn in the Neolithic age, and within view is an Ancient British Barrow on Rowbury Farm—a survival of the Domesday Hundred of “Roeberg.” We found unmistakeable marks in the walls and dome of the pit of metal picks, as were also observed in the famous Hangman’s Wood Deneholes, at Grays, in Essex, showing that these chambers owe their origin to a bronze or iron-using people.

Although it is always unwise to guess unless you know, it will be evident that the hypothesis that the North Heath denehole was mainly used as a secret storehouse for grain or hiding place of some kind, furnishes perhaps the most probable explanation of its existence.—W. MONEY.

BISHAM ABBEY.—Upon Mrs. Climensson’s interesting mention of the tradition of this house in the last number of the Berks, Bucks, and Oxon, *Archæological Journal*, I should like to make a few observations. By the kindness of the owner of the Abbey, Sir Henry Vansittart-Neale, K.C.B., I have been enabled to obtain further information since my visit in March last, when I was allowed to make an inspection of the house. Mr. Littledale’s version of the finding of the copy books differs so much from what follows that I venture to think them two entirely different matters, viz:—the finding of the books and the discovery of the coffin, have in the course of years become confused. The following copy of a memorandum made by Mrs. General Vansittart very soon after the discovery of the books would seem to be the correct account and has been always accepted as such by the Vansittart family :

“This small bit of paper”—referring to a scrap of paper relating to some baby linen—“was found when the corner of the dining room gave way in consequence of Mrs. Augustus East having the quoins on the sides of the windows cut down that there might be an alteration in the window shutters—which caused the rubble to run down and the corner to give way—in consequence of which they were obliged to take up a part of the floor to get at the foundations, that the corner might be properly rebuilt; and between the joists were found quantities of rubbish, of old papers, copy books, etc., sufficient to fill two clothes baskets. I drove over from Binfield the very day after these were discovered and looked over a number of the papers and copy books, the latter all signed by various names of the Hobby family and corrected by Lady Russell. In one of William Hobby, I think, every leaf had some blot. I wanted to take two or three away with me that day, but Mrs. East wished to keep them all till the Admiral and Henry Vansittart had examined them, promising to keep one or two for me. When I asked for them, all were missing, they suddenly had disappeared, supposed to be sold by the workmen. This scrap of paper I found amongst the dust still on the joists and as it agreed perfectly with

the writing and signature of Lady Russell in the correction of her children's books where several times her name was written there are no doubts of its being her autograph.

(Signed) Ann Mary Vansittart."

The date of the occurrence is, as stated by Murray, 1840, and at that time it is known the house was let to Mrs. Augustus East. It will be observed that no mention is made of the coffin falling into the room, an alteration in the wall being the cause of the corner giving way. It should also be noted, in comparing the different versions, that the books were found beneath the floor—generally accepted—not in the shutter panelling. The heterogeneous collection was sufficient to fill two clothes baskets, and contained the writing of various members of the Hoby family, not that of one child. In one book every page had some blot, but nothing is said about curious or cramped handwriting, or the comment of any of the medical profession thereon. The copy books do not appear to have been seen by any one except Mrs. General Vansittart and Mrs. East and possibly Henry Vansittart, previous to their disappearance. There is no entry of the birth or death of a child named William Hoby or Russell in the Bisham Parish registers. As regards the stone coffin, the story told by the ancestors of the present lord of the manor is that it was found under part of the outer wall of the Abbey, the foundation of which had been built over it; the sides of the coffin giving way, the wall settled. When the cause of the settlement was investigated the coffin was discovered. But this did not take place at the same time as the finding of the copy books, nor is it known whether the coffin was that of a child. The lack of substantiation in the Bisham Parish registers precludes me from making any observations upon the generalities of the tradition. That most traditions have a molecule of truth is usually conceded but I cannot make presumption surety for direct proof, and in the absence of the necessary evidence that such a person as William Hoby existed it would be folly to try and explain the circumstances of his death.—ERNEST W. DORMER.—22, Palmer Park Avenue, Reading.

Replies.

EARTHWORKS.—In your Journal for July last Mr. J. Chalkley Gould asks for titles of papers on the Earthworks of Berks, Bucks and Oxon. I send the titles of three papers of my own, but you will see the subject is treated as a geological one.

On some Terraced Hill Slopes of the Midlands.—Journ. Northampton Nat. Hist. Society. June, 1890.

On the Terraced Hill Slopes of North Oxfordshire.—Brit. Assn. Rep. Oxford, 1894.

More Notes on the Terraced Hill Slopes of North Oxfordshire.—Geological Mag. July, 1897.

Some reference is also made to the subject in Brit. Geol. Assn., 1895, p. 3.—EDWIN A. WALFORD, West Bar, Banbury.