

NOTES ON THE LOCAL DISTRICT.

(By "GOTSWOLDS.")

XX.—FROM CAINSCROSS TO STONEHOUSE.

The construction of the present main route Stroud-Stonhouse-Gloucester the common highway ran from Stroud to Stonehouse via Beeches Green-Paganhill-Westrip to what then was but a small village. Of little more than a hundred houses in the parish, Stonehouse was nevertheless not without importance, by reason of its cloth mills. In size and importance it was to increase progressively with the cutting of the lower Gloucester-Stroud main road, the construction of the Stroudwater Navigation Canal, the coming of the railways, and the steady instruction of all that pertains to modern industry and commerce.

The hamlets, Ebley and Cainscross, connected by lateral lanes with the old highway, stood in almost undisturbed surroundings, with little movement about them.

To-day it is the old highway that is quiet—at least, from Paganhill westwards—and all traffic to the Severn Valley passes over a route which, on the face of things, has little worthy of note. Yet in reality that route is not lacking in interest of a varied character. Let us follow it as far as Stonehouse.

Turnpike Riot at Cainscross.

Although I have been unable to ascertain the time when the modern main road was constructed, the following will serve to show it was in existence in 1754. On 25th May that year there was serious rioting at Gloucester, when turnpikes were demolished by the mob, and this was followed by a similar outbreak at Cainscross. In the State Papers (Domestic) for 1754 is contained the evidence of one William Bennett, innkeeper, who "deposed that on Sunday night, 19th June, 1754, whilst in a house situate near the turnpikes at Cainscross, a tumultuous company of disguised persons, sounding a horn and playing on a fiddle, and armed with firearms and other weapons, came up to the turnpikes and commenced hewing with axes; and when the deponent found out about two hours after, he saw that the turnpikes were utterly demolished."

Murder Most Foul.

In the year 1886 there was living at Stroud one Edward alias Edwin, Prit-

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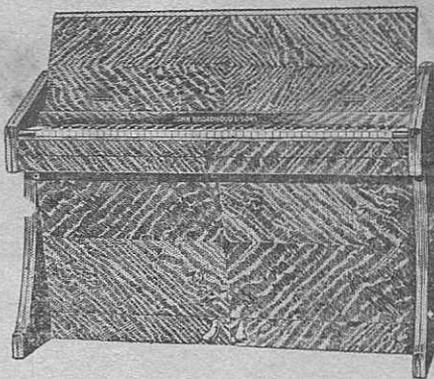
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THE PROMENADE, CHELTENHAM



M.C., late the Worcestershire Regiment, now a barrister-at-law and a London stipendiary magistrate. His father Mr. Charles Bennett, was for many years Chief Secretary of the Stroud Holloway Original Benefit Society. In the early days of the Great War Paul Bennett enlisted in the ranks of the Artists' Rifles. Not long after being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Worcestershire Regt, he won the Military Cross, either at the battle of Loos or at the same time as that expensive action was in progress; and on 5th November, 1916, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in rallying troops during the desperate fighting at Le Transloy, in the course of which fighting he was severely wounded.

The Derivation of "Cainscross."

There is a certain amount of speculation concerning the derivation of the name of Cainscross, and some time since I heard one British-Israelite enthusiast opine, with complete disregard for the fact that the Cross had no significance

As regards the last paragraph of a relative's eulogy: the shorthand system of the late Mr. Lewis, for all its many excellent points, has long since fallen into disuse, and seems to be almost completely forgotten.

Pass we onwards to Stonehouse, standing beneath Doverow Hill, and where the valley of the Froom debouches on level meadows in the broad Severn Vale.

The Manor of Stonehouse.

Stonehouse finds its mention in Domesday records, when the manor fell to possession of William de Ow, a Norman knight who had come over with the redoubtable son of the Falaise washerwoman to aid him in the settlement of a serious dispute with the last of the Saxon kings and, incidentally, to relieve that monarch of his realm.

Exactly when the descendants of William de Ow ceased to hold the manor is uncertain to me, but in the year 1281 John Giffard, of Brimpsfield, had free tenure of Stonehouse. It was probably

turnpikes at Cainscross, a tumultuous company of disguised persons, sounding a horn and playing on a fiddle, and armed with firearms and other weapons, came up to the turnpikes and commenced hewing with axes; and when the deponent found out about two hours after, he saw that the turnpikes were utterly demolished."

Murder Most Foul.

In the year 1886 there was living at Stroud one Edward, alias Edwin, Pritchard, an impecunious ne'er-do-well, some twenty years of age, who, as the following will show, would stick at nothing in order to obtain money with which to divert himself according to his own standard of enjoyment. He had spent three years in an industrial school, had been convicted of shop-breaking, and on the last day of December, 1886, the date on which he committed the most terrible of crimes, he was still under police surveillance as being a thoroughly undesirable character.

In the same year there was employed at Lightpill Cloth Mills the fifteen-years-old lad, Henry Allen. Somebody in authority had given the youngster the weekly task of proceeding to the Gloucestershire Bank, at Stroud, to draw and return with the sum representing the employees' wages.

Pritchard was aware of this, and it occurred to him that here was an opportunity to acquire sufficient funds at one swoop for a right good time. Obviously it did not enter his mind that he could probably achieve his purpose without endangering his neck, for he prepared for nothing less than murder.

For this purpose, the miscreant procured a horse and trap, armed himself with a hatchet, and hung about in the foggy afternoon of 31st December for the return of the boy with the money (some £200) that he had drawn from the bank. About half-past three young Allen came down Boweroff carrying the bag of money, to be accosted by Pritchard, who very kindly offered him a lift to Lightpill via the Cainscross Road. All unsuspectingly, the lad accepted the offer, and a few minutes later Pritchard callously brained his victim in the foggy main road, threw him, still living, down the lane that leads to Lodgemore Mills, and made off with his plunder. Less than twenty-four later he was apprehended at the Eagle Inn, Pitchcombe, for the coward's neck to be stretched in due course by ne Berry, the hangman, in Gloucester Jail.

The Marling School.

It was probably some years before his death that the late Sir Samuel S. Marling conceived the idea of giving Stroud a secondary school. He did not live to give effect to his benevolent intention, but his wishes were faithfully carried out by his children, and the date carved over the entrance to the imposing Marling School, that stands to the right of the Stroud-Cainscross Road, indicates that it was opened in 1889.

Its first headmaster was, I believe, the late Mr. W. J. Greenstreet, who will be remembered by many local residents as a zealous Freemason of high degree, and by his old pupils not only as a popular "head" of uncommon general efficiency, but also as a mathematical genius. Indeed, on his retirement from the headship of Marling School he accepted the editorship of the "Mathematical Gazette." He died some years ago at Burghfield, Berks., where he was my neighbour and, I am proud to say, my very good friend. Who could fail to like the tall, bearded man with the twinkling eyes, who drawled forth quip and jest with his cigarette in his mouth?

One of Mr. Greenstreet's pupils was Captain Eugene Paul Bennett, V.C.

and on 4th November, 1914, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in rallying troops during the desperate fighting at Le Transloy, in the course of which fighting he was severely wounded.

The Derivation of "Cainscross."

There is a certain amount of speculation concerning the derivation of the name of Cainscross, and some time since I heard one British-Israelite enthusiast opine, with complete disregard for the fact that the Cross had no significance whatever when Cain slew his brother, that the name comes from this, the first of murderers. John Aubrey, a seventeenth century writer, taken an altogether different view, and says, with considered reason, when referring to the Keynes family of East Combe, Wilts:—"It is believed that Cainscross, in the vicinity of Stroud, takes its name from a member of this family. Many of the well-known families of the clothing districts of Wilts and Gloucestershire had branches settled in this place in its most flourishing times, as the Fishers, Stantons, Taylors, etc." (Perhaps Aubrey refers to the Fishers, Stantons and Tayloes).

But why the "Cross"?

There stands, to the left of the turn of the road to Dudbridge, what is described in Kelly's County Directory as an ancient stone shaft supporting a sundial that was fitted to it in 1754. I have not examined this sundial with its support so cannot judge its age. It may, however, be the shaft of one of the preaching crosses that were set up throughout the county in mediæval times, to be mutilated by Roundhead zealots during the period of the Civil Wars. If that is the case, it would appear that the origin of the name of Cainscross is in part definitely accounted for.

John Henry Lewis, of Ebley.

About the year 1786 there was born at Havesfield House, as it was then called, between Ebley and Stonehouse, John Henry Lewis, son of Mr. James Lewis, clothier, who was engaged in business at the Oil Mills, Ebley. It was intended, as he grew older, that he should follow in the same business, and for this purpose he entered his father's counting-house. He was not there long when a misunderstanding with his father caused him to leave home.

Where he settled is not clear, but wherever it was, he turned his attention to stenography, and at the same time took steps to improve his handwriting, which was very bad. In course of time he produced his own system of shorthand, and devised a method for improving handwriting. Having brought these systems to perfection, he commenced teaching in the provinces; then he removed to London, where he set up as a professor of "The Royal Lewisian Systems of Writing, Arithmetic, Book-keeping and Shorthand." He was shorthand writer in the law courts, and the publisher of several handbooks for self-instruction in the subjects he taught.

Mr. H. J. D'Ath, his son-in-law, says in a letter that was written some 54 years ago:—"Mr. Lewis was a successful teacher of his systems throughout England and in Scotland, and made the acquaintance of many high and talented persons, by whom, and by many thousands of pupils, he was greatly esteemed. He finally settled in London, at the 'Flying Pen,' 115, Strand, in 1834, where he continued until his decease in 1853, and was interred in Kensal Green Cemetery. His professional business was successfully carried on, until recently, by one of the family. His shorthand is truly described as 'the only system that can be acquired in a short time, being easier learned, easier written, and easier read than any other.'"

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Exactly when the descendants of William de Ow ceased to hold the manor is uncertain to me, but in the year 1281 John Giffard, of Brimpsfield, had free warren of Stonehouse. It was probably his son John who lost the manor, and all other possessions (including his life), in 1932, in consequence of having, in the first place, plundered the army baggage train of Edward II. near Brimpsfield, and then being so unfortunate as to be taken prisoner while fighting against his sovereign lord at Boroughbridge. He was taken to Gloucester, beheaded, quartered and his limbs impaled—"pour encourager les autres," or otherwise.

The manor of Stonehouse now fell to possession of John, Lord Maltravers. In 1538 he, getting into trouble with Edward III., was despoiled of it to the joint benefit of Hugh le Despenser and Maurice Berkeley. Maltravers, however, recovered his lost manor at a later date.

About the year 1400 Stonehouse passed by marriage from the family of Maltravers to the lords Arundel, and in their hands it remained until 11th December, 1558, on which day the Earl of Arundel, in consideration of the sum of £1,095 16s. 2d., sold the manor to William Fowler and William Sanford, jointly.

Before proceeding further, it is interesting to recall the old tradition that during the Wars of the Roses a battle was fought at Stonehouse, and a field known as Berryfield (formerly Buryfield) used to be pointed out as the place where the slain were interred. Nothing in the way of a pitched battle is recorded as having been fought at Stonehouse, but there may be a certain amount of foundation for the tradition. On 2nd May, 1471, Margaret of Anjou and her Lancastrian army passed in haste up the Severn Valley in their frustrated attempt to cross the river at Gloucester, while a little to the rear of their right flank the army of Edward IV. followed along the western escarpment of the Cotswolds, both armies meeting in battle on the following day outside Tewkesbury, on the Bloody Meadow. It seems well established that on the previous day the skirmishing troops had come into collision, and it follows that, having once gained touch with the enemy, the Yorkist detached troops would follow up as closely as possible, with resultant small engagements with the Lancastrian army rear-guard, one of which may possibly have been fought in the vicinity of Stonehouse.

By a deed of partition between William Fowler and William Sanford, the former became sole lord of the manor, and in 1601 he erected the old manor house, probably on the site of its predecessor. It stood in the midst of a large park that is said in Tudor times to have contained 150 head of deer. The manor house is said to have sheltered Queen Elizabeth for one night. No record exists to support this tradition.

From the Fowler family, the manor of Stonehouse passed by marriage to the families of Smith and Ball, successively, and with the latter family space considerations dictate that it must be left.

(To be concluded.)

STROUD GIRL

SINGING