No. 17

# BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Affiliated to the Sussex Archaeological Society, the Sussex Archaeological Trust, and the South Eastern Federation of Museums and Art Galleries.*

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NOTE:—The Society is in no way responsible for the opinions of contributors as expressed in the above articles.

## EDITORIAL NOTE

Besides the lectures printed in this number, Miss A. Raper, M.B.E., F.S.A., gave an interesting talk on "Some Romney Marsh Churches" on 27th October 1967, and Mr. W. H. Dyer gave a lantern lecture on "Distinctive features of Sussex Churches" on 22nd March 1968. Owing to severe weather the lectures by Dr. Kathleen Morand on "Tapestries Medieval and Modern", fixed for 8th December 1967, and that by Prof. A. E. Bate on "St. Albans", fixed for 12th January 1968, did not take place. As recorded elsewhere in this number, illness prevented the Commemoration lecturer from fulfilling his engagement.

There were two social evenings, one at Powdermill House on 11th May, and the other at Brede Place on 30th August, by kind invitation of Mrs. Evelyn Webster and Mr. Roger Frewen respectively.

The recommendations of the Society about the Battle Town Plan, an important matter which occurred during the year, are reported in the article on the Annual General Meeting. After the Extraordinary General Meeting there was an example of how facts can be misrepresented. An article appeared in the *Evening News* in which it was suggested that our Society wanted to extend the site of the Battle of Hastings in order to check building development; to which was added a comment that if William and Harold had been kept in the picture with regard to future building development, they would have adapted their tactics and the locale of the battle accordingly. As might have been expected, "Peter Simple" of the *Daily Telegraph* seized upon this article and made merry over it. As building development did not enter into the matter at all, the President wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* pointing out that although "Peter Simple's" articles were greatly admired by many, he had, on this occasion, been misinformed. After some delay, to which attention had to be drawn, the letter was published.

Mr. Hilton Wadsworth, whose death occurred after the close of the Society's official year, was elected a Committee Member in 1963, and served also on the Museum Committee. His activities on behalf of the Society were many and varied, ranging from excavation at Bodiam to conducting learned societies and individuals round the battlefield. His knowledge of foreign tongues, of which he spoke three, enabled him in 1966 to give a description of the battle to the German section of the international "Chateau Gaillard" Society in their own language. His death was a sad loss to our Society, and he will be greatly missed.

## OLD SUSSEX CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Ague—or Axey as the old Sussex folk called it—was extremely prevalent in our county in bygone centuries. The quick remedy was to find a fat spider, wrap it up in its own web and swallow it alive. Among the youngsters, there was a great deal of whooping-cough every winter. When it was observed to be developing, mother would trap a field mouse and pop it into the oven until it was baked bone dry. She then reduced it to powder and administered it to the child in water. Several of the folk-remedies for complaints were of this purely physical nature but there were many others which could only be loosely classified under the heading spiritual. All of them, physical or otherwise, had been handed down, generation to generation, from time immemorial and many had originated in pagan days. A more advanced 'cure' for the ague—this time of the "spiritual" type—was to pass the patient between the halves of a cleft willow tree. The local parson was considered to be the most effective person to perform this rite. A further remedy was to take from the patient a clipping from each toenail and each fingernail, also some hair from the 'nod' (old Sussex for the nape of the neck). All these bits and pieces had to be acquired without the patient's knowledge! This might sound difficult, if not impossible, but if a man had ague badly, he would be highly unlikely to pay any attention to what his relations were doing. The collection was then put into a silken bag and deposited in a hole in an aspen tree, the theme of the superstition being that, as the contents of the bag decayed away, so the ague would go. By the way, Sussex never said 'aspen' but 'apsen' — and in this matter, old Sussex was right. The original Saxon word was *apsen*. A similarly spiritual treatment for whooping-cough was to take some hair from a donkey's cross, chop it finely and give it to the child in bread and butter as a sandwich. Donkey's cross? All donkeys share the common phenomenon of a cross of hair at the base of the mane. For rheumatism, the best preventative was a potato always carried in the pocket but—said old Sussex —it must be a stolen potato or it had no virtue.

A more effective remedy, however, especially in severe cases, was to obtain something—anything—from a murderer's remains or effects, boil it and drink the water. In days gone by it was not difficult to do this as most murderers were not buried after execution but hung in chains at cross-roads or on common land as a warning to others not to follow their bad example.

Here are a few more quaint Sussex superstitions: If your cat sneezes, turn it out quickly, but if it sneezes thrice, don't worry; the whole family will catch cold anyway. Cats have an inherent aversion to moving house. This could be cured by putting the cat into a cold oven for a couple of hours, immediately on arrival in the new home. When it comes out, it will have completely forgotten about the old place. Never stuff a mattress with game feathers or you will prolong the death agony of anybody dying on it. Don't pick blackberries on or after Michaelmas Day (the old date of which was 10th October). On that day, the 'Old Man' (Sussex for the Devil) spits on them all! If you go nutting on a Sunday, the Devil will hold the boughs down for you. If an itinerant swarm of bees settles on anything dead on your premises, beware of bad fortune, probably a death in the household. If the swarm settles on anything live—even father's head—good luck will follow. If Easter Sunday falls on Lady Day (25th March)—something which fortunately happens only very rarely—England will have to look out. The Sussex couplet embodying this superstition is:

*If Easter falls in our Lady's Lap*
*Beware Old England of a Mishap.*

These are some of the folk beliefs observed by our Sussex forebears. There are many more; if I were to recount all of which I have records, I should need the whole of this issue.

The customs were equally quaint and interesting. The Saxons loved wassailing and, remember, Sussex was the most completely Saxon part of England. The words "Waes hael" and the reply "Drinc hael" were used by the Saxons when they toasted each other. Once a year, Sussex people in the country wassailed practically everything in sight. Around the New Year period, they would gather on the village green, everybody carrying twigs of broom. They would then move in procession to all the farms in the neighbourhood, tapping all the fruit trees with the twigs and singing a doggerel verse:

*Stand fast root; bear well top,*
*Pray God send us a good howling crop.*
*Every twig, apples big,*
*Every bough, apples enow.*
*Hats full; caps full,*
*Three-quarters sacks full.*

The bees too were wassailed in similar fashion, the hives being gently tapped with the broom whilst the wassailers sang:

*Bees O bees of Paradise,*
*Do the work of Jesus Christ,*
*Do the work that no man can.*
*God makes men and men make money;*
*God makes bees and bees make honey.*
*God makes men to plough and sow*
*And little boys to scare both the rook and the crow.*

When a farm had been fully wassailed, there was a helter-skelter rush for the farm door. One good reason was that, behind the door were cakes and ale for all—but there was another reason, wrapped up in another old superstition: the first girl kissed over the threshold would be the first one married. The maidens would watch anxiously for the appearance of the first New Moon of the year. When the crescent showed in the sky, they would go into the fields, open their arms to the moon, bow and say:

*"Hail to thee Moon, O Hail to thee.*
*I prithee good moon reveal to me*
*This night, who my husband shall be."*

They then bowed again, went home and went to bed. *If* a girl could stay awake (so said the old belief) she would see in the course of the night the form and face of her husband-to-be come into the room, take a look at her and go out again. On Good Friday the whole family partook of hot cross buns at breakfast-time. The meal finished, the family would troop to the entrance of the house or cottage and solemnly nail a hot cross bun on the door. There it had two purposes to fulfil. In the first place, as a holy bun, it would ward off all evil influences. Its second function was to act as a specific for all the small ills flesh is heir to—colds, headaches, twinges of rheumatism and the like. Any member of the family who felt something of this sort coming on, would cut a piece off the bun on the door and eat it—or if the bun had passed the cutting stage, would scrape some of it off and take it in water. This would act as a cure for all everyday ills.

Here again, these examples I have cited are taken at random from a long record of such beliefs. Sussex people kept themselves strictly to themselves; their insularity was proverbial.

This is undoubtedly due to the fact that, before the coming of better roads with the development of the Royal Mail, Sussex was never easy of access from other parts of the country. The

large areas of watery marsh east and west, coupled with the great forest running right through the centre of the county, were effective barriers against easy approach. Consequently, Sussex people developed to a high degree suspicion of 'furriners'. They developed their own ideas, their own customs and their own superstitions; and the astonishing thing is that so many of their beliefs are on all fours with those held in other parts of England. Perhaps this is due to the apparent fact that all communities of human beings, through the ages, follow much the same paths in development and evolution.

W.H.D.

## THE VILLAGE THAT NEVER WAS

The road from Tenterden to Rye passes through the village of Wittersham on the Isle of Oxney and there are three side roads to the east all signposted "Ebony".

No village of Ebony is reached by following any of these roads but there is a combined parish of Stone-cum-Ebony.

Following the Lower Road in Oxney a hill in the Marsh to the north of the road is called Chapel Bank and Ebony Church formerly stood on the summit. The church was removed to Reading Street just over a hundred years ago.

Reverting to the name Ebony, the termination -y or -ey suggests an island (cf. Sheppey, Ely, Oxney, Walney, Romney) and a reconstruction map of the area in Roman times before the Marsh was 'inned', clearly shows that Chapel Bank was an island and is probably identical with Ebony.

References to documents show that in Saxon times the Manor of Ebony was granted by the King to the Prior of Christchurch, Canterbury, and the Manor remained in church hands until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537.

There was a large church on the island which was burnt down about 1559 and replaced by a smaller building. The church was, and still is, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and under the Benedictines the Manor became very wealthy. On the Isle of Oxney, within the manor, was Ebony Priory or Court Lodge from which the monks administered the Manor. The original Ebony Priory is now incorporated in an Elizabethan farm house and is reputed to be haunted.

The removal of the church from Chapel Bank in 1858 was carried out by a Woodchurch firm which is still in existence. The work took three months and cost £200!

*SUMMARY*. Ebony was originally an island, then an ecclesiastical manor, then the post-reformation parish of St. Mary but NEVER A VILLAGE.

*"I have a passion for the name of Mary*
*For once it was a magic sound to me;*
*And still it half calls up the realms of fairy*
*Where I beheld what never was to be."*

*Byron. Don Juan.*

D.R.

## WINCHELSEA

Winchelsea is unique in being a port transferred when at its zenith from one site to another some two miles away, and yet retaining its eminence for most of two centuries after the change. That eminence was among the Cinque Ports, though Winchelsea was not one of the original five—which were Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich.

At the height of their fame no Cinque Port ever handled a tithe of the trade of, say, Bristol, Southampton or Boston. They were primarily an association of small fishing fleets which from Saxon times had perforce learned the art of co-operation, of sailing together in convoy, of choosing and obeying, despite all jealousies, a single leader, as the condition of constant piracy in the narrow straits required. The seed of their power was sown when, c. 1050, Edward the Confessor disbanded his small royal fleet, and came to rely on them. After the Conquest the ports were in frequent use as cross-channel terminals.

Certainly by Henry II's reign the confederation was styled 'the Cinque Ports', its French origin being evidenced by the French names of Mayors, Echevins and Jurats. By then their fleets produced a skilful and tough fighting navy which, when not subduing pirates, often turned to preying on French, Flemish and Spanish merchantmen. Under Richard I, as Hastings had difficulty in finding her quota of ships, the 'Ancient Towns' of Winchelsea and Rye were added to the Five, on a basis of complete equality with them. Winchelsea, which then stood on a shingle spit, now probably under the sea near Camber, was then more important than Rye; which lay farther upstream.

The 13th Century, ushered in by the loss of Normandy in 1204, brought the Cinque Ports further to the fore. John indeed had started energetically to build a navy, but throughout his reign he had to rely for ships on the Cinque Ports; whose price was the grant to their corporations of full baronial privileges. The events of 1216-17, being little known, need special mention.

After John had signed Magna Carta in 1215, he remained so suspect to the greater barons that—themselves Norman-Frenchmen—they invited Louis the heir of France, who had a fair claim in right of his wife Blanche of Castile, John's niece, to invade, and to depose the King. They had too the powerful backing of the citizens of London. John was at Canterbury relying on the Cinque Ports fleet, but when this was dispersed by a great storm on 18th May, 1216, Louis was able three days later to bring over to Stonor near Sandwich his fleet of 800 ships carrying 1,200 knights with munitions and numerous infantry. John could only act as his celebrated counsellor William Marshal advised, and retire to Rochester and Winchester, both of which Louis captured, and so to Oxford, though he was later able to raise the siege of Lincoln before he died on October 19th. Meanwhile the Cinque Ports, although forced to take an oath to Louis, were in fact steadfast to the King throughout and effected much damage to French shipping.

John's death brought most nobles to realise that a boy king was preferable to a foreign conqueror who was the prospective king of France. Though over seventy, the aged Marshal was made Regent, and on 19th May, 1217, defeated Louis' lieutenants, who had renewed the siege of Lincoln, at 'Lincoln Fair', as the defeat was derisorily styled. Marshal achieved this largely by means of 300 archers using the crossbow, a new weapon evolved perhaps in the *Weald* though attributed to *Wales*. It is known that Marshal raised much of his force in the Weald, where he had worthy lieutenants, notably William of Keynsham, styled Williken of the Weald—possibly the Williken of "Percy's Reliques"—and Philip Daubeny. Driven from the Channel Islands, where he was Warden, by Eustace 'the Monk', the French sea captain from Boulogne, Daubeny then led a guerilla organisation based on Rye, which he called the Militia of God.

Throughout, Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, had defended Dover against Louis' besiegers; so when Louis began to see the need to return to France but also to hold a bridgehead on the English coast for future use, it was to Winchelsea that he

turned. When the Winchelsea folk were finally forced to leave their town, they took with them or destroyed all the provisions (except a store of nuts!) and ferried themselves across to Rye. Together with the Ryers and the guerillas they then set up a sea blockade of their own town, and the French starved there until, when they were nearly at the end of their tether, the blockade was lifted by a strong French fleet under Eustace the Monk. But on August 17th, when Eustace was taking heavy reinforcements and munitions in 80 ships to the Thames, Hubert de Burgh sallied from Dover with 40 ships only, and destroyed his enemy. Because Eustace had once been in the English service he was beheaded as a traitor on his own ship. After this Louis and his Frenchmen quickly made peace and went back to France.

Through the 13th Century Winchelsea grew more important. After the battle of Evesham in 1265 the younger Simon de Montfort tried to maintain himself there by pirating, but Prince Edward and his Lieutenant in Kent, Roger Leybourne, besieged the town, and on its surrender in 1266 are said to have killed one townsman in ten. The town was also affected by natural disasters. In 1248, and above all in 1287, flooding of the rivers blocked by inrushes of the sea changed the face of the marshes. Indeed by 1284 a commission of five men of national standing had decided that Winchelsea must be moved from its low-lying site, where at best it lay nearly cut off by the sea, to Iham hill overlooking a convenient stretch of the Brede river. As a result of their afflictions the townsfolk were too poor to pay for the move.

Thus the present town of Winchelsea began. Edward was lord of Aquitaine in south-west France, where 'bastides' were common. These were fortress towns built on a regular pattern with streets at right angles—Edward himself had built several such there, including 'Liburne', a town still named after his lieutenant Leybourne. In England he applied the pattern at Winchelsea. The streets were laid out, a Guildhall and a church begun, all on a generous scale; and since it was to be a store-place for imports, the cellars were dug. Each assignee had only to build the house above as his means allowed.

Despite the upheaval the eminence of the town increased. Thus in 1272 out of 21 ships to be provided from the Hastings area, Hastings and Bulverhythe together provided only six, Rye five and Winchelsea ten. In 1294 the full tally for the Cinque Ports was 50; of which Hastings and Hythe provided three each, Romney five, Rye and Dover seven each, Sandwich 12 and Winchelsea 13. Even in 1347, when 49 southern

ports had to provide 700 ships, Winchelsea's share (21) was exceeded only by Bristol, London and the King's own ships. Men of Winchelsea became national figures. From 1300 to 1307 Gervaise Alard was admiral of the whole east coast up to Berwick, and was in charge of the supplies by sea for Edward's wars in Scotland.

Frequent French raids made the Hundred Years War a heroic age for our towns. Parliament indeed declared that "if Winchelsea and Rye are lost that would be the greatest harm to the realm". The Abbot of Battle, as a baron of Parliament, seems to have been assigned permanent forces. If these could reach the towns in time, they could keep out even strong raids. Thus in 1370 the Abbot saved Winchelsea, but not Rye; in 1380 he saved Rye, but not Winchelsea—where the French did enormous damage.

Winchelsea survived all this, and largely rebuilt itself. It was not the French who killed the town, but the silting up of the harbour through the 15th Century, and the advantage Rye had of being a mile or two lower downstream than New Winchelsea, and on a deeper confluence. In 1496 "the last merchant left the town". Prowez' map (mid-16th Century) shows pictures of Rye and Winchelsea respectively. The former shows a seagoing vessel under refit, the latter only a sloop.

The later history of the town is soon told. In 1573, following a plea for help to improve the harbour, Queen Elizabeth I came down. "Beholding the goodly and ancient buildings, the grave bench of Mayor and jurats, and the city-like deportment of the people, she gave it the name of Little London". But she gave nothing else. In 1966, Queen Elizabeth II paid a visit, but the town asked nothing of Her Majesty.

In the three great wars of the 19th and 20th Centuries, Winchelsea lay in the forefront of the country's defences. In the first, the Duke of Cambridge reviewed the troops near Camber Castle; in the last, Winchelsea Beach and Camber Sands were the first villages in England to be compulsorily evacuated.

From 1600 to 1832, when the Reform Act abolished its parliamentary franchise, Winchelsea was the rottenest of rotten boroughs—a fact which John Evelyn among others remarked. It returned two members—chosen on one occasion by only three electors.

By the Municipal Reform Act of 1863 the town lost its criminal, civil and admiralty jurisdiction. In 1896 it was incorporated in Icklesham civil parish, of which it is now a ward. In 1957 the last fragment of Old Winchelsea, 'the Parish of St. Thomas the Apostle, Winchelsea', was merged with Broomhill to form the new Parish of Camber Sands.

But every such act which has affected the civil status of Winchelsea has always preserved its place and privileges as one of the Ancient Towns of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. So may it always proudly remain.

R.L.

## OUR SAXON HERITAGE

The popular idea that English history started with the Norman Conquest is far from the truth. Sir Frank Stenton's assessment of the Norman Conquest in his *Anglo-Saxon England* was: "The Normans who entered into the English inheritance were a harsh and violent race . . . They had produced little in art, and nothing in literature, that could be set beside the work of Englishmen. But politically they were masters of the world". And so, if we want to explore the foundations of our history, we must go back to our Saxon heritage. There is also another important aspect of our history—the unique mingling of races that has gone to build up the English character. So let us start with the Iberians. These people are important to our story, because it is estimated that some Iberian blood flows in the veins of every modern Englishman, more in the average Scot, and most in the Welsh and Irish. Then the Celtic migration commenced. The Celts were a superior race and became super-imposed on the Iberians. This composite race is referred to as 'the Britons', who resisted the Roman occupation. Their craftsmanship was considerable and their courage is clear from the story of Boadicea, who has a worthy memorial on the Thames Embankment. The Roman occupation of England had little or no effect on the mingling of the races, as there were too few Romans. The Roman occupation came to a sorry end in the 4th century, being submerged by the Saxon invaders. Behind the Saxons' savage destructiveness lay the urge to settle and till the ground themselves. Their colonizing energy altered the civilization and racial stock radically. We know little of the 5th and 6th centuries—centuries of chaos. The barbarian Saxons delighted to destroy a superior civilization. A fearsome chaos of warring tribes racked the unhappy island,

which passed so completely out of the stream of civilization that Procopius wrote of misty and mystic islands to which the souls of the dead were ferried over by some uncouth Charon. It was only in the 7th century that Britain began to emerge from the chaos and Christianity returned to England. One is used to Christianity appealing to the poor and outcast; but in England the process was reversed. It was the rulers who were converted first, leaving the common people to follow after. The advent of Christianity marked the beginning of a political civilization based on the arts of reading and writing. Thus developed the slow movement towards political unity which is the essential history of England during the 7th and 8th centuries.

One of the highlights of returning civilization was the reign of Ine (698 to 726) who produced a code of West Saxon law. These laws were copied out by Alfred as an appendix to the code with which English legislation began. Late in the 8th century there is a copy of a South Saxon charter which gives proof of the great advance in the art of government at the top. Another highlight is the glorious reign of Offa (757 to 796). Remarkable proof of Offa's prowess is Offa's Dyke. The scale of this dyke is tremendous, but is less remarkable than the skill with which the line was drawn. Offa was the only ruler in western Europe who could attempt to deal on equal terms with Charlemagne, and was the first English king to play an independent part in Continental affairs. The trade between England and the Continent goes back to the 8th century, and the continuous history of English currency begins with Offa. There was sufficient intercourse with the Arabs to justify the production of gold coins which the Arabs might accept. The next notable name to appear is Egbert of Wessex, whose reign marks an important advance towards political unity. Egbert was the progenitor of the great House of Wessex, which ruled England for over 200 years, and produced the only English king to be termed "The Great". Alfred the Great was Egbert's grandson.

The Viking invaders of England all came from the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian, the north-eastern and seafaring branches of a great family, and were of a stock kindred to the Saxons. They brought back to this island those seafaring habits which the Saxons had lost in their sojourn on farms. Fur traders, whalers, fishermen, merchants, pirates, yet all the while assiduous tillers of the soil. They had always been an amphibious people, combining the pride of the merchant with that of the warrior. By land or sea they were prepared

to trade with the newcomer or cut his throat according to the circumstances and the humour of the hour. These vigorous and versatile warriors formed no small part of the mingling of the races that produced the English character. The closing years of the 8th century and the opening of the 9th marked a great outburst of Viking activity on three main lines—eastward as far as the Black Sea, westward as far as North America, while a middle line, mainly followed by the Danes, attacked the north-east coast of Europe and the south and east coasts of England. These operations ended with the creation of two important Danelaws—the smaller, named after them, Normandy; and the larger all eastern England between the Thames and Tyne. Finally, Norse settlers in Lancashire and Cumberland joined hands across England with the Danish settlers from Yorkshire; so that at this point the Scandinavian race predominated from sea to sea.

Alfred the Great is naturally to be compared with Charlemagne: each was the champion of Christ against the heathen, of the new feudal kingdom against chaos. Each had many-sided talents as warrior, administrator, and scholar suited to an epoch when a king could himself teach, govern, and lead his subjects in peace and war. Their most obvious comparison is that Charlemagne means simply Charles the Great. A more topical comparison with Alfred is Winston Churchill. Both were great literary figures: in both cases England was hard beset, and in each case the stress of the hour produced the man. The Danes had overrun the North, the Midlands, and East Anglia; Wessex alone remaining undefeated. Then, in a surprise attack, Alfred was defeated and had to take refuge in the Isle of Athelney, whence, undaunted, he conducted guerilla activities. In Alfred's day the idea of unity was in its infancy; but he stood for the interests common to the whole of the English race. The result of Alfred's work was the future mingling of Saxon and Dane in a common England. And so when Alfred emerged from his guerilla activities there was a general uprising under his leadership and the Danes were defeated. The Danes settled in fortified places from which is was well nigh impossible to dislodge them. Alfred instituted a network of fortified sites in which the locals could find refuge, and responsibility for their defence was placed on the people who lived on the spot. He could raise local forces only for a short period, after which they were entitled to return to their villages; so Alfred divided the Fyrd into two parts: one part fought with him, and the other half stayed at home. He thus kept an army in the field. But for Alfred English might never have become a literary

language. He rescued, restored, and transmitted the scattered fragments of past achievements, historical, intellectual, and political. His eldest daughter married Ethelred of Mercia who worked closely with him; and when Ethelred died she continued to carry on his good work of subjugating the Danes, and was known as the Lady of Mercia, while Alfred's son Edward carried on his father's work in Wessex. Edward was followed by his son Athelstan, who was almost as great a man as his grandfather and continued the subjugation, including that of the North. He was followed by his two younger brothers, who did not live long. The next in succession were two minors, Edwig and Edgar. Edwig came to the throne, but only lived for four years, so Edgar came to the throne at the age of 16. His reign is notable for the dominance of Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was the central figure in English religious life. Edgar and Dunstan achieved a monastic revival which left a permanent impression on English history in the sphere of religion and culture. Edgar's long deferred coronation at Bath was a magnificent affair. The coronation order made it clear that the essence of the ceremony was not the crowning but the anointing of a king and the consecration of a priest. The form of coronation then produced by the Archbishop and his associates has set the orders on which all coronations have since been based. In the brilliant and peaceful reign of Edgar the administrative reconstruction of the country was consolidated. Shires were reorganized, each with its own sheriff responsible to the crown. An elaborate system of shire, hundred, and borough courts maintained law and order—institutions that have survived from that day to this. But following this blaze of autumn tints came the winter of the utter and ignominious collapse of the great dynasty.

Man has always thrived under conditions of stress, and tends to go to pieces when the stress is removed. Whilst Edgar was firmly on the throne discontent could hardly express itself; but as soon as he died unrest became vocal. The death of Edgar produced another crisis in the succession. He left two sons, both minors. His eldest son Edward, by his first wife, was his natural heir: his other son Ethelred was by his second wife Alfrida, who was all out for her son. Edward, however, was duly elected king, but after three years was foully murdered when visiting his step-mother and brother at Corfe Castle in Dorset. Alfrida was undoubtedly one of the prime movers in the murder, though nothing was proved. Ethelred, aged 13, was crowned king a month after the murder and began his reign in an atmosphere of suspicion. He was

too young to have been an accomplice; but he never escaped the consequences of the crime which had been committed for his sake. He was a weak king and lacked any martial ability. His ignominious reign lasted for 38 years. He preferred to buy off the Danes who revolted against him. He did one wise thing—he married Emma of Normandy. Swein, the Danish leader overran Wessex, and Ethelred fled to France, leaving Swein in military possession of the whole of England. Swein died a few months after Ethelred had fled, and was succeeded by Canute, his young son. Ethelred was invited to return on condition that he reformed everything of which the country complained. His son, Edmund Ironside, now comes into the picture. As a rebel against his father, he was accepted by part of the Danelaw. He and Canute made a compact of mutual friendship; but Edmund died in November 1016, his father Ethelred having predeceased him the April before; so the Saxon Witan decided to abjure the House of Wessex and chose Canute as King. In the miserable and ignominious reign of Ethelred, in spite of the national degeneracy, the Civil Service remained intact, the civilization of an earlier age was preserved, and a number of manuscripts written in England during the period have a distinctive place in the history of book-production. This is a great tribute to the House of Wessex.

Canute, King of Denmark, elected to the crown of England, proved an excellent king. He restored the stable conditions established by Alfred, treating Saxon and Dane with even-handed justice according to their separate customs. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Church, and England prospered under his strong and just rule. Two details of Canute's reign cast their shadows before. The first was the rise of Godwin, the son of a thegn of Sussex, who was raised to power and made Earl of Wessex. At the end of Canute's reign Godwin was one of his chief advisers, he played a leading part in running the country under Edward the Confessor, and he was the father of Harold. The second was the institution of a small standing army of 'Housecarls'. They were a bodyguard of heavily armed professional mounted infantry. Essentially Viking in origin and Anglo-Saxon in development, the Housecarls perished with Harold at Hastings.

Canute was followed by his son Harold, and then by Hardicanute. Neither was of any account, and after seven years the problem of succession cropped up again. There was a strong national demand for the return of the ancient house of Wessex; there was also a party who sought to put Magnus of Norway on the throne; but it was Edward the Confessor

who was elected king in London by popular acclaim. The King of Norway's claim to the throne is important. Canute was the king of Denmark, Norway, and England. If he had lived till he was sixty instead of dying at forty, he might well have founded his Nordic Empire; but when he died, Norway was already in conflict with Denmark. Magnus of Norway made a treaty with Hardicanute, who was ruling Denmark before he came to the English throne. This treaty set out that if either should die without heir, his kingdom should pass to the survivor. Hardicanute acquired the kingdom of England and died without heir; and on this slender pretext Magnus claimed that he had inherited the kingdom of England. Magnus was succeeded by Harald Hardrada.

The accession of Edward the Confessor meant that England now looked towards Normandy. Edward's mother was Norman, he had been brought up in Normandy, and was at heart not an English king but a French monk. When he died without heir, there were only some minors surviving, so there was a void in the succession. Harold Earl of Wessex had ruled the country under Edward; a brilliant warrior, he commanded the army of Housecarls, and was the only and obvious choice of the Witan. But England was a rich prize for Harald Hardrada, who sought to restore the Scandinavian empire of Canute, or for William of Normandy.

Hardrada got in first. In September 1066 with 300 ships he invaded Yorkshire. The Northern levies gave battle at Fulford but were defeated. Harold marched hot-foot up north, and completely surprised Hardrada at Stamford Bridge on 25th September. Hardrada was a notable commander, had an excellent army, and was a formidable opponent. Stamford Bridge has been largely eclipsed by Hastings; but it was probably the more important battle of the two. Harold well nigh annihilated the Norsemen and Hardrada was killed. Stamford Bridge was Harold's most brilliant victory; but it was won at a considerable price as his losses were heavy. Three days after Stamford Bridge William landed in Sussex. The news reached Harold in York and he marched swiftly back. William harried the locals, and, knowing Harold's impetuosity, counted on this to bring Harold hot-foot to blast him into the sea. William's strategy was successful, and nothing would satisfy Harold but to attack forthwith. The result we all know; but what is not so well appreciated is that Harold had done William a good turn in defeating Hardrada, and had thus removed a serious and formidable threat to William's claim to the whole of England.

What about the abiding effect of the Norman Conquest? Trevelyan, in his History of England, considers one outcome to be the making of the English language. "As the result of Hastings," he wrote, "the Anglo-Saxon tongue, the speech of Alfred and Bede, was exiled from hall and bower, from court and cloister, and was despised as a peasant's jargon, the talk of ignorant serfs. It ceased almost, although not quite, to be a written language. The learned and the pedantic lost all interest in its forms; for the clergy talked Latin and the gentry talked French. Now when a language is seldom written and is not an object of interest to scholars, it quickly adapts itself in the mouths of plain people to the needs and uses of life . . . If the grammar is clumsy and ungraceful, it can be altered much more easily when there are no grammarians to protest. And so it fell out in England. During the three centuries when our native language was a peasant's dialect, it lost its clumsy inflections and elaborate genders and acquired the grace and suppleness and adaptability which are amongst its chief merits. At the same time it was enriched by many French words and ideas. The English vocabulary is mainly French in words relating to war, politics, justice, religion, hunting, cooking, and art. Thus improved, our native tongue re-entered polite and learned society as the English of Chaucer's Tales and Wycliffe's Bible to be still further enriched into the English of Shakespeare and Milton . . . It is symbolic of the fate of the English race itself after Hastings, fallen to rise nobler, trodden under foot only to be trodden into shape."

A.R.C.

## THE CANAL STORY

The era of Canals—as distinct from river navigations—began about the year 1760, during the first stirrings of the Industrial Revolution. The inventions of Watt, Arkwright, and Crompton and also of the Rev. Edmund Cartwright, F.S.A., who is remembered on the north wall of Battle Parish Church as an eminent divine, poet and inventor, all tended to increase production. Whereas the method of transportation remained in the pack-horse era, as it had done for centuries.

The story really opens in 1762 with the return to his estates in Lancashire after an unsuccessful love affair in London, of Francis Egerton, third and last Duke of Bridgewater. On the family estates at Worsley were productive coal mines and the second Duke had already given much thought to the problem of getting this coal away to market,

but he died before anything could be done. Francis the third Duke, during his travels on the Continent, had taken note of a canal in the South of France and it was possibly this that put into his head the idea of digging his own canal for the distribution of his coal. It was at this juncture that a man was introduced to him, by name James Brindley. Brindley was a very exceptional man; of little or no education, he yet had a natural flair for engineering and mechanics. He did most of his work in his head without drawings or written calculations, yet he became known as "The father of inland navigation".

After much hostility and opposition, Royal Assent was given to the plan and work on the canal began in 1762. It must be remembered that there were no machine tools at this period and all the work was done by hand, with pick, shovel, barrow and horse and cart. The canal was completed to Liverpool in ten years and at a cost of £220,000, but before the Duke died, he was receiving revenue of about £80,000 a year.

An east-west canal was the next to be built, linking the Mersey and the Trent, but Brindley, with his wide vision, had a scheme to link the four great waterways of England; Mersey, Humber, Severn and Thames, forming a grand trunk canal off which other canals would branch. Unfortunately, he died at the early age of 56 before his great scheme was completed. Suffice it to say that by 1794, 45 canals had been completed. Most were very successful, though some served only local needs, but the canal-building boom enabled raw materials and finished goods to be moved with a cheapness never before attained and contributed very largely to the industrial expansion of the Midlands and North.

Among other canal-builders, who became prominent later in other spheres of engineering, may be mentioned John Rennie, Thomas Telford, William Jessop and John Smeaton.

By 1820, the system was nearly complete. Three canals crossed the Pennines, others served the collieries, ironworks and quarries of Derbyshire, a line from the Trent through Leicester linked up with Birmingham and London to form what is now the Grand Union Canal. Three canals joined the Thames to the river Severn or the Bristol Avon, while others served the collieries of South Wales and even penetrated deep into mid-Wales.

The commonest engineering feature on the canals was the ordinary "pound" lock, which raises or lowers the level of the waterway according to the ground—an idea attributed to

that versatile Italian, Leonardo da Vinci. Brindley tried to keep his canals on the same level as long as possible by following the contours of the ground and then grouping the locks in tiers of five or seven. The climax of this method was the Bingley Five Rise, on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, in which each lock leads directly into the adjoining lock without an intervening pound, thus providing a maximum ascent with the minimum of labour. A number of alternative methods were tried and the most successful, the Anderton Lift, is still in daily operation. This connects the river Weaver with the Trent and Mersey Canal and lifts or lowers boats 50 feet in two caissons; these originally worked hydraulically but were electrified in 1912.

Brindley devised an aquaduct to take his Bridgewater Canal over the river Irwell and this remained in use until 1893, when it was replaced by a swing aquaduct on the building of the Manchester Ship Canal. Other aquaducts were built on the later canals, but mention must be made of Telford's masterpiece at Pontcysyllte, which carried the Shropshire Union over the valley of the river Dee. This consists of a cast-iron trough 1,007 feet long, carried on stone piers 121 feet high in the middle. Opened in 1801, at a cost of £47,000, it is still open for use by pleasure craft and is scheduled as a monument of national importance.

Most canals resorted to tunnelling to penetrate the final were illuminated, but the great majority, for reasons of stage of any major land divide. A few had towpaths and economy, had neither. Brindley's Harecastle Tunnel on the Trent and Mersey Canal, nearly 3,000 yards long, was the first to be built; Strandedge Tunnel in Yorkshire, more than three miles in length, was at the highest level of any British navigation; Blisworth Tunnel on the Grand Union, 3,075 yards, is now the longest tunnel in use on British waterways.

Sapperton Tunnel ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles) on the Thames and Severn Canal pierces the Cotswold watershed and was opened in 1792 by King George III in person. It is one of the very few tunnels to have an ornamental portal, as the eastern entrance is battlemented, has two tall monoliths and three niches, which were to have contained statues of George III. Father Thames and Sabrina, signifying the union of Thames and Severn under George III. Unfortunately, the statues were never put up. The G.W.R. eventually bought up the canal to prevent competition and then let it go to ruin.

Most of the traffic moved slowly, but there were express boats, called "fly boats", which travelled day and night with

relays of fast horses, carrying passengers or small consignments of goods at a higher charge. Many canals had market boats for housewives once a week and *The Times* in December 1806 describes the movement by canal of a division of troops from London to Liverpool, each barge containing 60 men. The move took seven days, as compared with 14 by march route, and the troops arrived "with comparatively little fatigue". Steam in due course superseded the horse as motive power and was in turn replaced by the diesel internal combustion engine.

In the early days, the narrow boats were crewed by men who lived ashore; but with growing competition from the railways, the earnings of the boatmen fell and it was then that they brought their wives and children to live on board, to provide a cheap crew and save rent. With the passing years, boat families grew into a race apart, seeking little contact with those who lived "on the land". Their cabin homes were miracles of compactness and there grew up the traditional "roses and castles" form of decoration that embellished their boats inside and out and also their domestic utensils.

In the south and south-east of England, the impact of canals was hardly felt. Work on river navigations had been going on for a number of years and by 1800, improvements to the rivers Wey, Medway, Arun, Adur and the western Rother had brought inland water transport to Godalming, Tonbridge and Midhurst, but only seven canals with a total length of 142 miles were cut to feed them. Of these, the most ambitious and the most successful, was the Wey and Arun Junction Canal, which with a proposed extension from the Arun through Langstone Harbour would provide a complete waterway from London to Portsmouth. The decline of these canals started with the coming of the railways in 1855-56 and in 1892 the Portsmouth and Arundel Company was finally wound up. A canal cut from the river Wey at Byfleet to Basingstoke was never officially abandoned but it now loses itself in a tunnel after 31 miles and the final six miles to Basingstoke are largely dry. Three other canals, the Croydon, the Thames and Medway and the Andover, were all eventually converted to railways.

However, one canal, though built for strategic reasons, was commercially successful and is still in existence. This was the Royal Military Canal, from Hythe skirting Romney Marsh to reach the sea at Rye Harbour. The project was conceived in 1804 as a defensive measure against the threat of invasion by Napoleon. The scheme was authorized as a

field work and John Rennie was appointed to take charge of the work. The canal was to be 60 feet wide at the top and 9 feet deep: the excavated earth was to form a defensive rampart on the landward side behind which ran a military road. The canal was completed about October 1806 and was found to have cost £59,000 less than the estimate.

The Act of Parliament authorizing the canal was not passed until the following year and this treated the canal entirely as a commercial proposition, except that there was one unusual proviso which prohibited landing on the north bank (i.e. the rampart side) under pain of a fine of £20. Until about 1850, the canal not only paid for its upkeep, but made a substantial profit from canal rates and road tolls. Navigation on the eastern portion of the canal ceased about 1890, but on the Rother and into the western portion, it lingered until about 1914. The main function of the canal is now land drainage.

The coming of the railways in the middle years of the 19th century provided fierce competition for the canal owners, which at first they endeavoured to ignore, adopting a policy of blind hostility and clinging obstinately to their high tolls and charges. Eventually, some canal owners attempted to build railways for themselves, others to sell their canals to railways. By 1888, one-third of the existing canals had been acquired willingly or unwillingly by the railway companies. Some of these they worked, even at a loss, others were used as a bed for railway tracks. In more recent years, further competition has come from road transport and the canals, now nationalised, are administered by the British Waterways Board.

L.C.G.

## IGHTHAM

The second visit of the Society to Ightham was attended by 29 members. The first visit took place on 22nd April, 1959, and descriptions both of Ightham Mote and Ightham Church appeared in No. 8 of *Transactions*. Ightham Mote is a curious name: Ightham is said to mean the estate of some unknown Saxon called Ehta, while Mote is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Gemot* meaning "Council"; which suggests that the earliest building on the site, if indeed the council meetings were not held in the open air, fulfilled the same functions as Watch Oak at Battle.

## PRESTON AND CLAYTON

The meeting was attended by 20 members

### Preston Manor House

The manor of Preston Episcopi, or Bishop's Preston, was originally one of eight which belonged to the Bishop of Chichester. It included not only most of the old parish of Preston, but also more than half the parish of Hove, including the greater part of Hove foreshore. The Manor House was originally erected about 1250, about the same time as the parish church, but not, perhaps, on its present site. Whatever house stood on the site in 1738 was put into its present Georgian form by Thomas Western, a descendant through the female line of Anthony Shirley, who was the stepson of Richard Elrington who had obtained the lease of the manor from Robert Sherburne, bishop of Chichester in 1510. The great-grandson of Thomas Western, later created Baron Western of Rivenhall sold Preston in 1794 to William Stanford, whose grand-daughter succeeded to the property and married, as her second husband, Charles Thomas, who assumed the additional surname of Stanford and was created a baronet in 1929. Already in 1925 the Thomas-Stanfords had given Preston Manor and four acres adjoining to the Corporation of Brighton for the purposes of a public museum and park. Sir Charles and Lady Thomas-Stanford both died in 1932 without heirs, having bequeathed their furniture, books, documents, deeds, and papers to Brighton Corporation, which assumed complete control of the Manor House on 2nd January 1933. In 1936 the lodges and stables were pulled down and the space laid out with grass and shrubs. Preston Park, originally part of the grounds of the Manor House, was bought by the Corporation of Brighton for £50,000 in 1883. The cause of the church tower jutting out into the manor garden is that in 1547 Richard Elrington was permitted to take 64 square poles of the churchyard to add to his orchard, on condition that he rebuilt the churchyard walls. The flint walls that he built still stand.

The furniture at Preston Manor, selected to be transferred to the Corporation, remained, by Lady Thomas-Stanford's wish, in the museum to give visitors a correct idea of the appearance of the house when handed over. The rooms at Preston Manor House are sumptuously furnished with a variety of historic pieces, pictures, silver, and *objets d'art*; the whole forming a most pleasing exhibition.

**The Church of St. Peter, Preston**

Preston, formerly Prestetone, or Priest's Farm, although now part of Brighton, was once a village; and its church, standing as it was built about 1250, is one of the ancient churches of England. There were two earlier churches on the site, one of which was Saxon and mentioned in Domesday Book. Its font, discovered in the Manor grounds, was reinstated, so that there are now two fonts. It is a long church, 95 feet; and the Early English chancel arch shows the chancel to be of slightly later date than the nave. Three fragments are all that remain of paintings which once covered all the walls. That of the murder of Becket may be the oldest extant representation of the subject. Henry VIII objected to it and ordered that all the paintings be covered up with plaster. When the plaster was removed in 1830 the paintings were in excellent condition; but a disastrous fire in 1906 destroyed most of them. The beautiful carving of the choir stalls is attributed to Grinling Gibbons, who lived for a while at Rottingdean. The chancel has a good example of a barrel roof, and the altar is actually a tomb bearing the arms of Edward Elrington who held the manor at his death in 1515. This is one of the few remaining altar tombs in the country. The church is rich in stained glass, mostly of the 19th century.

**The Church of St. John the Baptist, Clayton**

This Saxon church, dating from the second half of the tenth century, was previously visited by the Society on 22nd May 1963, and a short account appeared on No. 12 of *Transactions*. Since then the wall paintings, for which the church is famous, have received their third preservation treatment and are now in good condition. During the restoration it was found that the whole chancel arch had been covered with thick red paint in the 15th century. When this was removed, the whole painting of "Christ in Glory" was revealed. The subject of the paintings is an extremely full rendering of The Last Judgment, probably the most complete of its date (11th or 12th century) in existence.

Clayton, although never, perhaps, a conventional village, has been from ancient times a centre of population, as proved by relics of habitations found from time to time. It stands on the Roman road from Croydon to Portslade, a Roman port. The name Clayton means what it seems to mean—*Farmstead on clayey soil*; and one of the fields on the tithe map is called *The Clay*. The Domesday entry of Clayton is as follows: "There is a church and 23 acres of meadow, woodland yielding 15 swine, 26 villeins and 5 bordars" (freehold cottagers).

## ROMNEY MARSH CHURCHES

The meeting was attended by 24 members.

### Ivychurch

This spacious church, 114 feet long, has been called "The Cathedral of the Marshes". It has a high tower which is a landmark, a low tower, and a small round turret. Its 14th-century nave and chancel are separated from the two aisles, which run the whole length of the church, by arcades of seven fine arches. Except for a few 15th-century windows, the church is probably one of the most complete examples of 14th-century craftsmanship. There is a wealth of ancient woodwork, and some medieval stained glass. Also to be noted are the encaustic tiles and a long stone bench of the 15th century.

### Old Romney and New Romney churches

Members also visited these churches. They were previously visited by the Society on 10th June 1959, and descriptions of them appeared in No. 8 of *Transactions*.

## FISHBOURNE AND BOSHAM

This all-day outing was attended by the record number of 56 members. The weather was inclement; but not, perhaps, as bad as on 8th June 1960, when the Society last visited Chichester.

### The Roman Palace and Museum, Fishbourne

One afternoon in April 1960 an excavator was being used to dig a trench for a water main north of the village of Fishbourne, a mile and a half from the centre of Chichester. It cut through a mass of Roman tiles; and so the largest Roman building of its kind in the country was discovered. The first trial excavation in 1961 disclosed astonishing remains. It was evident that an elaborate building, too large to be called a 'villa' and of earlier date than anything of the kind so far discovered in Britain, awaited systematic excavation. Over a period of eight years archaeologists examined the development of a large Roman site, its military beginnings at the very start of the Roman occupation (A.D. 43), its civilian growth which culminated in the erection of a unique palace, and its final destruction by fire about A.D. 270.

The military buildings were wooden structures and formed a base with storehouses and workshops for dealing with supplies for the Roman Army which were landed at a small nearby port.

Between A.D. 45 and 75 the site had been turned over to civilian use and several buildings were constructed and demolished, among them one consisting of small rooms overlooking workshops where bread was baked and bronze implements made, a bath house by the stream, and a fine country house with colonnades. Masonry had succeeded wood in the seventh decade of the first century. To the west of these buildings stood an enormous guest house or official residence which, apparently, had never been finished. Its extent is unknown, as most of it lies under modern gardens.

About A.D. 75 the country house was added to and became the south-east corner of a magnificent palace with four wings enclosing an ornamental garden. The west wing was built on a higher platform so as to overlook the rest of the building. The area covered was more than 250,000 square feet, and it must have taken years to build. When it was finished, there lay at Fishbourne a palace without parallel in the provincial part of the Roman Empire. The colonnades were constructed of columns covered with fluted plaster, supporting ornate Corinthian capitals. The interior decoration was also ornate: some walls were inlaid with marble, others were painted with bright coloured panels of yellow, red, and dark blue. The floors of almost all the 60 rooms were covered with mosaics; the earlier group comprising black and white geometric patterns and polychromatic mosaics quite unlike any found outside Italy and the Mediterranean. Early in the second century the palace changed hands and more coloured floors were introduced, of which the finest is that with a boy and dolphin motif in the centre, laid down in the mid-second century. Other mosaic floors depict Medusa and shell and rosette motifs, providing, in all, a demonstration of how the mosaic art developed in Britain from the first to the third century. This is of great importance because nearly all villa mosaics in Britain were laid in the fourth century.

The large formal garden uncovered during the excavation included bedding trenches for shrubs and an irrigation system with four-inch pipes, and basins. This is the only original Roman garden known in Europe outside Italy; and it is being reconstituted in its original condition.

Unfortunately, the main Portsmouth road bisects the site, and the south wing is buried under Fishbourne village; but trial trenches have proved that it had two colonnades, one facing the garden and the other looking southwards to the sea.

For whom, it may be asked, was this superb palace erected? That may never be known; but the palace was on the very doorstep of *Noviomagus Regnensium* (Chichester), the capital of the Regni, who became *Socii* either before or soon after the invasion. Cogidubnus, their king, faithful to the Romans, had been promoted *Legatus Augusti*, equivalent in rank to a Roman senator, by the time the palace was begun. Either he or his successor must surely have been the first owner.

The site has been prepared for the public at a cost of more than £200,000, all of which was financed by various trusts and individuals. Mr. I. D. Margary, president of the Sussex Archaeological Society paid for the land, the museum, and the north wing cover buildings; while the *Sunday Times* contributed £20,000 for the museum exhibition, in which new techniques were employed to display the painted wall plaster, column capitals, sculpture, coins and other evidence of daily life at Fishbourne. The Chichester Civic Society organized the excavations, which were directed by Professor Barry Cunliffe of Southampton University, and the Sussex Archaeological Society owns and manages the property. The site was formally opened by Mr. Ivan D. Margary, F.S.A., on 30th May 1968, the Rt. Rev., the Lord Bishop of Chichester, Roger Wilson, D.D., President of the Society presiding at the ceremony.

**Church of the Holy Trinity, Bosham**

*The church of Dicul, of King Canute, of Earl Godwin, of King Harold, of the Domesday Book, and of the Bayeaux Tapestry. The oldest site of Christianity in Sussex.*

Built on a Roman site, the stones of the original Basilica (A.D. 350) can be seen at the foot of the great chancel arch, and Roman bricks can be seen in the walls. The first written record of Bosham Church is contained in the Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History. Describing Bishop Wilfrid's conversion of the South Saxons in 681 he wrote: "All the province of the South Saxons were strangers to the name and faith of God. There was among them a certain monk

of the Scottish nation, whose name was Dicul, who had a very small monastery at a place called Bosanham, encompassed with the sea and woods, and in it five or six brothers who served The Lord in poverty and humility; but none of the natives cared either to follow their course of life or hear their preaching".

Out of Dicul's little church, possibly represented today by the crypt, grew first a small Saxon church, and then a very important Minster, or major Saxon church, which expanded quickly when the Wessex kings acquired Bosham Manor House and made the church a royal chapel. The existing church was begun by Canute about 1020. Canute's church was rectangular, outlined by the centre aisle of the present church and extending about one-third of the way up the chancel. While Canute was resident at the Manor House in 1020 one of his three daughters, aged eight, was accidentally drowned in the moat or Bosham Stream. She was, by tradition, buried in the church to the right of the chancel arch; and this was verified when her stone coffin was found and opened in 1865. The story of Canute and the waves may have had its origin at Bosham, because he built the first sea walls round Quay Meadow. That he sat in a chair is part of the story, and it has been suggested that "chair" is a corruption of an old Saxon word for sea-wall. Godwin, created Earl of Wessex by Canute, made Bosham his main house; and is thought to be the man buried in a stone coffin in the middle of the chancel arch. The chancel arch, said to be the biggest pre-Conquest arch in England, was built in, or just after, the time of Harold, Godwin's son. It is depicted in the stylized representation of Bosham church on the Bayeaux Tapestry. The tapestry also shows Harold enjoying a meal at the Manor House at Bosham, and then embarking on his enigmatic voyage to Normandy in 1064.

King Harold is often represented as an upstart and a commoner; but this is not quite true. His mother, Gytha, was a daughter of Canute's first cousin, and can therefore be regarded as of Danish royal blood.

The north aisle of the church was built about 1200. The chancel was lengthened and the magnificent east window was built about 1250, when the south aisle was added. Herbert of Bosham, secretary to Thomas Becket, who wrote an eye-witness account of the archbishop's murder, is buried in the church. Still in use are the late Norman font, and an oak chest, dating from about 1200, in a secret recess of which was found a coin of Edward I.

## BREDE PLACE

This visit had originally been projected as an autumn outing to wind up the summer season; but Mr. Roger Frewen wrote to say that he was disposing of Brede Place early in September, after which the house would no more be open to the public. However, owing to his long association with this society, he was glad to extend a special invitation to our members to pay a farewell visit to the house and to meet members of the Northiam Historical and Literary Society, of which he is president.

Accordingly, some 50 members arrived at Brede Place at 6 p.m. on Friday, 30th August, to be greeted by Mr. Frewen and Air-Cmdr. F. A. Skoulding, the chairman of the Northiam Society. Not only was the whole house open for members to go where they pleased, but sherry and light refreshments were later served to round off an occasion which was most interesting and pleasant, though somewhat nostalgic.

L.C.G.

## BELLE TOUTE EXCAVATIONS

On a sunny, blustery day, 14 members visited the Bronze and Iron Age excavations on the Downs between Birling Gap and the old Belle Toute Lighthouse. Since earlier excavations in 1909 (see S.A.C. LV, page 41), there has been much erosion of the cliff edge.

The objects of the present excavations were to date the earthwork enclosing the entire 50-acre hilltop, where early Iron Age shards were found, and to examine a small rectangular enclosure situated on the cliff edge within this outer earthwork. The work was undertaken by Mr. Richard Bradley, of Southampton University and a team of voluntary helpers.

Mr. Bradley explained that digging was suspended on the outer earthwork in order to concentrate on two areas of the interior, totalling 5,000 square feet. The earthwork of the small enclosure was shown to belong to the Beaker Culture of the early Bronze Age (i.e. about B.C. 1800), and to have gone through six or seven phases of construction and reconstruction. In both areas traces were found of living sites. Fragments of Beaker pottery were found; also earlier Mesolithic flints, within the enclosure.

Later, the site of a small circular hut was found. The site, as it is now known, seems to have no close parallel in England, and it is hoped that permission will be given for a further season's work to be carried out on it.

J.E.S.R.

## FINDS AND FIELDWORK

In midsummer 1967 it was unexpectedly discovered that Limen field, Bodiam, was not under cultivation. With the kind consent of Mr. H. R. Roberts, managing director of Guinness Hop Farms Ltd., a further brief excavation was made in September by Mr. Gerald Brodribb, with the expert assistance of Mr. Manwaring Baines, F.S.A. Time was short and the area selected was one measuring 15 feet by 12 feet, centred on a point only 20 yards from the gate to the field. This area was thoroughly investigated down to a point 37 inches deep where a metalled track was discovered only an inch or two above the basic clay. This track appeared to run towards the area excavated in 1960, and within the present area made a right-angled turn towards the main road. The track was well cambered and on the outside of the bend was a horse-shoe-shaped paved patch measuring 40 inches by 32 inches. This was paved with some 20 pieces of thick tile including some pieces of terrae mammatae with the boss upwards, but no one piece fitted with another.

It was not easy to obtain clear and regular sections but in general the numerous pieces of broken tile came at a depth of between 15 and 23 inches, with traces of burning below that, and lower still, a considerable quantity of pottery shards of which the better examples were found almost at the same level as the track. As seen at previous excavations here, there were many signs of considerable disturbance.

Among the many pieces of tile fragments were several CL BR tiles. Most were very small, but they showed an interesting range of type, and it may be said that Bodiam has already produced more variety of CL BR tiles than any other site. The tiles have been reported to Mr. R. P. Wright, who records all inscriptions in *The Journal of Roman Studies*.

Six coins in very poor condition were found, and cover a period between A.D. 138 and A.D. 270: since other coins found in previous Bodiam excavations all pre-date the latter year, it can be suggested with some confidence that the Bodiam occupation may have come to an end towards the end of the third century, possibly at the time of Saxon raids.

Other finds included a great deal of corroded iron, and only a few nails remained intact. The iron stain damaged much of the pottery shards; and this was regrettable, as the shards included some 40 pieces of Samian ware—many of them very small bits. Three of the pieces which proved to fit together and form one were found in widely scattered

areas, which gives further evidence of the disturbed nature of the site. Other finds of interest included part of a millstone made of Neidermendig Lava imported from the Rhineland, a portion of amphora handle, one piece of Castor ware with its usual hunting-dog motif, several pieces of varying-coloured glass, a few pig's teeth, and one oyster shell.

This brief excavation confirms the belief that the whole of Limen field contains a vast quantity of Roman material, and probes suggest a wide range of tracks running across it. It is hoped that the occasion may soon arise when excavation may be made in Piper's field on the other side of the main road. It is likely to be just as interesting, and may perhaps contain the original building which is the source of the miscellaneous tile scattered in second-hand use over the whole Bodiam area.

G.B.

## COMMEMORATION OF THE 902nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

### COMMEMORATION LECTURE

The Commemoration Lecture should have been delivered on Friday, 11th October, by Mr. R. H. C. Davis, M.A., Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and editor of *History*, on "The Reign of King Stephen". Unfortunately, owing to a sudden illness, Mr. Davis was unable to come to Battle, and his place was taken at very short notice by Miss M. A. Ashe, M.A., from Eastbourne, who gave a delightful and interesting talk on "Parish Churches", illustrated with slides of her own taking. The Society is most grateful to Miss Ashe for thus stepping into the breach; but on account of the breadth and character of her subject is not publishing a precis of her lecture.

### COMMEMORATION SERVICE IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, BATTLE

The Commemoration Service on Sunday, 13th October, 1968, was conducted by the Rev. Frank Hawthorne of St. George's Church, Tacumseh, Michigan, U.S.A., who arrived in Battle earlier in the month on a ten months' exchange of pulpits with the Very Rev. F. H. Outram, Dean of Battle. The lessons were read by Mrs. E. Webster, a vice-president, and Major L. C. Gates, chairman of the Society. The sermon was preached by the Rev. H. R. Darby, M.A., Vicar of Waltham Abbey, the reputed burial place of King Harold,

who in the prelude to his sermon said that he brought greetings from King Harold's home, and that he was very pleased that, although we were commemorating an act of violence, the burden of our intercession in our prayers at the service had been that of peace.

In his sermon he recalled that Waltham Abbey had been built by Harold before he became king 900 years ago. As nothing was left of the true history of those times one had to fall back on legends which, though nearly all romance, yet contained some little grain of truth. He then repeated the legend of Harold's being bitten by a witch, becoming paralysed, and then being cured when laid before the Holy Cross in a little Saxon chapel. Out of gratitude he built the Abbey and dedicated it to Waltham Holy Cross, which was housed therein and the Abbey thereafter became a place of pilgrimage. A second legend was told, according to tradition, by Turkil, Abbey Sacristan in 1066. On Harold's southward march after his victory in Yorkshire he made a little detour with his men, who were knocked about, wounded, and tired, to Waltham. Harold and Turkil spent the night in vigil; and as Harold went out at sunrise the stone figure on the cross bowed its head—a sure sign that Harold would never return alive. That was Turkil's story: was it imagination? At any rate he believed it and so did the people of Waltham.

Who knows now whether he is a Saxon or a Norman? Even in our own day our names can still betray our origins, but the blood is so mingled within us that we partake of the genius of both. It is interesting in the old legends to see where each side looked for its strength; and it seemed that they both looked the same way. Those two strange fierce men William and Harold: what was it that activated both? At various times victory could have gone either way; but neither of these two men would accept defeat. It can be believed that our people carry in them something of the genius of both; because we have stood on the brink of being swallowed up very many times since then. It is a sort of joke that has been levelled at us down the years—not knowing when to give up.

The preacher then recalled that after four years as a prisoner of war in Japan, the doctor came to tell him that a Dutchman who had nothing medically wrong with him was giving up after the awful times they had been through, and had turned his face to the wall. Nothing could be done for him, and he died just two weeks before they were all free men again. It is a very fine line between victory and

defeat. We have something to learn from Harold and William this morning. The same cross was their symbol—the same cross. The coat of arms of Waltham Abbey bears the legend which was of such very great importance to them—IN HOC SIGNO VINCIMUS. *In this sign we conquer.*

## EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on 15th November 1968

The Chairman's report, previously circulated, was taken as read and approved. Membership at the end of the year stood at 268, a drop of 16 from last year, although 28 new members had joined. The effective balance of the General Account had fallen during the year from £55 7s. 9d. to £18 8s. 6d., a situation which gave the Committee considerable cause for anxiety. It was, therefore, proposed to amend Rule 5 and increase annual subscriptions as follows:

(a) Minimum adult individual subscription to be 15s.
(b) Subscription for two members of the same family, 25s. Junior subscriptions to remain at 5s.

The new rates to come into operation in October, 1969. After discussion, a resolution to this effect was passed.

Early in the year the Planning Officer, East Sussex County Council, submitted the Draft Battle Town Plan and Town Centre Map to the Society for consideration. The Society's recommendations, which were confirmed at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 14th March, 1968, were forwarded to Battle Rural District Council on 27th March. Briefly, they were:

(1) That the area of the battlefield as marked on the map and classed as of great historical importance should be extended:
    (a) northward to the boundary wall of the abbey grounds.
    (b) south-westward to the drive to Powdermill House; and
    (c) south-eastward to the entrance gate of Glengorse, so as to include all the important points of the battlefield, and the area of the Norman deployment.
(2) That an area about Oakwood Gyll, now generally agreed as the site of the Malfosse, be classed as of great historic importance.
(3) That a relief road to the east of the town, which would necessitate drastic demolition in Mount Street, would be accepted only with the greatest regret.

(4) That if a relief road were found eventually to be necessary a route be followed well to the west of the town that would not endanger any of the important and recognizable features of the battlefield.

At the elections which followed, Mrs. E. Webster and Mr. A. E. Marson were re-elected vice-presidents for three years. The following officers were re-elected for one year: Chairman, Major L. C. Gates; vice-chairman, Brigadier D. A. Learmont; hon. secretary, Mr. W. Orger; hon. treasurer, Mr. R. W. Bishop. Three retiring members of the Committee, Mrs. O. Bindley, Miss R. Chiverton, and Mr. A. E. Stevenson were re-elected; and Mr. E. H. Mayer was elected vice Sir James Doak (who did not seek re-election), all for three years.

After the Museum Trust meeting Mr. K. Clarke showed two short colour films on "Glass-making in Hastings" and "Charcoal Burning in Marley Lane".

## MUSEUM TRUST

### Second Annual General Meeting

Held on 15th November 1968

The chair was taken by Mr. E. H. Mayer, vice-chairman. The report of the Committee of Management, previously circulated, was approved. Mr. E. H. Mayer, a co-opted member, was elected a committee member vice Mr. K. Clarke, resigned; and the following members were elected en bloc, Messrs. C. T. Chevallier, A. R. Clough, W. Orger, W. N. Palmer, H. Wadsworth, B. A. Weber, and Miss J. E. S. Robertson (hon. secretary). Mr. E. H. Mayer was elected hon. curator of the museum vice Lieut.-Colonel Lemmon, who retired during the year. Sincere tribute was paid to Lieut.-Colonel Lemmon for his outstanding services, thanks to Mr. Wadsworth, who resigned as vice-chairman owing to ill-health for all his help, and also to Mr. Clarke for his help in the photographic field. Net profit for the year was £179 15s. 1d., and the total balance in hand £474 3s. 8d. It was agreed to donate £13 to the General Fund of the Society, and £18 to Battle Memorial Hall Funds. A grant of £2 was made from the Research Account to assist the excavations at Belle Toute, leaving a balance of £25 19s. 5d. The attendance figure was 11,913 (last year's figure being 9,556), which is highly satisfactory. The Museum Trust, being a registered charity, can reclaim all selective employment tax paid for the two custodians.

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