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BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: Professor G. M. TREVELYAN, O.M., C.B.E.

Transactions
1953 - 1954

Price: 2/9

BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Affiliated to the Sussex Archaeological Society and the
Sussex Archaeological Trust*

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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

In compiling this volume of the Transactions of the Society during the fourth year of its existence, the Editors have had again to restrict that which is put on record to that which is of local interest, and to omit, regretfully, the four very instructive talks by Mr. Frank Geary, B.Sc. (Econ.), chairman of the Northiam and District Historical and Literary Society, on "Life in Mediaeval England". These lectures were much appreciated, and the thanks of the B. & D.H.S. are due to the sister society of Northiam. In place of Mr. D'Elboux's lecture on Heraldry he has kindly contributed an article of more local interest on "Sussex Brasses".

The two visits of the Souvenir Normand are described at some length because they are recent local history in the making, and concern the only monument, except the Abbey itself, which has yet been erected on the battlefield. The existence of the B. & D.H.S., moreover, supplied the necessary liaison with the Battle district, and so filled, to a great extent, the void left by the lapse of the East Sussex branch of the Souvenir. This branch has now been re-formed, and Lord Bessborough has agreed to become its President. At a meeting at Hastings Town Hall on December 9th, a committee of 11 was elected, which included, *ex-officio*, the Chairman of the B. & D.H.S., Three committee members of the B. & D.H.S. were also elected. More members are required. The Hon. Secretary and Treasurer is Mr. W. H. Dyer, 9 Verulam Place, Hastings.

Lecture delivered by Mr. Rupert Gunnis on
November 13th, 1953

ENGLISH SCULPTURE IN CHURCHES, 1660 - 1850

The Society was fortunate in hearing Mr. Gunnis' first public lecture on this subject in which he presented information collected in the study of sculpture in 6,000 English churches, and illustrated by projected photographs. His period ranged from the Restoration to the Great Exhibition; which, the lecturer remarked, whatever its other merits, was a landmark in the decline of scriptural art.

Sculpture, he said, had not greatly flourished in England; it was far perhaps from the Mediterranean warmth and light. Nevertheless, we could boast of a number of genuine English artists, some well known; others known only by an occasional

work; or like Weston, of Exeter, about whom nothing is known except one admirable piece dated 1717 in the cathedral of his home town.

In earlier days every village had its lapidary craftsmen working in local material; but for the important works of later times, marble was imported from Italy and elsewhere. Grinling Gibbons, though his career was passed in England under the patronage of Royalty, and also of Evelyn and Wren, was born at Rotterdam, of English parents. Other foreigners who worked in England included Michael Rysbrack of Antwerp; and, greatest of them all, Francois Robiliac, who came from France in 1732. A remarkable achievement of an English sculptor was that of John Bushnell, whom matrimonial troubles drove out of England. He settled at Venice; and there, though a foreigner and a Protestant, was commissioned for a memorial to a Doge, to be placed in the church of San Lazzaro. He later returned to the court of Charles II, and executed many works in England, including the statues of Temple Bar. He was of special interest to this Society as the sculptor of the elaborate memorial, of 1675, to William Ashburnham and his wife in Ashburnham Church.

Of the late sculptures of the period there were some lamentable examples commissioned as official memorials in St. Paul's Cathedral. In addition to the famous Chantrey, those sculptors more worthy of remembrance were Westmacott, of whose group in memory of Charles James Fox in Westminster Abbey the great Canova said that he had seen nothing to surpass it either in or out of England; E. H. Baily, one of whose works was the Nelson figure on the monument in Trafalgar Square; and Samuel Joseph, who in 1838 executed the remarkably vivid statue of Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey.

FURTHER QUESTIONS ON LOCAL PLACES,

PERSONALITIES AND EVENTS

Held on December 12th, 1953

The team was composed of Mrs. E. Harbord, Lieut.-Col. C. H. Lemmon, Mr. G. Meppem, Mr. A. H. Sinden, and Mr. James Woodhams; and the Chairman and Question Master was Mr. B. E. Beechey. A verbatim report has been separately published; but to place the information obtained on more permanent record, this summary has been included in the Transactions.

First question: What is known of the windmills in or near Battle? *Answers:* The King's Head Mill or White Mill, the remains of which still stand on Caldbec Hill; owned by Edward Cooke and worked by W. Neve in 1827 when its yearly value was recorded as £4; owned and worked by Michael Porter in 1858; purchased by the Duke of Cleveland and remained part of the Battle Abbey Estate until 1924: worked by Samuel Jenner about 1870, then by his father Jonathan, then by his son Caleb, then by Caleb's son Gordon, recently deceased. Worked till about 1922. It was a Smock Mill.

The Black Mill on Caldbec Hill stood on the site of Mr. Seymour's house. John Shaw was the miller for over 30 years, as he was working it both in 1827 and 1858. It was assessed for land tax at £6 a year. It was burnt down in 1871 or 1872 when it was being worked by the Jenner family. Telham or Black Horse Mill was owned and worked by Stephen Bournier in 1827, when it was assessed at £3: subsequently owned by Miss Crisford, Messrs. Wallis and Co., and Messrs. Charlton and Co.: ceased working in 1912 or 1913. It was a Post Mill. The last grinder was a Mr. Weston. Whatlington Mill, actually in Sedlescombe parish as the crossroads near Hancox: owned and worked by William Bates in 1843, and subsequently by William Ashby. Mill Cottage and the mound still remain; shewing it to have been a post mill. The 1783 map shews Mill Cottage but no mill; the 1873 map shews both. It is not known when it was demolished. Staplecross Mill: marked on the 1783 map: owned in 1848 by Thomas Martin and worked by Henry Richardson: ceased working after the first World War when worked by Messrs. Banister and Co. Demolished as unsafe in 1952.

Beacon Mill between Cripps' Corner and Staplecross: owned by Gilbey Cullen and worked by Aaron Cloke in 1848. Burnt down one fifth of November night in the late seventies.

Harrow of Baldslow Mill, now incorporated in a dwelling: worked about 1914 by Mr. J. J. Hayward, and afterwards by Mr. Caleb Jenner. Silverhill or Tivoli Mill: built in 1868, ran till 1941, and therefore the last working mill in the district. Last owner Messrs. Draper & Co. The last grinder there and also at Baldslow was Arthur Freeman.

Brightling Mill: probably on the site of the Observatory: owned by Thomas Thatcher in 1771, but had disappeared by 1839. Dallington Mill: on the site of the school playground: had disappeared by 1840. Other mills were at Silverhill, Hurst Green; Standard Hill, Ninfield, Bexhill Downs, Sidley, Westfield, Windmill Hill, Hurstmonceux, Wartling, Udimore Hill, Guestling, Fairlight, Ore, Icklesham, Henley Down, Rye,

and West Hill, Hastings, where there were three. With at least five of all these mills the Jenner family was associated. Some tithe assessments in 1858 were: King's Head Mill £2—10—0, Black Mill £3—11—0, Beacon Mill 16/-, Staple-cross 10/6, Whatlington 5/-.

The first known mill in Battle is mentioned in the will of Robert the Plasterer, dated 1210.

Second question: What recollections, stories or anecdotes have the team of Battle personalities of the past? *Answers:* Isaac Ingall, born in 1682, and died at the age of 120 in 1802. Employed as steward or butler by three successive members of the Webster family at Battle Abbey during the whole of his life. Walked into Hastings at the age of 100. The brothers Dunn; John Dunn was postmaster and keen follower of cricket, the last to wear a rabbit skin cap called a Battlejack. Battlejacks were made during the 1914-18 war in a shop where the Gateway tearooms now are. James Morgan, died in 1919 at the age of 99 and 7 months, worked for many years at the powder mills, and had the dangerous job of taking the powder in a pair-horse waggon to Dartford and other places, which were more than one day's journey.

Third question: What is known about the storms and hurricanes which have visited the neighbourhood? *Answers:* The 13th century was a stormy period. In 1236 Old Winchelsea was first damaged, in 1250 it suffered more damage and in 1287 it was swept away, as was also Northeye in the Pevensey marshes. In 1579 a storm deepened old Rye harbour, now the football ground, and silted up Seaford harbour for good. In a bad storm in 1825 the sea broke in at Seaford and reached Blatchington. On May 20, 1729, a tornado struck the coast near Bexhill. It proceeded inland by way of Sidley Green, Cole Wood, Henniker Wood, Loose Farm, Battle Great Wood, Marley House, The Bowlings, Sedlescombe Rectory, Great Sanders, near Staplecross, near Ewhurst, and blew itself out on the Newenden Levels. It left a trail of destruction of which a very full account with map can be seen in Sussex Archaeological Collections, Vol. XXXVI. The sea has made great inroads at Glyne Gap. Before the 1914-18 war there were 50 acres belonging to Crowhurst Park, with farm buildings, between the railway and the sea. In 1927 the railway line had to be shored up. In the first three months of 1947 there was a prolonged glacial frost which brought down nearly all telephone wires.

Fourth question: Are conifers natives of Sussex? If not, when were they first imported? *Answers:* Before the ice age this part of the country was a great coniferous area. In

historical times the Juniper and Yew were the only two indigenous conifers. Pines, spruces, and firs are not natives of Sussex. Conifers from abroad were imported during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Norway spruce, the "Christmas Tree" arrived in the 16th century. The greatest influx was however in the reign of George III, when England, strangely enough, was almost denuded of trees. England may then be said to have become tree-conscious, and plantations of trees were definitely made.

Fifth question: What is known about the river from Sedlescombe to Battle? *Answers:* The *Gazette* dated 1775 states, under the heading of Battle, that it had, at that date a harbour for barges. This harbour could not have been on the Asten-Avon river as the fall is too great. On the Brede, however, barges came up to Brede bridge until quite recently, and the dry harbour still remains there. It would, in fact, still be practicable, in heavy water, to get a barge up to Sedlescombe bridge. Between Sedlescombe bridge and The Bowlings the river has been altered in some way, and it may be there that the port was situated. At the Bowlings the stream forks, and the branch coming down the valley from Marley Lane could not ever have been navigable. The field below Whatlington church on the other branch, however, shews signs of having at some time been subject to tidal flow, and that may be a possible alternative site for the harbour.

Sixth question: What is known of the Battle Brass Band and its origin? *Answers:* It was originally the band of the Cinque Ports Rifle Volunteers, Battle Detachment, but was dissociated from it on the formation of the Territorial Force, and became the Battle Town Band. As a volunteer band in the middle of the 19th century it was locally quite famous and took very many engagements all round the country. As the town band about 1920 it played at village "Clubs" and flower shows and often at the Hastings flower show. In those days church parades with massed village bands were a feature. On one occasion over 80 musicians took part in such a parade at Sedlescombe. The band came to an end in the last war because the old members became too old, and the young ones joined the forces; and its last public appearance was at a parade of the British Red Cross in May, 1939.

Seventh question: What changes have there been in the road system round Battle since early times? *Answers:* In very early times the road system round Battle resembled the letter Y, with the tops of the two arms joined. The stem

represents the ancient track from the cliffs at Fairlight, and the fact that it starts at right angles to the cliffs shews how ancient it is. The bifurcation was on Caldbec Hill. The right arm of the Y represents the trackway through Whatlington to Vinehall, where its junction with the Rye-Uckfield Ridgeway is still marked by a mound. The left arm of the Y was a trackway via what is now the North Trade Road to Netherfield, where it joined the same Rye-Uckfield Ridgeway. The Romans made a road from Rochester on the Watling Street through Maidstone, Bodiam, and Sedlescombe to Ore, to serve the ironfields and this crossed the main ridgeway at Cripps Corner. This is how the roads were at the time of the battle, as no new main roads were made in England between the fourth and the seventeenth centuries. There were, of course, local lanes, and Marley Lane, originally called Wasingate, must have been in existence in 1066 as it points to the place where Harold fell, which must have been at a crossroads, for the continuation can be traced to Park Gate and so to Catsfield.

The 18th century maps shew a network of lanes round Battle, many of which can still be traced, though their object is often obscure. In the Tudor period a local road was made from Gate Farm to Vinehall, probably to serve Hodesdale Forge and Mountfield Furnace, but it also made a short cut on the London road. Its metalling can still be found under more than a foot of mud, also the abutments of a bridge near Woodsdale Farm. Then came the turnpike era. A map of 1783 shews the North Trade Road turnpiked: it was part of the 18-mile long Broyle Gate-Battle turnpike road. Other early turnpike roads were Beechdown-Battle, 15 miles, and the Flimwell-Hastings road, which was the London road, through Robertsbridge, Whatlington, Battle, Baldslow, and Ore. In 1836 three local turnpike acts were passed: the roads constructed were Hastings Priory-Silverhill-Beauport Park to join the existing turnpike road, and another from two beginnings at the South Saxon Hotel and the Maze Hill arch, St. Leonards, united at Silver Hill, and crossed that road to proceed via the Harrow to the tollgate at Black Ditch, where it forked, one branch going through Sedlescombe to Staple-cross, and the other to join the older London road at the Royal Oak, Whatlington. Lastly, the Watch Oak-Johns Cross road, a completely new one, was made, and provided a direct London road from Battle. In 1813 the old ridgeway from the S.E. corner of Ashburnham Park to Netherfield was made into a road, but Powdermill Lane remained a lane until comparatively recent times.

Lecture delivered by Squadron Leader L. G. Pine,

B.A., F.S.A., M.J.I., on April 2nd, 1954

NORMAN ANCESTRY

The lecturer began by explaining that as Editor of Burke he had been approached for years by persons desirous of impressing him with stories of their Norman ancestry. In the majority of cases he had been able to disprove these claims; and in consequence had become extremely sceptical about the whole thing, and wondered why such claims were made. In other countries people prided themselves on being descended from the subjugated race; but he supposed the English were snobs, and therefore had to be descended from the best people; and as the Normans had won the Battle of Hastings, they were obviously the best people. He felt impelled at last to write a book on the subject, which under the title "They came with the Conqueror," would appear in a few days.

The number of people who could claim a descent from the Norman conquerors in the direct male line, and who could prove it, was very small. The Gresley, Malet, Giffard, and de Marris families were probably the only ones known to have a male line descent from a companion of the Conqueror; but there were, however, many descents in the female line. Besides these there were some 200 families which could prove a descent from a Norman ancestor. The reason for this small number was easy to understand, because documentary evidence was very largely wanting; and even where it existed, it had not been written primarily for genealogical purposes, but for statistics of revenue and similar things. There were a great many genealogical references in Domesday Book; but after that there was a gap of nearly a generation before the Pipe rolls began.

On the other side of the picture, and for different reasons, he could congratulate everyone in the audience on possessing Norman blood.

The population of England at the Norman Conquest was approximately 1,000,000 to 1,500,000; and the number of Normans between 20 and 60 years of age was perhaps about 100,000, which formed an element of one in ten to one in fifteen in the post-conquest period, and which would be quite sufficient by intermarriage to give Norman blood to every family today which had resided in England for 100 years.

No reliability could be placed in the Roll of Battle Abbey, giving the names of the knights said to have accompanied the Conqueror. There were six copies in existence, but no original.

A gentleman once claimed that his ancestor was at the Battle of Hastings, and that his name was Sir Piers. He said he had been knocked down and nearly overrun in the battle, until the Duke commanded those around him to give him air. Ever afterwards he was known as Sir Piers d'Ayre. Later on he was granted some land in a valley and was then known as Sir Piers d'Ayredale, which later became Iredale. This was the kind of rubbish that was brought forward in support of claims to Norman ancestry. Actually his first recorded ancestor was a linen draper in Belfast, and the family first appeared in Burke's Landed Gentry for 1722. The story that a scarf belonging to the Conqueror had been handed down in a Yorkshire family until the present time was also nothing but nonsense; and in fact most claims to Norman descent could be dismissed.

**Lecture delivered by Mr. M. L. Pearl
on April 23rd, 1954**

COBBETT AND THE LAST LABOURERS' REVOLT

After sketching Cobbett's career, the lecturer explained the burdens which, after the close of the Napoleonic War, oppressed the countryside: reduction of arable acreage, unemployment, loss of independence of labourers owing to enclosure acts, wages below subsistence level in spite of subsidies from the rates, and rising prices.

Added to these were extremely heavy taxation, and a poor law unaltered since the reign of Elizabeth I. As an example of the former, the lecturer instances a 300-acre farm on which the rates and taxes were £383, and a tax of £11 on £22 wages.

In his publications the "Porcupine" and "Political Register", Cobbett had warned the country that revolts would occur, and the riots of 1815 justified his warnings.

In the autumn of 1830 a strange and chaotic peasant protest spread rapidly from Kent to other counties in the south of England. The disturbances were remarkable for their lack of violence. They were usually confined to a group of villages or a small country town, in which men would gather, choose a leader, and march on the houses of the parson andquire. Their demands were simple: a decent wage, the

destruction of farm machinery which displaced their labour, a reduction in, or an end to tithes, a lowering or remission of rents, and a more humane system of poor relief. They bore no arms and shed no blood. Here and there harsh workhouse overseers were ducked in village ponds or paraded in dung carts. Action against property was more forceful and effective: burning of ricks and barns, breaking up of farm machinery, and wrecking of workhouses if demands, made in the name of "Captain Swing" were not acceded to. Small farmers found themselves in sympathy with the attacks on tithes and high rents, and even the destruction of machinery. Moreover, a section of the gentry disliked the Poor Law system and was concerned about the condition of the labourers. Extremely mild sentences were given in the first few weeks of the "Rural War", and unpopular overseers were dismissed, local examples being those of Burwash and Brede. Mr. Collingwood, a J.P. of Battle, was sympathetic to the labourers and was officially reproved.

On October 16th, 1830, Cobbett addressed a meeting in a booth at Battle. He spoke for two hours and advocated an alliance between aristocracy, farmers, and labourers. [He was no class warfare man, and made no call to riot. He roused his audience in turn to great bursts of applause, laughter, and fierce anger.] He condemned the burning and destroying, but welcomed the gains in wages which resulted. He concluded: "Here is a petition ready, let us all sign it; and then we shall soon be restored to the happy state in which our forefathers lived". In the "Political Register" he wrote: "At Battle, last night . . . a stage made with faggots and boards, for me to stand on; a small table with two candles on it before me; a chair for me to sit on before I began; an audience consisting of about 500 persons, chiefly from the villages round the town, and some from a distance of 15 miles; about a third part of the audience in smock frocks; about a twentieth of it consisting of women, mostly young; and, while the rest of the auditory had to stand all the while, seats had been provided for a row of these pretty Sussex women (always admired by me), who were thus ranged directly before me! I was really at home here: here were assembled a sample of that part of this honest, sincere, kind, and once free and happy people, amongst whom I was born and bred up, and towards whom my affections have increased with my age."

A week or so later, fires were raging in the district and Battle soon became one of the storm-centres of the campaign. Two Battle labourers, a man called Bushby, and a young cooper named Thomas Goodman were sentenced to death for

arson. From the beginning strenuous efforts were made by the authorities to implicate Cobbett in the rising, and Goodman was induced to sign a statement blaming Cobbett's lectures for his lapse. He was pardoned and hurried out of the country; but Bushby was hanged.

Sir Godfrey Webster, of Battle Abbey, considered that it was Cobbett who ought to have been prosecuted, and that the hanging of Bushby was a judicial murder. One hundred and three farmers, craftsmen, and labourers of Battle and 14 parishes around signed a declaration to prove that Cobbett had not counselled anything but peaceful petitioning. Cobbett expressed his willingness to bear the calumny, though he could prove it to be false, lest Goodman should be hanged after all.

As the result of an article in the "Political Register" for December 11th, 1830, the Government issued an indictment charging him with publishing a libel calculated to incite the labourers to acts of violence. The case was finally heard in July, 1831. Melbourne, the Home Secretary; Brougham, the Lord Chancellor, and four other ministers were subpoenaed, and Melbourne was asked the reason for Goodman's pardon. The proceedings developed into a trial of the government rather than of Cobbett, and although the judge's summing-up was unfavourable, the jury disagreed and Cobbett was free. Soon after his trial he appointed James Gutsell, the Battle tailor who organized the declaration, to be his private secretary and overseer of his farm in Surrey.

VISIT TO LEWES

on Wednesday, May 12th, 1954

In cool but fine weather 73 members arrived at Lewes Castle at 3 p.m., and ascended the keep from which an excellent view of the town is obtained. After being conducted round the ruins by a guide, Mr. N. E. S. Norris, F.S.A., the Curator of the Sussex Archaeological Society's Museum, received them at Barbican House and pointed out some of the more important exhibits: such as the trephined Neolithic skull, of which there are only two other examples in England; the fine collection of flint implements; the collection of querns; the linch pin of a British chariot; the Roman bronze helmet dredged from the sea near Chichester; Saxon jewellery, spears, shield bosses, and coins struck in Sussex mints; mediaeval water vessels, weights, and measures; the beautiful 14th century ivory carving of the Assumption; and the silver spoon with the rare Lewes "touch mark" dated 1661.

After tea at the Bull House, members were shewn round that ancient hostelry by Colonel Wilson, and then walked down Keere Street with its quaint paving and ancient houses, past Southover Grange (1571), and the Hospital of St. James, to the Church of St. John the Baptist Southover, where they were received by the Rev. P. G. Matthews, M.A. This church contains a very fine early 12th century arcade, and was probably the guest house or hospital of the monastic buildings of St. Pancras. The chief object of interest, however, is the beautiful little chapel (erected in 1847) of Norman architecture containing the tomb of William de Warenne, favourite of the Conqueror, and his wife Gundrada, whose bones in lead cists were exhumed when the railway was constructed through the abbey ruins, and reburied under the original 12th century finely carved black marble slab, which, the Rector explained, had already been placed in the church many years before. It was disappointing to learn that Gundrada is not now supposed to have been the Conqueror's daughter.

The party then proceeded to the ruins of St. Pancras Priory, of which an eloquent description was given by Mr. John Knight. The length of the Priory church, one was surprised to hear, was 450 feet, more than that of Chichester Cathedral, while the Dorter was larger than that of Canterbury. Founded by William de Warenne for Cluniac monks during the reign of William the Conqueror, it was the noblest of monastic houses in Sussex for 450 years until destroyed in 1538 by Thomas Cromwell. Portinari, the Italian engineer he employed, has left a detailed description of his technique. It is a matter for regret that Cromwell was able to organize this vandalism before his execution two years later. The most eloquent fragment of these vast buildings now remaining is the small altar of the Infirmary chapel in its original position. It is close to the edge of the cutting, having by a miracle escaped destruction both by Thomas Cromwell, and the London Brighton and South Coast Railway.

VISIT TO BREDE PLACE AND BREDE CHURCH

on Wednesday, June 9th, 1954

Fifty-one members attended, and were received at Brede Place by the owners, Mr. Roger and the Hon. Mrs. Frewen, who conducted them over the house and shewed them the very interesting collection it contains. Supposed to have been

built by Sir Thomas Atteford in the 14th century, it was owned by the Oxenbridge family in the 15th and 16th centuries, and is considered to be one of the best existing specimens of the small country houses of the time of Henry VII. The Great Hall has now been subdivided into an upper and lower floor. Recently the plaster walls, which had been built 18 inches in front, were removed, displaying 14th century mouldings, and incidentally six playing cards dated 1570. The property came into the Frewen family in 1676, and, with the exception of a short interlude, has remained in it ever since.

Brede Church comprises a late 12th century nave, a 13th century north aisle, a little 14th century work, tower, south aisle and chancel of the 15th century, the Oxenbridge chapel of about 1530, with its almost flamboyant traceries, and the tomb of Sir Goddard Oxenbridge bearing his effigy in armour. An unexpected exhibit in the church is the wooden cradle of Dean Swift.

EVENING VISIT TO BATEMANS, BURWASH

on Thursday, June 24th, 1954

This visit repeated that of June 27th, 1952, an account of which appeared in the Transactions for 1951-1953. Thirty-two members attended.

VISIT TO SISSINGHURST CASTLE AND GOUDHURST CHURCH

on Wednesday, July 7th, 1954

The visit to Sissinghurst castle was planned, not so much for historical reasons as to see the beautiful garden, at its best in the month of July. Fifty-four members attended.

EVENING VISIT TO GREAT DIXTER, NORTHIAM

on Thursday, July 22nd, 1954

This visit repeated that of April 23rd, 1952, an account of which appeared in the Transactions for 1951-1953. Thirty-six members attended.

DIEX AÏÉ !

An account of two visits of the Souvenir Normand to Battle 1903

On Wednesday morning August 19th, 1903, between 35 and 40 French members of the Souvenir Normand arrived at Hastings. They should have arrived the evening before, but the sea was so rough that they postponed crossing from Calais until the night boat, and even then had a rough passage to Dover. Seldom, if ever, had worse weather been experienced in the middle of August.

The Souvenir, a society formed to promote friendship between France and England on the basis of the common Norman tradition and historical association of Normandy and England under one ruler, anticipated the establishment of the Entente Cordiale, which it played a great part in developing. An English branch had been formed under the presidency of Lord Brassey with Mr. E. E. Clarke as Hon. Secretary. Wednesday was spent sightseeing and being fêted in Hastings: the events of the next day are best told in the words of the *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer* for August 22nd, 1903.

"On Thursday the entire day was devoted to a visit to Battle Abbey, which, by the kindness of Sir Augustus Webster, was thrown open to the French visitors, and a large contingent of friends from Hastings and St. Leonards. The majority of these journeyed by the 10.34 train from Hastings. Carriages and other vehicles met the train at Battle. The road to the Abbey being also thronged with pedestrians, a stirring scene was presented to view. Decorations increased the gaiety of the town. The reception by Sir Augustus Webster and the Ladies' Committee in front of the Abbey at 11.15 was the first event . . . Great credit is due to the Ladies' Committee, initiated by Mr. Harvey Combe, for the success of the day.

The Committee included the following:—Lady Brassey (President), Mrs. Harvey Combe (Vice-President), the Baroness Von Roemer, the Hon. Mrs. Egerton, the Hon. Mrs. Spiller, Mrs. Adamson, Mrs. Burton, Mrs. Courthorpe, Miss Papillon, Mrs. Henry Morland, Mrs. Colonel Tubbs, Mrs. Liddell, Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Sayer-Milward, Mrs. Crake, Mrs. Lambert, and Mrs. G. Ashton. Among those present at the reception or subsequently were:—The Mayor of Hastings (Alderman Tree, J.P.), General Sir Harry Prendergast, G.C.B., Mr. G. L. Courthorpe, Mr. Alfred H. Burton,

D.L., J.P., Mr. R. White Ford, J.P., Mrs. and Mrs. F. G. Langham, Mr. Ben F. Meadows (Town Clerk of Hastings) and Mrs. Meadows, the Countess O'Clery, Mr. W. V. Crake, Miss Crake, Mr. W. Shadforth Boger, Mrs. and Miss Boger, Mrs. Coghill, the Rev. W. C. Sayer-Milward, the Rev. Father Russell (of St. Alban's, Holborn), Mr. C. B. Gabb, Mr. E. E. Clarke, Miss Clarke, Major Davenport, Dr. Davis, Miss Seacombe, Miss Laeta Seacombe, Mr. Ralph Seacombe, Sir J. W. M. Ashby, K.C.B., Miss Bethune, Mr. de Muller, Mr. Jacomb, Mrs. Crosse, Mr. F. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. Pringle, Mr. Lambert, Mr. Harvey T. B. Combe, Mr. Harvey Combe, Junr., Mr. Boyce Combe, Mr. Charles Dawson, F.G.S., Mr. J. Horace Round, M.A., D.L., Mr. O. Biddulph, Miss Hargreaves, Miss Georgina Hargraves, Councillor and Mrs. Eaton, Councillor and Mrs. Dighton, Mr. and Mrs. P. Beer, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Tharle, Mr. and Mrs. L. F. St. John, Mr. E. W. Amooore, Mr. H. A. Jepson, Mr. P. M. F. Cole. Mr. A. C. Jenour (*sic*) Mr. Conway Seymour, Lieut. Dewing, Mrs. and Miss Till, Miss Rutter, Mrs. Allwork, the Misses Allwork, Mrs. Ben Thorpe, Miss Edith Thorpe, Miss Agnes Thorpe, Mr. Albion Thorpe, Mrs. Jenner, Mr. W. A. Raper, Mrs. Raper, Mr. and Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Hammond, Mr. Hammond, Miss Noakes, Miss Turle, Mr. and Mrs. Still, Mrs. G. Newbury, Mrs. J. Newbury, Miss Burgess, Mr. Val Marriott, Mr. H. Goss Custard, Mr. A. C. Simpson, Mr. J. King, and Mr. J. H. Blomfield.

Among the members of the Souvenir and their friends were:—Le Marquis de la Rochethulon et Grente (President), M. Jehan Soudan de Pierrefitte (Vice-President), le Baron de St. Georges, le Baron Béville, Mr. Henri de Béville, Professor Stebbing, M. La Roche, M. Willia, Mme. and Mlle. Willia, M. and Mme. Roger de Goey, M. J. Sieyes de Veynes, Mme. Jourdain, M. Jourdain, M. Perrignon de Troyes, Mme. Mary Star, Mlle. Valtour, M. Ferrier, M. Delsharde, M. Lenery, Mlle. Victoria Valtour, Mme. Labory, Mme. Leonin, Mme. Russell, M. Jacques Turdy, M. Alexandre Stewart, M. Paul Chambeyron, M. Lucien Laught, M. Eugène Vaillant, Mme. Vaillant, Mme. Clemancy, M. Mullegans, M. Picard, M. Testort, Mme. Bourgeois du Play.

About 12 o'clock an adjournment was made to the Abbot's Hall, for the delivery of Mr. Horace Round's address. The Hall was crowded. Mr. Clarke announced that because of the high wind which was blowing outside, Mr. Round was not able to read his paper to them on the terrace. Mr. Round then read his paper in excellent French, his observations being listened to with great attention . . .

Perhaps the most picturesque ceremony of the day was the unveiling, about one o'clock, of a commemorative plaque, placed in a porch in the precinct wall of the Abbey, which stretches from the Dormitory. The plaque, which was of white marble, with red letters, bore the following inscription:

DIEX AIE !

Dans le champ historique de Senlac sur la tombe du brave Harold le Saxon, 837 ans après la bataille qui donna à la Grande Bretagne la loi Normande, Le Souvenir Normand, venu des bords de la Seine, a proclamé avec joie la Paix des Normandies Soeurs.

1066 — 1903

20 Août 1903

A procession bearing floral trophies started from the cloister garth, and passing the Dormitory and the crypt, drew up on the Vinery green in front of the Precinct wall. The procession comprised a Norman cortège, carrying flags and representing peasants, Norman soldiers, monks and priests, and a number of English young ladies drawn from county families claiming Norman descent, dressed in white early nineteenth century costumes, with straw bonnets of the period, and with light blue and pink sashes. They wore knots of apple blossom, the floral emblem of Normandy, famed for its apples and cider.

The following young ladies formed the English representatives: Lady Idina Sackville, Lady Iris Capel, The Hon. Helen Brassey, Miss Phyllis Egerton, the Misses Ashton, Miss Hilda Boger, Miss Muriel Crowther, Miss E. Fry, Miss Margaret Harrison, Miss Barbara Porter, and Miss Mitchell Taylor.

Two trumpeters in brilliant costume of red and gold, one with the heraldic blazon of Normandy, the two lions, and the other with the blazon of England, the three lions, headed the procession. Then came Lady Idina Sackville and the Hon. Helen Brassey carrying a wreath, the Misses Ashton and the Misses Harrison bearing the first floral canopy, Miss Fry, Miss Mitchell Taylor, and Miss Boger with the second, the Misses Crowther and Miss Porter with the third, and Lady Iris Capel and Miss Phyllis Egerton with a wreath.

At the request of Sir Augustus Webster, the Marquis de la Rochethulon et Grente unveiled the plaque at the signal of a fanfare. After unveiling the plaque, the President said that, through his mother, he was a descendant of Hughes de Grandmesnil, the faithful companion of William the Conqueror. He was enchanted with the splendid ceremony, which brought

him back here for the cause of "The peace of the two Normandies". Notwithstanding a shower of rain, the proceedings were most enthusiastic.

The company subsequently adjourned for luncheon in a tent below the picturesque terrace. After luncheon the company strolled about the grounds till 3.30, when a new dramatic lyrical legend "Herlève de Normandye Mère du Conquérant", by M. Jehan de Pierrefitte, was given in the Abbot's Hall by a Parisian troupe. The Hall was filled to its fullest extent, many scarcely obtaining standing room.

Subsequently, as it was raining heavily, and time pressed, the intended visit to the battlefield was abandoned, and the party returned to the railway station, coming back to Hastings by the 5.59 train from Battle, which was 20 minutes late."

* * *

1954

The Souvenir Normand having expressed a desire to revisit East Sussex on August 20th and 21st, Mr. W. H. Dyer, Director of Publicity to the Borough of Hastings, called a general meeting of those interested for June 18th, to which the chairman and certain members of the Society were invited. Unfortunately, chiefly owing to the deaths of the leaders, the English branch of the Souvenir had lapsed, and it was felt that these distinguished French visitors should be welcomed by an organized body of sympathisers on this side of the Channel.

At the general meeting a reception committee was formed on which the B. & D.H.S. was represented by four members: Sir John Thorne (the Chairman), Mrs. E. Harbord, Mr. C. T. Chevallier, and Lt.-Col. C. H. Lemmon.

At 4.30 p.m. on August 20th seventeen members of the Souvenir Normand, five more than had been expected, arrived at Newhaven, and were met by some members of the committee. In sharp contrast to the rough weather of 1903, the sea was completely calm. One visitor even went so far as to say that it was too calm, and that a little movement "aurait peut-être ajouté au pittoresque". On the way to Hastings Pevensey Castle was visited, and later the visitors were entertained to a buffet dinner of sucking pig roasted on the spit at Brede Place by Mr. and Mrs. Roger Frewen.

Saturday morning was spent in visiting Hastings Castle, Rye and Winchelsea, concluding with a "Vin d'honneur" at Hastings Town Hall.

At 1 p.m. the representatives of the Souvenir arrived at the Railway Hotel, Battle, to lunch as guests of the Chairman Battle Rural District Council. Fifty-four sat down. The Norman guests were:—M. J. R. Quesnot-Monnier (Chairman of the Souvenir), M. F. Le Pelletier (Chairman of the Norman Society of Paris), Count Robert d'Orglandes (Vice-Chairman of the Souvenir), M. Letellier (Mayor of Corneville), M. Thieullant (Deputy Mayor of Saint Adresse), M. J. Mabire (Editor of 'Viking', the journal of the Souvenir), Mme. Mabire, M. Guilbert and M. Gogibu (Aldermen of Corneville), Mme. De la Fosse, Mlle de la Haye ("Miss Corneville" 1954), M. and Mme. Bazin (Members of the Souvenir), M. M. D. Quesnot (Deputy Mayor of Corneville), Mme. d'Olivera (Poet and distinguished opera singer), Mme. le Campion (Secretary-General of the Souvenir), and Mlle. Aubourg (Assistant Secretary). The English representatives were: Mr. George Barling (Chairman Battle Rural District Council), The Very Rev. A. T. A. Naylor (Dean of Battle), Alderman F. T. Hussey (Mayor of Hastings), Alderman Ford and Councillor Curtis (Hastings), The Hon. Ruth Buckley (Chairman East Sussex County Council), Alderman Ford (Hastings), The Hon. Daphne Courthorpe (former Chairman Battle R.D.C.), Colonel H. Wilson (Vice-Chairman Battle R.D.C.), Commander J. D. Ross (Member R.D.C.), Sir Alan Moore, Bt. (Member R.D.C.), Mr. C. T. Chevallier (Clerk to the R.D.C.), Mr. J. Newbery (Chairman Battle Parish Council), Mr. J. Cummins (Vice-Chairman P.C.), Mr. G. W. Meppem (Clerk to the P.C.), Miss E. M. Powell (Vice-Chairman Battle Chamber of Commerce), Mr. H. B. Chatfield (Hon. Secretary B.C.C.), Sir John Thorne (Chairman Battle and District Historical Society), Mr. B. E. Beechey (Vice-Chairman B. & D.H.S.), Mrs. E. Harbord and The Hon. Mrs. Whistler (Vice-Presidents B. & D.H.S.), Miss A. J. Crozier (Hon. Secretary B. & D.H.S.), Mr. P. F. Room (Hon. Treasurer B. & D.H.S.), Miss R. Chiverton, Mr. A. R. Clough, Lt.-Col. C. H. Lemmon, Mr. A. E. Marson, Mr. L. H. Pyke (Committee members B. & D.H.S.), Mr. Alexander (Member B. & D.H.S.), Mr. C. W. Allwork (Hon. Secretary and Treasurer Battle Horticultural Society), Mr. G. Bramley (President Battle Branch British Legion), Mr. F. C. Sheppard (Clerk to the Justices), Mr. W. F. Dyer (Secretary Reception Committee), Mrs. F. S. Bouquet, Mrs. B. H. S. Arnould, Mr. Roger Frewen and the Hon Mrs. Frewen (Reception Committee) and a representative of the *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer*.

After the loyal toasts of both countries, Mr. Newbery made the speech of welcome, which was translated by Mr.

Chevallier. He spoke of the warm welcome, of a different kind, prepared for the first Norman visitors in 1066, when the plans of the reception committee went wrong, and the visits, not always aimiable, which the two countries paid to each other in succeeding centuries, until King Edward VII took the lead and the Entente Cordiale was born, since when Anglo-French friendship had been proved in the two greatest wars in history. M. Quesnot-Monnier, in reply, told how he wished to continue the work of the founders of the Souvenir Normand, which was formed six months before the Entente Cordiale. He looked forward to many more visits to further friendship between the two countries.

Mr. Barling then presented to M. Quesnot-Monnier a piece of the Watch Oak, polished and emblazoned with the Battle coat-of-arms; which M. Quesnot-Monnier, in accepting, said would hold a place of honour in Normandy.

Lieut.-Colonel Lemmon, speaking in French, then dealt with the events immediately preceding the battle, after which he conducted the party to St. Mary's Farm, the Abbey farmstead, and the sports ground, to view the three sectors of the battlefield, explaining at each the course of the battle in that locality, the whole tour taking an hour and a half. The weather was dull and cloudy, but no rain fell.

At 4.30, Mrs. Harbord, a Vice-president of the B. & D.H.S., entertained the visitors to tea on the Cloister Garth of the Abbey.

At 5.30 a procession was formed to proceed to the Norman Stone. It was led by the Normans, three of the ladies wearing their national costume with high starched bonnets, followed by the English representatives. Each party carried flowers to lay on the monument; two trumpeters of the Hastings and St. Leonards Band sounded a fanfare, and the ceremony was televised by the B.B.C. Arrived at the memorial, the Normans formed up on the right and the English on the left, the general public forming the third side of the square.

M. Quesnot-Monnier, after a speech, read the names of Normans who fought and fell at Senlac. Sir John Thorne, Chairman of the B. & D.H.S., then read the names of all the Saxons definitely known to have been killed in the Battle, that is to say: Harold, Gyrth and Leofwine sons of Godwin, Aelfric of Huntingdonshire, Breme of Suffolk, Godric, Sheriff of Berkshire, Thurkill, Lord of Kingston Bagpuze, Berks., Aelfwig of Winchester, Leofric, Abbot of Peterborough, Eadric, Deacon of Cavendish, Suffolk, the 12 monks of Aelfwig, and the two freemen of Tederlec, Hampshire.

Flowers were then laid, after which Mrs. Harbord said, "I bid our Norman cousins welcome to this historic ground. Our English fields and our hearts are also yours." Mr. Chevallier, speaking in French, described the ceremony as a great moment. It was the Norman organizing power fused with English solidarity, he said, which created modern England. The Comte d'Orglandes said France would be ever grateful to England for coming to Normandy, ten years before, for its liberation. The ceremony ended with the singing of the French and British national anthems.

Owing to the many improvements in horseless carriages since 1903, the party was spared the necessity of waiting at the station for a train to convey them back to Hastings.

EVENING VISIT TO THE ABBEY, ROBERTSBRIDGE

on Wednesday, August 25th, 1954

This visit repeated that of Saturday, June 14th, 1952, an account of which appeared in the Transactions for 1951-1953. Twenty-four members attended.

VISIT TO WILMINGTON CHURCH AND PRIORY

on September 8th, 1954

The 35 members who attended were met by the Rev. J. A. Wood, Rector of Wilmington, who kindly acted as guide.

The Priory of Wilmington was founded in 1050 by Herluin de Contaville, husband of Arletta the Conqueror's mother, and father of Bishop Odo and Robert Count of Mortain, both of whom fought at the Battle of Hastings. It was a possession of the Benedictine Abbey of Grestain in Normandy, and thus one of the Norman "5th Column" cells established in England in the reign of Edward the Confessor.

The 12th century chancel of the church, not very much shorter than the nave, was doubtless the monks' Quire, while the nave was used for parochial worship. Of special interest are the two Aumbries on the east wall of the Sanctuary, an unusual situation; an early Norman Madonna now on the north wall of the Chancel; and the well-known "Bee and Butterfly" window in the north chapel.

The Priory, which now belongs to the Sussex Archaeological Trust, was planned more like a manor house than the usual monastery. No remains of domestic buildings of the 12th century have come to light, but there are remains of the 13th century Great Hall and another Hall of the 14th century, and the Old Vicarage which was built in the Priory buildings before 1541; while in the portion still inhabited there is an 18th century staircase with a curious Chinese design.

Members were also shown the garden and exterior of the present Vicarage across the road, a square building of pleasing design which was built in 1635.

Wet weather somewhat marred this visit, and the projected walk to the Long Man had to be abandoned.

MUSEUM EXHIBITION

arranged by Mr. L. H. Pyke, and held on

October 6th, 1954

At the invitation of the Battle and District Horticultural Society, this Society gave an exhibition, as in former years, of objects of local historical and antiquarian interest at the autumn flower show. The feature this year was a large number of photographs, some dating back to the early days of photography, to illustrate the "changing face" of Battle between 1870 and 1954. Most of these had been kindly lent for the occasion, and shewed unfamiliar aspects of parts of the town, groups of clubs and societies, and likenesses of many of the former inhabitants.

The Rev. F. Vere Hodge shewed an ecclesiastical collection; the Curator of the Hastings Museum, Mr. J. Manwaring Baines, lent a collection of letters, several to addressees in Battle, which had been carried before postage stamps were invented. Of special interest were two or three with secret marks on the envelope, which the recipient could read, thereby obtaining the information he desired. He could then refuse to pay the postage, which was collected at the receiving end in those days.

The flint implements mentioned elsewhere in this number, which were found at Le Rette Farm, Battle, and Tudor glass fragments from the ancient factory site near Northiam were also shewn.

SUSSEX BRASSES

The brass has the advantage over other forms of memorial, in that it lies flat with the surface of the stone, into which it is inlaid; and in many cases is more durable than the stone, despite the alloy from which it is made (termed Latten) being softer than actual brass. It came into general use in the XII to XIII centuries at a time when ledgers were being inlaid in white marble or pigment, the better to shew in the stone a representation of the deceased.

It remained in vogue well into the XVII century, and lingered in the form of rectangular plates, incised with shields and inscriptions, until the XIX century Gothic revival gave it fresh impetus. In form it could be of two styles; that of the Continent, of a series of quadrilateral plates laid conjoined, the whole surface of which was incised with figure diaper work, architectural canopies, angels and such like; the English style, which always inlaid the figure, inscription, and ornamentation separately into the stone. Since, as far as modern research goes, all latten was made abroad in Flanders, no doubt the English style was determined by the cost of importing the plates. The result, in its pleasant combination of Purbeck marble and brass, is far more pleasing to the eye, though the actual artistic depiction of the continental brasses is usually greater than on the English counterpart. The oldest existing brass in England is that to Sir John D'Abernon at Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey, of 1277. Sussex, however, has one of the earlier females at Trotton where the brass to Margaret de Camoys is dated at about 1310. At Cobham in Kent is that of Joan de Cobham of about the same date. Thence onward, Sussex has a representative collection in its churches of brasses of all sizes to all manner of men and women, though in Chichester Cathedral only the despoiled slabs, for the most part, remain.

At Cowfold is the finest ecclesiastical brass in England, that of Thomas Nelond, Prior of the Cluniac Priory at Lewes, 1432. At Fletching is one of the rare brasses shewing the deceased's tools of trade as his memorial, in this case a pair of gloves, for Peter Denot, glover, of about 1460. Throughout the country are scattered products of what is termed the London School, well executed but rather slick figures with or without canopies, mainly of 1400 to 1450. Of such are Sir Hugh Halsham and wife at West Grinstead (with a female figure at Hellingly almost a duplicate of Lady Halsham), Sir William Fiennes at Herstmonceux, and Lord Camoys and his wife at Trotton.

The sixteenth century sees an era of the brass for the common man, and of that type the small figure of 1520 to William Crysford at Ewhurst is a good example. The religious troubles made a temporary lull in the output of brasses, but by Elizabeth's reign they were turning out as many as ever, and often on Continental brasses torn from their slabs as loot and sent across to England for engraving on the reverse. These are termed palimpsests, and a good example exists at Northiam in the inscription of John Sharp 1583.

At Firle (and one at Framfield) is a series of brasses executed by a foreigner who settled in England, at Southwark, Gerard Johnson. They were all done to order in 1595 for John Gage, a member of the old faith, who insisted on Johnson's cutting the figures to his wishes, and even sent to town by carrier his wife's French hood, that all might be right. By a fortunate chance, Johnson's drawings for two of the brasses, with the correspondence, are preserved at Firle Place, and Viscount Gage has recently had the drawings placed on show there.

Finally, at Old Shoreham, is an embossed brass (i.e., the surface is in relief) of achievement and inscription to Captain Richard Poole, 1652. In all England there exists only one other, at St. Decuman's, Watchet, Somerset, and that by a well known sculptor, Nicholas Stone.

There can be no doubt that in this type of monument Sussex can more than hold its own against other counties, and that within reach of Battle a representative collection of Sussex brasses can be found.

R. H. D'ELBOUX.

THE BATTLE OF RYE BAY

This battle, also called the Battle off Winchelsea, and the Battle of Espagnols sur Mer, fought by the English fleet under King Edward III and his son the Black Prince, was briefly alluded to by Mr. J. C. Moore in his lecture to the B. & D.H.S. on December 13th, 1951. As the complete edition of Froissart, the principal authority, is not readily obtainable, Captain Frewen has kindly supplied the following account of the battle, which was translated from the French edition of Sir John Froissart's Chronicles, Volume II, by Thomas Johnes in 1805.

"The Spaniards, mustering 40 great ships at Sluys for return to Spain, laden with merchandise and marvellously provided with all sorts of warlike ammunition, such as bolts

for crossbows, cannons, and bars of forged iron to throw on the enemy in hopes, with the assistance of great stones, to sink him. Of them, Edward III said 'We have for a long time spared these people, for which they have done us much harm, without amending their conduct; on the contrary, they grow more arrogant for which reason they must be chastised as they pass our coasts'.

So he went to the coast of Sussex and embarked on board his fleet, with the Prince of Wales and very many earls, barons and knights (including Sir Walter Manny and Sir Bartholomew Burghersh). There were 400 knights; nor was he ever attended by a larger company of great lords. And he kept the sea, cruising three days between Dover and Calais.

The Spaniards weighed anchor with the wind favourable to them, and if the English had a great desire to meet them, it seemed as though the Spaniards were still more eager for it. They were full 10,000 men, including all sorts of soldiers they had enlisted in Flanders.

When the Spaniards were sighted, the trumpets were ordered to sound, and the ships to form a line of battle for the combat. The Spaniards disdained to sail by, but bore instantly down on the English and commenced the battle.

The battle was not in one place, but in 10 or 12 at a time. The English had not any advantage, and the Spanish ships were much larger and higher than their opponents. After ramming two enemies and grappling the second, the King's ship was in danger of sinking, which made the knights on board more eager to conquer the vessel they were grappled to. Many gallant deeds were done, and at last they gained the ship, and flung all they found in it overboard, having quitted their own ship.

This sea-fight between the English and Spaniards was well and hardly fought, but as night was coming on the English exerted themselves to do their duty well and discomfit their enemies. The Spaniards, who are used to the sea, and were in large ships, acquitted themselves to the utmost of their power. The young Prince of Wales and his division were engaged apart. His ship was grappled by a great Spaniard, when he and his knights suffered much. The Duke of Lancaster saw the engagement, and fell on the other side of the Spanish vessel, with which he grappled, shouting 'Derby to the rescue!' The ship was taken and all the crew thrown overboard, not one being saved. The Prince, with his men, instantly embarked on board the Spaniard, and scarcely had they done so when his own vessel sank, which convinced them of the imminent danger they had been in.

I cannot speak of every particular circumstance of this engagement. It lasted a considerable time; and the Spaniards gave the King of England and his fleet enough to do. At last victory declared for the English; the Spaniards lost 14 ships, and the others saved themselves by flight.

When it was completely over, and the King saw he had none to fight with, he ordered his trumpets to sound a retreat and made for England. They anchored at Rye and Winchelsea a little after nightfall, when the King, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Lancaster, the Earl of Richmond, and the other Barons disembarked, took horses in town, and rode to a mansion where the queen was, scarcely two English leagues distant. Her attendants had seen from the hills of the coast the whole of the battle, as the weather was fine and clear, and had told the Queen that the Spaniards had 40 large ships. The Queen was mightily rejoiced on seeing her lord and children. The King, with those knights who had attended him, passed the night in revelry with the ladies, conversing of arms and amours. On the morrow the greater part of his barons, who had been in this engagement, came to him. He greatly thanked them before he dismissed them, when they took their leave, and returned every man to his home."

Notes. Froissart gives no date. Thomas Walsingham gives September, 1350. Another authority gives August 29th, 1350.

Walsingham also says that 26 large ships were captured and all the rest were either sunk or put to flight.

Froissart says the battle began rather late "about the hour of Vespers". He could hardly have meant sunset, which would not have allowed time for so much to happen. Vespers may in fact be at any time after noon, and even occasionally before it (*Encyclopaedia*).

From the figures given, the average complement of the Spanish ships was 250. They must indeed have been large for those days!

More than one mansion is claimed to be that at which Queen Philippa was staying. Wickham, quite close to Winchelsea, was well placed for the attendants to see the battle from the coast, in fact it would be near the cliff edge in those days, but it is not two leagues (six miles) from Winchelsea, and would then have needed a long detour to be reached from Rye. Brede Place is exactly the right distance from Rye, but there was nowhere nearer than Rye itself from which the battle could have been seen.

FINDS AND FIELDWORK

Supposed Mesolithic site at Le Rette Farm, Battle

In April, 1954, our member Mr. H. C. Alexander reported that he had picked up flints, some apparently worked, in a field on his farm. An examination of the ground on May 7th revealed a "scatter" of flints, of which the centre was 43 yards from the east corner of the cowshed on a true bearing of 21 degrees. Two cores and 114 flakes were picked up. At least 20 flakes have been fashioned into tools by the tranchet technique (i.e., the production of a sharp edge by striking off flakes in two different planes), of which a few show signs of subsequent trimming. On the large exterior flakes the platform and bulbs of percussion are well marked. Flints do not occur naturally in the Battle District, and these appear to be of the type found on the South Downs.

Four scrapers were found, and a chisel point which is still sufficiently sharp to chip wood. Of particular interest are 9 very small flakes, one of which is a minute arrowhead, and another a geometric microlith of trapezoid shape.

According to "Flint Implements", a British Museum publication, the Tardenoisian culture, introduced into Europe from Africa at the close of the Ice Age, was characterised in its later stages by microliths of geometric shapes. The Tardenoisian immigrants settled thickly on the sand country of South East England.

The presence of both cores and unworked flakes suggests that flint-knapping took place on the spot; and the fact that many resemble those found in 1950 at the Mesolithic site at Abinger Common, Surrey, suggests moreover that excavation of the sight might disclose, as it did at Abinger, the pit dwelling where the flint-knappers lived.

Owing to the extremely wet season, however, it was not practicable to attempt any excavation. The National Grid reference of the site is 51/741176.

Further finds in the Durhamford Valley

On April 24th, 1954, our member, Mrs. Chown, found a broken Neolithic or early Bronze Age stone axehead just south of Combe Wood (Nat. Grid Ref. 51/774193), at the place where she had previously found the hollow-based flint arrowhead which was reported in "Sussex Notes and Queries", Vol. XIII, Nos. 15 and 16, for November, 1953. The expert

to whom it was submitted remarked that it had been re-chipped and used as a hammer stone. Mrs. Chown also found during the year at the same place two sherds of late Saxon or early Norman pottery. This part of the Durhamford Valley, through which ran the Roman road to the ironworks, which was examined by members of the Society in 1951, has yielded several interesting objects of widely differing dates, two of which were reported in the last number of the "Transactions".

The Staplecross Axehead

During the year our member, Mr. V. F. M. Oliver, was handed a stone axehead which had been picked up in a field about 600 yards due west of the Staplecross war memorial (Nat. Grid Ref. 51/778224). It measures 5 inches by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and is nearly complete, though somewhat battered. A small smooth area indicates that it was originally ground and polished and may therefore be assigned to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age or roughly B.C. 2,500. The stone is light green, resembling that so frequently seen in Cornwall; so it is being submitted to petrological examination to determine its place of origin. Mr. Oliver has given the axehead to the Society.

Northiam Glass Furnace

In 1882 Mr. Lord, of Church House, Northiam, found traces of glass in a small field called Glasshouse Field close to the stream forming the parish boundary between Northiam and Beckley, and at the edge of Great Goteley Wood. In 1933 Mr. S. E. Winbolt and Mr. G. H. Kenyon visited the place, but did not excavate to any extent. During the summer of 1954 our member, Mr. V. F. M. Oliver, carried out, almost single-handed, an excavation of the site. He found that a modern ditch had been dug right through the middle, which makes it impossible to carry out a complete excavation, but he was able to locate the actual furnace, the overall dimensions of which were about 20 feet long by 11 feet wide, the long side running east and west. The foundations, which are of brick, are about 2 feet below present ground level. The furnace operated during the 16th century. Many fragments of both window glass and vessels were found, all of a blueish-green colour, also a quantity of small glass rods, some only one-tenth of an inch in diameter and some tubes of about three-

eighths inch in diameter, There was one small piece of white opaque Venetian glass. Of the pottery found, one piece was dark brown, glazed, and with an incised decoration, and another cream-coloured with a floral design in yellow and green glaze. No bugles or beads were found, although it is on record that these were made at Beckley Furnace, the site of which has never been located. Some pieces of a crucible with charcoal and cinders proved that the glass had been made on the spot. The Nat. Grid Ref. of the site is 51/842249. When marking this on the Sussex Archaeological Society's map it was discovered that the site had been previously marked 250 yards farther down stream. Mr. Kenyon, who visited the excavation, was able to say however that it was the same place that he had worked at in 1933, so that the error was rectified.

COMMEMORATION OF THE 888th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

**Lecture delivered by the Rev. Dr. Compton Dickinson,
D.Litt., F.S.A., on October 15th, 1954**

ENGLISH MONASTERIES ON THE EVE OF THE DISSOLUTION

The progress of historical research has done a great deal to dissipate the ignorance and prejudice with which this subject was invested in Victorian times. The great proportion of monasteries dissolved under Henry VIII had been founded in the two centuries after the Norman Conquest: in 1066 there were some 60 religious houses, which increased to 150 in 1100, 728 in 1216, and 1000 in 1350.

The monastic population was about at its peak at the time of the Black Death of 1348-9, when it numbered some 17,500. The plague reduced it by about two-fifths, but some of the leeway was later recovered, and by 1500 the figure was about 12,250.

The progress before 1350 sprang from a deep popular admiration for the monastic life, which a later age found excessive, and which had probably exceeded saturation point. Inevitably the small house suffered the most severely from it, especially the houses of Austin Canons, a number of which, notably in East Anglia, had been founded for only a handful of brethren with the over-optimistic hopes of future expansion. Thus in 1506 the Abbey of Creake was closed because the

abbot had died from the plague, leaving no convent and in 1507 Bicknacre priory suffered a similar fate. Altogether in the two centuries before the Dissolution some 150 houses disappeared, though most of these were very small, some being only cells of larger houses. In a large number of the houses which survived, the number of inmates was undesirably low.

The modern man can see that there was an overwhelming case for a rationalisation of the monastic structure, reducing the number of houses, and levelling out the tremendous discrepancies in their income. (At the Dissolution some houses, especially minor nunneries, had only a few score pounds a year on which to exist, while at the other end of the scale were a few dozen monasteries, mostly ancient Benedictine foundations, had an income of several thousand pounds a year, representing an enormous sum in modern money, which often led the brethren to indulge in undesirable easy living conditions). But there were considerable technical difficulties in the way of any extensive schemes of administrative reform and little was done along these lines. Their great difference in size makes it most dangerous to generalise at all narrowly about the economic condition of English monasteries as a whole in the later Middle Ages. Certainly a number found the financial situation precarious, and tried desperate remedies; as when the prior of Chelwood sent his few brethren to do agricultural work, to the neglect of their spiritual obligations (1460). The same critical situation may have led the prioress of Esholt to keep a tavern within the Monastic precinct (1535).

The medieval episcopal visitations, many of which have been published, throw a flood of light on the monastic life of the times. They do not give any support to the view that the religious houses were sinks of vice. The serious crimes they mention are few, and if considered in the light of contemporary social conditions, negligible.

On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that the general standard of life was by no means as high as was desirable. The upkeep of the fabric of the monastic church and buildings was a heavy burden for such small communities, and there are many reports of such buildings being ruinous or in great need of repair. Attempts to remedy the situation by granting corrodies (an annual allowance of food, clothing and lodging in return for some lump payment) tended to make the situation worse rather than better. At Goring in 1516 it was reported that the dormitory was ruinous and various other buildings collapsed. At Laund Abbey in 1528, the refectory was ruinous and rain came in through the church roof. Another

source of trouble was the pocket money paid to monks, which in the wealthy houses was sometimes very considerable.

The lower quality of life is often evinced by the complaint of slackness at divine worship, especially in attendance at Mattins, and in irreverent behaviour in church. At Bourne Abbey in 1525 it was reported that Henry Alton and John Todd spent the night in the gatehouse drinking and gossiping, absent themselves from worship, and when in church wander about the nave. Another symptom of the same trouble was the frequent occurrence of a tendency to wander outside the monastic precinct without good reason. The canons of Ulverscroft got into trouble for birdnesting by night, and the monks of Humberstone for going into the town to play tennis (1525). In houses of nuns the slackness manifested itself in a tendency to wear unduly fine clothes, and in 1535 even the abbot of St. Mary's, York, was in trouble for having a silk lined hood and gilt spurs.

In some ways more important was the intellectual torpor which had affected many religious houses. Theology had ceased to be pursued with any great vigour, and there was a rather out-of-date feeling about the older orders, which had not the interest in the outside world that the growing humanist spirit demanded.

Yet nothing is easier than to underestimate the strength of the monastic life in the early sixteenth century. It might be in certain respects old fashioned, slack and ill organised but, as its remarkable history since then has shewn, there was nothing essentially effete about it. "The best men of those days were as good as the best of any day", wrote Dr. Coulton, "and to the very end a considerable proportion of the best men were in the monasteries".

J. C. DICKINSON.

COMMEMORATION SERVICE IN BATTLE PARISH CHURCH

A special service was held in the Parish Church, Battle, on Sunday evening, October 17th, by kind permission of the Dean, a Vice-President of the Society.

The lessons were read by Mrs. Harbord, another Vice-President of the Society, and Sir John Thorne, the Chairman. There were special hymns and psalms and the address was given by the Rev. F. Vere Hodge, who had been elected a member "*honoris causa*" of the Society at the third annual general meeting for his part in compiling the history of St. Mary's Church, a valuable contribution to the history of Battle.

FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on October 29th, 1954

The Chairman reported that the membership at the end of the fourth financial year was 295, made up of 261 ordinary members, 23 junior members, 6 half-yearly members, and 5 honorary members; an increase of 5 on the previous year. The balance of funds at the end of the year, including a reserve of £10-19-7, was £29-7-6. The reduction in the reserve was due to the necessity for financing the "Transactions". Two Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Penrose Fry and the Hon. Mrs. Whistler, who were due to retire, were re-elected. The following were elected officers for 1954-55: Chairman, Sir John Thorne; Vice-Chairman, Mr. B. E. Beechey; Hon. Secretary, Miss A. J. Crozier; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. P. F. Room. Committee: Mr. C. T. Chevallier, Miss R. Chiverton, Mr. A. R. Clough, Mr. R. H. D'Elboux, Miss C. A. Kirk, Lt.-Col. C. H. Lemmon, Mr. A. E. Marson, Miss M. J. Powell, Mr. L. H. Pyke, and Mr. W. Raper.

The Society's finances, though sound, having proved inadequate for all the Society wants to do, increases in the annual subscriptions were unanimously approved as follows: Ordinary members and Guest Vouchers for the full year 7/6. Junior members, members elected after April 14th and guest vouchers after April 14th 5/-.

Two short documentary films were then shewn: "The Growth of London" and "London To-day". A short film taken by the B.B.C. of the ceremony at the Norman Stone in the Abbey grounds on August 21st was also shewn. A copy of this film, through the generosity of a member, has become the property of the Society.

Not found in July 1988 - BSC has no record

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