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[Picture: Portraits of two Iron-Miners]

[Picture: Title Page]

THE

FOREST OF DEAN;

AN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT,

DERIVED FROM PERSONAL OBSERVATION, AND OTHER SOURCES, PUBLIC,

PRIVATE, LEGENDARY, AND LOCAL.

BY H. G. NICHOLLS, M.A.,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF HOLY TRINITY, DEAN FOREST.

John Murray, Albemarle Street.

1858.

PREFACE.

Disappointment expressed by others and felt by myself that a History of

the Forest of Dean should never have appeared in print, and an impression

that a considerable amount of interesting information relative to it

might be brought together, combined I may add with the fact that there

seemed no probability of such a work being otherwise undertaken until old

usages and traditions had passed away, have induced me to attempt its

compilation. I here venture to publish the fruit of my labours, in the

hope that the reader may derive some portion of that pleasure which the

prosecution of the work has afforded me, and trusting that the same

indulgent consideration which led the officers of the Government, the

gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and many of the intelligent Foresters to

aid in the execution, will by them and the public be extended to the work

itself.

I have endeavoured to make it as complete as possible by supplying every

known circumstance, mostly in the words of the original narrator, and yet

trying so to harmonize the whole as to engage the attention of the

general reader, but more particularly of the residents in the district,

by acquainting them with the past and present state of one of the most

interesting and remarkable localities in the kingdom.

H. G. N.

\_July\_, 1858.

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CHAPTER I.

A.D. 1307-1612.

Origin of the name "Dean"?--The "Buck Stone," and other Druidical

remains--"The Scowles," &c., and other ancient iron-mines, worked in the

time of the Romans--Symmond's Yat, and other military

earthworks--Domesday Book, and investment of this Forest in the

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St. Briavel's first built; Giraldus--Flaxley Abbey founded--King John at

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the Forest--Date of the ruins of St. Briavel's Castle--Iron forges

licensed by Henry III.--Perambulation of 1282, and first "Justice

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Forest--Newland Church founded--Free miners summoned to the sieges of

Berwick, &c.--Edward II., grants in the Forest--Edward III.,

ditto--Richard II., ditto--Henry IV., ditto--Henry V., ditto--Henry VI.,

ditto--Severn barges stopped by Foresters--Edward IV., and retreat hither

of the Earl Rivers and Sir J. Woodville--Edward VI. farmed the Forest to

Sir A. Kingston--Design of the Spaniards to destroy the Forest--Papers

from Sir J. Caesar's collection, viz. Sir J. Winter's negotiations

relative to the iron-works, &c.--Blast furnaces erected.

The district known as "the Forest of Dean" is situated within that part

of Gloucestershire which is bounded by the rivers Severn and Wye. Its

name is of doubtful origin. Was it so called from its proximity to the

town of Mitcheldean, or Dean Magna, mentioned in Domesday Book, and

which, agreeably to its name, is situated in a wooded valley, the word

"Dean," or "Dene," being Saxon, and signifying a dale or den?--or do we

accept the statement of Giraldus, and some other writers, that the Forest

of Dean obtained its name from the Danes sheltering themselves in it,

secured by its shades and thickets from the retaliation of the

neighbouring people, whose country they had devastated?--Or, again, do we

"fancy," with Camden, that "by cutting off a syllable it is derived from

Arden, which word the Gauls and Britons heretofore seemed to have used

for a wood, since two very great forests, the one in Gallia Belgica, the

other amongst us in Warwickshire, are called by one and the same name,

Arden"? This latter suggestion Evelyn, in his 'Sylva,' accepts, in which

he is supported by the fact that the name of "Dean" is first met with in

William the Norman's survey.

Probably the earliest trace of this locality being inhabited exists in

the Druidical rocks which are found on the high lands on the

Gloucestershire side of the Wye. The chief of them is "the Buck Stone,"

so called perhaps from the deer which sheltered beneath it, or else from

its fancied resemblance to that animal when viewed from certain distant

spots. It is a huge mass of rock poised on the very crest of Staunton

Hill, which being of a pyramidal form, and almost 1000 feet high, renders

the stone on its summit visible in one direction as far as Ross, nine

miles off. A careful examination of the structure of the rock, and

particularly of the character of its base, will show that its position is

natural. But that the Druids had appropriated it to sacrificial

purposes, is evident from a rudely hollowed stone which lies adjacent.

In shape "the Buck Stone" is almost flat on the top, and four-sided, the

north-east side measuring sixteen feet five inches, the north seventeen

feet, the south-west nine feet, and the south side twelve feet. The face

of the rock on which it rests slopes considerably, and the bearing point

is only two feet across. This part may be an unbroken neck of rock, but

apparently the entire block has crushed down upon its base, as though,

from having once formed the extremity of the portion of cliff near, it

had fallen away, and had accidentally balanced itself in its present

position. {2} The texture of "the Buck Stone" is similar to that of the

slab of rock on which it rests, commonly known as the old red sandstone

conglomerate of quartz pebbles (a stratum of which extends through the

whole district), exceedingly hard in most of its veins, but very

perishable in others; and hence perhaps the form and origin of this

singular object.

[Picture: The Buck Stone]

In addition to the above, there is a large mass of grit-stone, from nine

to ten feet high, standing in a field on the north side of the road

leading from Bream to St. Briavel's, named "the Long Stone." Another,

called by the same name, and of similar character, occurs on the

north-east side of the Staunton and Coleford road; but nothing remarkable

is known of either of them, only their weather-worn appearance shows that

they have been exposed to the action of the elements during many

centuries.

Next in order of time to the above remains are the ancient Iron-mines,

locally termed "Scowles," {4} which were undoubtedly worked when this

island was occupied by the Romans. This appears certain from the coins,

&c., which have been found deeply buried in the heaps of iron cinders

derived from the workings of these mines. A highly interesting MS.

Dissertation, written about the year 1780 by Mr. Wyrrall, on the ancient

iron-works of the Forest, a subject on which he was well informed, being

a resident in the neighbourhood, is conclusive on this head. He

states:--"Coins, fibula, and other things known to be in use with that

people (the Romans), have been frequently found in the beds of cinders at

certain places: this has occurred particularly at the village of

Whitchurch, between Ross and Monmouth, where large stacks of cinders have

been found, and some of them so deep in the earth, eight or ten feet

under the surface, as to demonstrate without other proof that they must

have lain there for a great number of ages. The present writer has had

opportunities of seeing many of these coins and fibula, &c., which have

been picked up by the workmen in getting the cinders at this place, in

his time; but especially one coin of Trajan, which he remembers to be

surprisingly perfect and fresh, considering the length of time it must

have been in the ground. Another instance occurs to his recollection of

a little image of brass, about four inches long, which was then found in

the cinders at the same place, being a very elegant female figure, in a

dancing attitude, and evidently an antique by the drapery."

Numerous additional traces of the same people have been discovered in

this neighbourhood, viz., a Roman pavement, tesserae, bricks, and tiles

at Whitchurch, already mentioned; remains of Ariconium, a town, it seems,

of blacksmiths, at Bollitree; a camp, bath, and tessellated pavement at

Lydney; and coins to a large amount, indicative of considerable local

prosperity, on the Coppet Woodhill, at Lydbrook, Perry Grove, and

Crabtree Hill--of Philip, Gallienus, Victorinus, Claudius Gothicus, &c.

Crabtree Hill being situated near the centre of the Forest, renders the

discovery of Roman antiquities there especially interesting. On 27th

August, 1839, a man who was employed to raise some stone in Crabtree

Hill, of which several heaps were lying on the surface, in turning over

the stone found about twenty-five Roman coins. The next day, in another

heap about fifty yards distant, he found a broken jar or urn of baked

clay, and 400 or 500 coins lying by it, the coins being for the most part

those of Claudius II., Gallienus, and Victorinus. The spot is rather

high ground, but not a hill or commanding point, and there do not appear

any traces of a camp near it. Some of the stones seemed burnt, as if the

building had been destroyed by fire. There was no appearance of mortar,

but the stones had evidently been used in building, and part of the

foundation of a wall remained visible. A silver coin of Aurelius was

likewise picked up.

Similar discoveries have been made in other places. At Seddlescombe, in

Sussex, one of the earliest iron-making localities in the kingdom, Mr.

Wright, in his interesting work entitled 'Wanderings of an Antiquary,'

mentions several Roman coins, especially one of the Emperor Diocletian,

having been met with in a bed of iron cinders, manifestly of great

antiquity, since four large oaks stood upon its surface.

An interval of a few hundred years brings us to the probable date of the

next class of antiquities, viz. the military earthworks yet traceable in

the neighbourhood. They are four in number, commencing with the lines of

circumvallation which enclose the promontory of Beachley; next, the camp

and entrenchments on the high lands of Tidenham Chase; then, a camp near

the Bearse Common; and, as a termination to the chain, the triple dyke

defending Symmond's Yat. Some have regarded these remains as forming the

southern termination of Offa's Dyke, which that sovereign constructed

about the year 760, to prevent the Welsh from invading his kingdom of

Mercia; but they are not sufficiently uniform or continuous to warrant

such a conclusion. They seem rather to be connected with the incident

which the Chronicles of Florentius Vigorniensis relate as taking place

A.D. 912:--"The Pagan pirates, who nearly nineteen years before had

retired from Britain, approaching by the province of Gaul, called

Lydivinum, return with two leaders, Ohterus and Hroaldus, to England,

and, sailing round West Saxonia and Cornubia, at length reach the mouth

of the river Sabrina (Severn), and, without delay, invade the northern

lands of the British, and, exploring all the parts adjoining the bank of

the river, pillage most of them. Cymelgeac, a British bishop who

occupied the plains of Yrcenefeld (Archenfield), was likewise taken; and

they, not a little rejoicing, carry him off to their ships, whom, not

long after, King Edward ransomed for forty pounds of silver. Soon after,

the whole force, leaving their ships, return to the aforesaid plains, and

make their way for the sake of plunder; but suddenly as many of the

inhabitants as possible of the adjoining towns of Hereford and Glevum

(Gloucester) assemble, and give them battle. Hroaldus, the leader of the

enemy, and his brother Ohterus, the other leader, with a large part of

the army, are slain. The rest are put to flight, and driven by the

Christians into a certain fence (septum), where they are at length

besieged, until they give hostages, so that as fast as possible they

depart King Edward's realm." Mr. Fryer, of Coleford, ingeniously

supposes that Symmond's Rock was the scene of the above contest, which

may possibly be correct.

Edward the Confessor is stated in Domesday Book to have exempted the

Forest of Dean from taxation, with the object apparently of preserving it

from spoliation. The exact terms used are, "\_has tras c' cessit rex E.

quietas a geldo pro foresta custod\_," manifesting an interest in its

protection on the part of the Crown, to which no doubt it had now become

annexed. Probably in those early days the King possessed the right to

all lands not under cultivation or already apportioned, just as the

Sovereign of our own day exercises the right in our colonial territories,

and makes specific grants to private individuals. Thus, Mr. Rudder, in

his 'History of Gloucestershire,' remarks that "originally all the lands

of the subject are derived from the Crown, and our forests may have been

made when the ancient kings had the greater part in their own hands."

Agreeably with which principle, combined with the attractions which the

Forest of Dean possessed as a hunting ground, it was sometimes visited

for the sports of the chase by William the Conqueror, who in the year

1069 was thus diverting himself when he received information that the

Danes had invaded Yorkshire and taken its chief city. Roused to fury by

these tidings, he swore "by the splendour of the Almighty" that "not one

Northumbrian should escape his revenge;" an oath which he put into prompt

and terrible execution. It seems not improbable that upon one of these

royal visits the miners of the Forest applied for and obtained their

"customes and franchises," which, even in the less remote days of Edward

I., were granted, as the record of them declares, "time out of minde."

The demand which the Conqueror made upon the citizens of Gloucester for

thirty-six "Icres" of iron yearly, each of which comprised ten bars, made

at their forges, six in number, wherewith to furnish his fleet with

nails, was procured doubtless from this Forest, for which impost the

above-named grant was possibly designed as a compensation.

The 'Annals' of Giraldus, relative to the reign of Henry I., inform us

that the Castle of St. Briavel's, or Brulails was now built by Milo

Fitz-Walter, with the design of confirming the royal authority in the

neighbourhood, and of checking the inroads of the Welsh; but, extensive

as its ruins still are, they seem to contain no trace of so early a

period. The only vestige of that age is seen in the Parish Church, which

stands opposite the north entrance of the castle. Henry created

Fitz-Walter Earl of Hereford, and committed the castle of St. Briavel's,

and the district adjoining, to his care. The 'Itinerary' of the same

writer speaks of "the noble Forest of Dean, by which Gloucester was amply

supplied with iron and venison." Tithes of the latter were given by this

King to the Abbey there.

[Picture: South side of the Nave in St. Briavel's Church]

In the fifth year of the succeeding reign of Stephen, by whom the gifts

just mentioned were confirmed, the Forest of Dean, that is, its royal

quitrents, were granted to Lucy, Milo Fitz-Walter's third daughter, upon

her marrying Herbert Fitz-Herbert, the King's chamberlain, and progenitor

to the present Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. So profuse a gift on

such an occasion may seem almost incredible; but its tenure, we must

remember, was precarious, the Forest itself being continually exposed to

danger by its proximity to the Welsh border. Mahel was this lady's

youngest brother, of whom Camden records that "the judgment of God

overtook him for his rapacious ways, inhumane cruelties, and boundless

avarice, always usurping other men's rights. For, being courteously

treated at the Castle of St. Briavel's by Walter de Clifford, the castle

taking fire, he lost his life by the fall of a stone on his head from the

highest tower." It should be observed, however, that, according to Sir

R. C. Hoare, Camden is mistaken in placing the scene of Mahel's

catastrophe in the Forest of Dean; Brendlais, or Bynllys, as mentioned by

Giraldus, being a small village on the road between Hereford and Hay,

where a stately tower marks the site of the ancient castle of the

Cliffords, in which most likely this tyrant lost his life.

In this year also, A.D. 1140, the Abbey of Flaxley was founded by Roger,

the Earl of Hereford's eldest son, by whom it was partially endowed, and

who named it "the Abbey of St. Mary de Dene," the site being formerly

included in the precincts of the Forest. The institution of the Abbey

was confirmed by Henry II., who further enriched it by granting

permission to the monks to feed their cattle, hogs, &c., in the Forest,

repair their buildings with its timber, and have an iron-forge there. In

course of years the Fitz-Herbert interest in the Forest and Castle of St.

Briavel's, passing through the families of Henry de Bohun and Bernard de

Newmarch, was released by the former to King John, who granted them at

the close of his reign to John de Monmouth. The 'Itinerary' of this

monarch shows that he often visited the neighbourhood, no doubt for the

diversions of the chase, viz.:--

A.D. 1207, at Gloucester Nov. 14, Wednesday.

St. Briavel's ,, 15, Thursday.

,," ,, 16, Friday

morning.

Flaxley ,, ,, ,, evening.

St. Briavel's ,, 17, Saturday.

Hereford ,, 18, Sunday.

1212, at Flaxley ,, 8, Thursday.

,, ,, 9, Friday.

St. Briavel's ,, 10, Saturday.

,, ,, 11, Sunday.

,, ,, 12, Monday.

Flaxley ,, ,, Monday evening.

1213, at St. Briavel's ,, 28, Thursday.

,, ,, 29, Friday.

Monmouth ,, ,, Friday evening.

,, ,, 30, Saturday.

St. Briavel's ,, ,, ,,

Flaxley ,, ,, ,,

Gloucester ,, 30, Saturday.

1214, at Braden's Coke Dec. 11, Thursday.

Ashton ,, ,, ,,

Flaxley ,, ,, ,,

From this date Bigland, in his 'County History,' arranges nearly an

unbroken succession of the constables of St. Briavel's Castle, and

wardens of the Forest of Dean, viz.:--

A.D. 1215 17 King John John de Monmouth.

1260 44 Henry III. Robert Waleran.

1263 47 ,, John Giffard (Baron).

,, ,, Thomas de Clace.

1282 12 Edward I. William de Beauchamp Earl

of Warwick.

1289 19 ,, John de Bottourt

(deprived).

1291 21 ,, Thomas de Everty.

1298 27 ,, John de Handeloe.

1300 29 ,, Ralph de Abbenhalle.

1307 1 Edward II. John de Bottourt

(restored).

1308 2 ,, William de Stanre.

1322 15 ,, Hugh Le Despenser

(senior).

1327 18 ,, John de Nyvers.

,, 20 ,, John de Hardeshull.

1341 14 Edward III. Roger Clifford (Baron).

1391 14 Richard II. Thomas de Woodstock Duke

of Gloucester.

1436 14 Henry VI. John Duke of Bedford.

1459 38 ,, John Tiptoft Earl of

Worcester.

1466 6 Edward IV. Richard Neville Earl of

Warwick &c.

1612 9 James I. Henry Earl of Pembroke.

1632 10 Charles I. Philip ,,

1660 1 Charles II. Henry Lord Herbert of

Raglan Duke of Beaufort.

1706 5 Queen Anne Charles Earl of Berkeley.

1700 9 ,, James ,,

1736 8 George II. Augustus ,,

1755 27 ,, Norborne Berkeley Esq.

Lord Bottetourt.

1760 1 George III. Frederic Augustus Earl of

Berkeley.

1814 54 ,, Henry Somerset Duke of

Beaufort.

1838 Chief Commissioner of

Woods and Forests.

Judging from the architectural character of the remains of St. Briavel's

Castle, the whole of which seem to belong to the middle of the thirteenth

century, and closely to resemble in several features the neighbouring

castles of Chepstow and Goodrich, viz. in their entrances, angular-headed

arches, and three-cornered buttresses, the present building was probably

erected by John de Monmouth, at the cost of the Crown, paid out of the

increasing receipts which now accrued to it from the charges levied upon

the iron mines and forges at work in the district. The latter, being

itinerant forges, were ordered to cease until the King, Henry III.,

should command otherwise, which appears to have led to the Chief Justice

in Eyre directing that none should have an iron-forge in the Forest

without a special licence from the Sovereign.

[Picture: Entrance to St. Briavel's Castle from the North]

By royal permission the Abbot of Flaxley possessed both an itinerant and

a stationary forge; one of the former kind also belonged to the men of

Cantelupe. Henry Earl of Warwick had likewise forges in his woods at

Lydney, as well as others in the Forest, and these formed no doubt but a

small part of the whole number. The dimensions of these forges may be

judged of by the two at Flaxley consuming more than two oaks weekly, to

the destruction of much timber, in lieu of which the King gave the Abbey

872 acres of woodland, which still forms part of the property at the

present day, under the name of "the Abbot's Woods."

During the long reign of Henry III. pasturage was granted to the men of

Rodley, who also in common with the King's people might hunt the boar.

Commonage was likewise given to the Abbot of Flaxley. The bailiwick of

Dean Magna was granted to Walter Wither. The men of Awre were allowed,

by custom, pasturage in the Forest; those of Rodley, estover, dead and

dry wood, with pannage and food for cattle as well.

The earliest of the various perambulations of the Forest, in the ensuing

reign of Edward I., was in the year 1282, and comprised the peninsula

formed by the Severn and Wye, proceeding north-east as far as Newent, and

north to Ross, as in fact it had always done. It may be also observed

that about this period the Abbot of Gloucester purchased thirty-six acres

of land in Hope Maloysell, held by Gilbert and Julian Lepiatte, receiving

also Thomas Dunn's gift of all his lands in the same parish. The most

ancient of the justice seats for these parts sat the same year at

Gloucester Castle. By its proceedings, some of the records of which

happily still exist, we learn that upwards of seventy-two "\_Forgeae

errantes\_," or moveable forges, were found here; that the sum which the

Crown charged for licensing them was at the rate of seven shillings a

year, viz. three shillings and six pence for six months, or one shilling

and nine pence a quarter; that a miner received one penny, or the worth

of it in ore, for each load brought to any of the King's ironworks; but

if conveyed out of the Forest the penny was paid to the Crown; and that

in those cases where a forge was farmed, forty-six shillings was charged.

{12} No less than fifty-nine mines were let at this time to Henry de

Chaworth, who had besides forges at work in the Forest.

A careful examination of the oldest copy extant of 'The Miners' Laws and

Privileges,' regarded, as Mr. Wyrrall tells us, writing in the year 1780,

"as the Magna Charta of our miners and colliers," incontrovertibly proves

that it belongs to this period. It was first printed by William Cooper,

at the Pelican in Little Britain, 1687, from a manuscript copy preserved

in the office of the Deputy Gaveller, to which a postscript is added,

"written out of a parchmt. roll, now in ye hands of Richard Morse of

Clowerwall, 7 June, 1673, by Tho: Davies." Richard Morse was then one of

the deputy gavellers. The date of the compilation has heretofore been

considered as determined by the wording of the short introduction with

which it is prefaced, commencing thus--"Bee itt in minde and Remembrance

what ye Customes and Franchises hath been that were granted tyme out of

Minde, and after in tyme of the Excellent and redoubted Prince, King

Edward, unto the Miners of the Forrest of Deane, and the Castle of St.

Briavells," &c., in which words it will be observed that only the name of

King Edward is mentioned, the number not being added, although for some

cause or other all modern copies insert "the Third," and hence the

impression that the collection was then formed; whereas the description

given in the paragraph immediately following, specifying what were then

the limits of the Forest, shows its date to be that of the first of the

Edwards, since the bounds are therein recorded as extending "between

Chepstowe Bridge and Gloucester Bridge, the halfe deale of Newent, Rosse

Ash, Monmouth Bridge, and soe farr into the Seassoames as the blast of a

horne or the voice of a man may bee heard." But these limits ceased to

prevail soon after the beginning of the fourteenth century, and

consequently an earlier date must be assigned for the above record than

has commonly been given to it.

The body of the document, originally, it would seem, unbroken, as now

printed is divided into forty-two paragraphs or sections, but expressed

in very rude and involved phraseology, confirming its antiquity, as still

further appears by the nature of the incidents which it contains. It

specifies, first of all, the franchises of the mine, meaning its

liberties or privileges, as not to be trespassed against, and consisting

apparently in this, that every man who possessed it might, with the

approval of the King's gaveller, dig for iron ore or coal where he

pleased, and have right of way for the carrying of it, although in

certain cases "forbids" to sell might be declared. A third part of the

profits of the undertaking belonged to the King, whose gaveller called at

the works every Tuesday "between Mattens and Masse," and received one

penny from each miner, the fellowship supplying the Crown with twelve

charges of ore per week at twelve pence, or three charges of coal at one

penny. Timber was allowed for the use of the works above and below

ground. Only such persons as had been born and were abiding in the

Forest were to "visit" the mines, in working which the distance of a

stone's throw was always to be kept, and property in them might be

bequeathed. The miners' clothes and light are mentioned, and the

standard measure called "bellis," to the exclusion of carts and "waynes."

It alludes to "the court of the wood," at the "speech" before the

Verderers, but more particularly to the court for debtors at St.

Briavel's Castle, and to the mine court, as regulated by the constable,

clerk, and gaveller, and the miners' jury of twelve, twenty-four, or

forty-eight, where all causes relating to the mines were to be heard.

"Three hands," or three witnesses, were required in evidence, and the

oath was taken with a stick of holly held in the hand. The miners of

Mitchel Deane, Little Deane, and Ruer Deane are called "beneath the

wood."

It also appears that at Carleon, Newport, Barkley, Monmouth, and

Trelleck, the manufacture of iron was carried on by "smiths," who were

connected with smith-holders living in the Forest, and supplying the ore,

at each of which places it is remarkable that iron cinders have been

found. The document concludes with the names of the forty-eight miners

by whom it was witnessed, confirmed, and sealed.

[Picture: Map of limits of the Forest]

Such then were the mining privileges and regulations existing amongst the

operatives of the Forest at this period, A.D. 1300, which by their

settled and methodical character bear out the statement made in the

preface to "the Customes," &c., that they had been then granted "time out

of mind," and consequently were more ancient than the sieges of Berwick,

to which it appears many of the Forest miners and bowmen were summoned,

and perhaps received for services then rendered their peculiar rights.

Another important characteristic of this reign (Edward I.) is the

unsettled state of the Forest boundaries, as indicated in the various

perambulations which were made about this time. A record of that made in

1302 is preserved in the Tower of London, whilst the register of the

perambulation performed by Letters Patent the year following, exists in

Walter Froucester's transcript of it, in the possession of the Dean and

Chapter of Gloucester. Both documents agree in setting forth the same

limits, no longer extending to Gloucester, Chepstow, and Monmouth, or

even including Hewelsfield, Alvington, Ailberton, Lydney, Purton, Box,

Rodley, Westbury, Blaisdon, Huntley, Longhope, Newent, Taynton,

Tibberton, Highnam, Churcham, and Bulley as formerly; but confining them,

as nearly as can now be determined, to the bounds laid down in the

accompanying map of the district. It appears that these perambulations

were made by a numerous and important staff of officers, comprising four

King's justices especially appointed, the chief justice in Eyre, nine

foresters in fee, four verderers, and twenty-four jurors--such was the

importance then attached to those acts.

There are some further items of information extant of this date, viz. the

ten bailiwicks of "Abbenhalle, Blakeney, Berse, Bicknoure, Great Dean,

Little Dean, Stauntene, Le Lee, and Bleyght's Ballye, and Ruardean," held

respectively by Ralph de Abbenhalle, Walter de Astune, William Wodeard,

Cecilia de Michegros, the Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, Richard de

la More, John de la Lee, Alexander Bleyght, and Alexander de Byknore;

Henry de Chaworth had fifty-nine mines, and some forges; the timber wood

of Kilcote was held by Bogo de Knoville; William Bliss held 180 acres of

assart, and seventeen acres of meadow land; certain miners, named William

de Abbensale, Walter and Elys Page, had been found digging mine at

Ardlonde belonging to the Abbot of Flaxley, who at once removed them, and

filled up the place. The question was now also raised as to the Crown

possessing the right of conferring the tithes of the "assarted" (rooted

up) Forest lands, not being within the bounds of any of the adjacent

churches; when it was decided in the affirmative, the King exercising the

claim in favour of the church of Newland, in consideration, probably, of

the lordship of the manor being held by him, and the whole being formerly

comprised in the Forest. A considerable proportion of such of the

existing encroachments as are reputed the oldest pay tithes to Newland, a

circumstance confirmatory of their alleged antiquity. {16}

The records we possess of the ensuing reign of Edward II. afford the

interesting intelligence that on various public occasions the military

services of the Foresters were required, and even at places as distant as

Berwick-upon-Tweed, which, owing to its position as a border town, and

the contests then waging between the English and Scotch, was repeatedly

lost and won by both sides. From the year 1174 to 1482 it changed owners

upwards of sixteen times. The sieges to which our choice Foresters were

summoned appear to have been those of 1310, 1311, 1315, 1317, 1319, and

1355. On the first occasion the Constable of St. Briavel's, and Keeper

of the Forest of Dean, was commanded to select one hundred archers and

twelve miners. In the following year writs were addressed to the Sheriff

of Gloucester, directing that, out of fifty men to be chosen from the

county, the larger number should be from the Forest of Dean, and urging

expedition in sending them. The next writ, issued four years afterwards,

was sent to the Sheriff of Herefordshire, and is entitled "Concerning the

Choice of Soldiers in the Forest of Dean," and orders ninety-six men of

those parts to be provided. Two years later the Keeper of St. Briavel's

is directed to bring two hundred men to Northallerton; and again, two

years afterwards, he is to take twenty of the strongest miners in his

bailiwick to Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and a writ was addressed to all mayors,

sheriffs, bailiffs, &c., reciting the aforesaid instructions, and

commanding that assistance should be rendered them whenever it was needed

during their journey. In connexion with these incidents, it is stated by

Guthrie, the historian, that Sir Edward Manny bringing engineers out of

the Forest of Dean, and Edward III. investing the place with a prodigious

army, the Scots capitulated. They were also ordered by the same King to

join his forces at Portsmouth in 1346 and 1359.

From these facts we are justified in concluding that the population then

inhabiting the Forest were regarded as a brave and skilful race, not

merely in their own quarter of the kingdom, but also in the camp of its

Kings. They were skilful with the bow from following the chase on the

King's behalf, and were of course able sappers and miners from the nature

of their everyday occupations. Indeed, the tradition now in vogue

amongst the Foresters, is, that their ancestors were made free miners in

return for the aforesaid services; but it has been shown that the

franchises of the mine date from an earlier period. {18}

The researches of the Rev. T. D. Fosbroke, as printed in his History of

the county, supply most of the following additional particulars of this

reign. The Bishop of Llandaff, who already claimed the moiety of a

fishery at Bigswear on the Wye, to which the parish of Newland extends,

received a grant of the newly cleared Forest lands for founding a chantry

at the latter place. Tithes to the amount of ten pounds from the

iron-mines in the Forest were given to that dignitary, but the Dean of

Hereford and the Canons, with the Rectors of St. Briavel's and Lydney,

aided by their servants and others, violently carried them away, the see

of Hereford then comprising all these parts. The vineyard of Norton,

together with certain wastes, were let to John de Witham and his heir for

50s. 6d. per annum, provided two hundred acres of the adjoining soil were

brought into cultivation and enclosed at a certain rent, by which all

injury to the Crown would be avoided, Norton not being a vineyard, but a

"lacius" worth sixpence per annum. So also William Jote might hold one

hundred acres, twenty lying in Michelerleye, and eighty in Brakenford,

and also the Prior of Lanthony two hundred and seventy acres, upon paying

twopence per annum. The Abbot of Gloucester had leave to cut wood in

Birdewoode and Hope Mayloysell, without demand or view of the Forester.

The men of Rodley Mead Forest were allowed to have firewood and mast for

their swine. John de Abbenhall held a certain bailiwick of the King by

the service of guarding it with bows and arrows. Robert de Barrington

held forty acres of waste near Malescoyte-wood. Ralph Hatheway was

seized of forty acres in Holstone. Bogo de Knoville was seized of

Kilcot-wood, and Henry de Chaworth had a forge in the Forest.

By the sixth year of Edward III. (A.D. 1333) the dispute between the Dean

and Chapter of Hereford and the Bishop of Llandaff, relative to the

tithes of the iron-mines in the parish of Newland, was settled in the

Bishop's favour, who also obtained the great tithes and the presentation

to the living, all of which still continue attached to that see, and in

connexion with which it may be observed, that by far the larger part of

the fabric of the church at Newland exhibits the style of architecture

which prevailed at that period. It is a large building, and the tower is

particularly fine.

Parliament now confirmed the perambulations made in 26th and 28th Edward

I., which reduced the bounds of the Forest to the limits which, with some

slight exceptions, remained in force till within the last twenty-five

years. The ensuing items of information, taken from Mr. Fosbroke's

valuable work on the county, apply to this period. Guy de Brien, to whom

the Forest was farmed, obtained wages from the Crown for the payment of

four foresters, who were allowed the privilege of cutting all underwood

within the same from seven years to seven years. J. Flory held the

bailiwick of the Lee, and John Preston that of Blakeney. Robert Sappy,

warden of the Forest, petitioned Parliament for some allowance to be made

him, as, owing to the late alienations of Crown property in favour of the

monks of Tintern and the Bishop of Llandaff, he no longer received the

usual pay of one hundred shillings per annum. The Abbey of Gloucester

had twigs granted to it for the annual repairs of the weirs at

Minsterworth and Durry; a similar privilege was enjoyed by the lords of

the manor of Rodley, provided the twigs were fetched once a day with two

horses, between the 14th of September and the 3rd of May; heavy timber

was also allowed for the same purpose. John Juge succeeded to the

bailiwick of the Lee, but was unlawfully deprived of it by John Talbot,

who held the castle on Penyard as well as Goodrich. William de Staunton

held the bailiwick there, and Reginald Abbenhall the woods. Walter Ivor

held that at Blakeney, after Roger Flotman. The Abbot of Gloucester had

ninety acres of land in Walmore, at eight pence an acre rent, for

cultivation, but not for commonage. John Joice and his heirs had a grant

of 116 acres in several parcels in the Forest, at the yearly rent of

nineteen shillings and four pence.

In the reign of Richard II. John Wolton obtained the grant for life of a

place called Stowe. It was found that a monk from the convent of Grace

Dieu was celebrating mass in the Forest for the souls of the King, his

successors, and ancestors, holding two carucates of land, ten acres of

meadow, and six acres of wood, a fact which may account for the name of

"Church Hill," at Park End. Thomas Hatheway was a chief forester. A

bailiwick in the Forest, with lands in Lee-Walton and Lee in

Herefordshire, were held in tail, remainder to Richard Curle, by Thomas

de Brugg and Elizabeth his wife. The Castle of St. Briavel's and the

Forest were given in special tail to the Duke of Gloucester, who was

afterwards empowered by Parliament to constitute justices and other

officers then usually attached to such properties.

In the time of Henry IV. William Warwyn held a certain bailiwick here by

the service of being a forester in fee. Another office called "the

forester's wyke" was filled by Henry de Aure. In the succeeding reign

this Forest was held in capite as the King's heir, by John Duke of

Bedford, under a grant made by Henry IV.

Whilst the throne was occupied by Henry VI. we have chiefly to notice the

complaint, which the traders of Tewkesbury made to the Government, that

"their boats and trowes conveying all manner of merchandise down the

Severn to Bristol, &c.," had been stopped at the coast of the Forest by

great multitudes of the common people dwelling thereabouts, who seized

their vessels, carried away the corn, threatened their lives if they

resisted, and forbad any complaint being made, on their coming that way

again. The petition caused letters of privy seal to be proclaimed in

those parts to the effect that "no man of the said Forest should be so

hardy to inquiet or disturb the people passing the said river with

merchandise, upon pain of treason." But the account proceeds to say that

"the said trespassers came to the said river with greater routs and riots

than ever they did before, there despoiling at divers times eight trowes

of wheat, rye, flour, and divers other goods and chattels, and the men of

the same cast overboard, and divers of them drowned, and the hawsers of

the same trowes cut away, and mainstrung the owners of the said goods,

who should not be so hardy as to cause any manner of victuals to be

carried any more by the same stream, much or little, for lord or for

lady, as they would hew their boats all to pieces if they did so." More

stringent measures were therefore evidently necessary, and in 1429 the

Parliament passed an act, enforcing a restoration of the plunder, and

amends for the injury done, within fifteen days, and the offenders to be

imprisoned, or else the Statute of Winchester would be enforced against

them.

The singular perquisite of a bushel of coal, worth twenty pence, from

each pit, at the end of every six weeks, was now attached to the office

of "capital forester of all the foresters," held at this period by Robert

Greyndour. The King's lands, manors, castles, and other possessions in

this Forest, were also granted to Henry Duke of Warwick, for one hundred

pounds annual rental.

After the accession of Edward IV., and his unpopular marriage with

Elizabeth Woodville, this Forest was the spot to which, upon the defeat

at Edgecote (26th July, 1469), her father the Earl Rivers and her brother

Sir John Woodville fled, where they were recaptured and carried to

Northampton, their place of execution. A sergeantry, called woodward of

the Lee Baile, was then held by John Throckmorton, Esq.

In the reign of Henry VIII. the office of Bleysbale and forestership of

fee was filled by William Alberton. A rental of sixty-five shillings and

sixpence was paid to the Crown for certain lands in the Forest held by

the priory of Monmouth; and others, called Cley-pitts, Litterfield, and

Hill Hardwell, paid two shillings and four pence. Letters patent granted

the custody of the Gablewood to Henry Bream.

Edward VI. farmed the Forest to Sir Anthony Kingston. How far the Forest

population were interested in the stirring events of the Reformation, we

are, unfortunately, left to conjecture; but the suppression of the

adjacent Abbeys of Tintern and Flaxley, with their large possessions,

must have brought the changes of the period visibly home to them.

The reign of Elizabeth brings us to the date of an incident more

generally notorious perhaps than any other in the history of Dean Forest,

viz. its intended destruction by the Spanish Armada. Evelyn in his

'Sylva' thus mentions it:--"I have heard that in the great expedition of

1588 it was expressly enjoined the Spanish Armada that if, when landed,

they should not be able to subdue our nation and make good their

conquest, they should yet be sure not to leave a tree standing in the

Forest of Dean." Were it not that he particularly states that he had

"heard" the report, we should conclude that he obtained his information

from Fuller's 'Worthies,' published two years previously, where it is

mentioned with this only difference, that "a Spanish ambassador was to

get it done by private practices and cunning contrivances." Fuller had

probably read this account in 'Samuel Hartlib, his Legacy of Husbandry,'

published in 1655, where, speaking of the deficiency of woods at that

time, he writes--"the State hath done very well to pull down divers

iron-works in the Forest of Dean, that the timber might be preserved for

shipping, which is accounted the toughest in England, and, when it is

dry, as hard as iron. The common people did use to say that in Queen

Elizabeth's days the Spaniards sent an ambassador purposely to get this

wood destroyed."

As Mr. Evelyn writes that he "heard" what he states of the matter, Mr.

Secretary Pepys was probably his informant, who was told it by his friend

Sir John Winter, who again heard it from his grandfather, Sir William

Winter, vice-admiral of Elizabeth's fleet, but kinsman to Thomas Winter

of Huddington, who at the close of this reign was constantly aiding the

Spanish Romanists in their intrigues here, and eventually took part in

the Gunpowder Plot. Such tradition is highly to the credit of the Forest

timber of those days, if not to the iron as well. Both must have been

renowned for supplying an important portion of the materials used in the

Royal dockyards, which were at this time much enlarged, an increase of

the navy being found necessary; whilst the stock of timber then standing

in different parts of the kingdom was judged so insufficient for the

wants of the Government, that recent acts of the legislature had directed

that "twelve standils or storers likely to become timber should be left

on every acre of wood or underwood that was felled at or under

twenty-four years' growth," and prohibited the "turning woodland into

tillage," and required that, "whenever any wood was cut, it must be

immediately enclosed, and the young spring thereof protected for seven

years." Moreover, no trees upwards of a foot in the square were to be

converted into charcoal for making iron.

The returns from Sir Julius Caesar's collection preserved in the

Lansdowne MSS. recognise the above regulations, as well as the market for

wood created by the Forest iron-works, now greatly enlarged; they possess

considerable interest, and will be found in Appendix No. I.

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1612-1663.

Grants in the Forest to Earl of Pembroke--Mining restricted to the

Foresters--Iron cinders of old workings re-smelted in the new

furnaces--Last justice seat held in 1635, extending the limits of the

Forest to those of Edward I.--Grant to E. Terringham--Forest surveyed in

1635--Sale of the woods to Sir J. Winter--Disturbances of the Civil War

at Coleford, Highmeadow, Ruerdean--Adventures of Sir J. Winter at

Westbury, Little Dean, Newnham, Lydney--Events on the north side of the

Forest--Incidents of the Protectorate, riots and devastations of the

Forest--Sir J. Winter's patent restored--Effects of a great storm--Survey

of the Forest in 1662--Mr. J. Pepys and Sir J. Winter on the Forest--The

latter resumes his fellings--Inhabitants suggest replanting and enclosing

the Forest--Act of 20 Charles II., c. 3--Sir J. Winter's licence

confirmed.

On the 17th of February, 1612, William Earl of Pembroke obtained a grant

"of 12,000 cords of wood yearly for twenty-one years at 4s. per cord,

being 2400 pounds, and reserving a rent besides of 33 pounds 6s. 8d. per

annum," with "liberty to dig for and take within any part of the said

Forest, or the precincts thereof, such and so much mine ore, cinders,

earth, sand, stone, breaks, moss, sea coal, and marle, as should be

necessary for carrying on the iron-works let to him, or which he should

erect; no person or persons whatsoever other than the said Earl to be

permitted during the said term to take or carry out of the said Forest

any wood, timber, mine ore, or cinders, without consent of the said Earl,

except such timber as should be used for his Majesty's shipping." The

Earl obtained, on the 13th June of the same year, a grant of "the

lordship, manor, town, and castle of St. Briavel's, and all the Forest of

Dean with the appurtenances, and all lands, mines, and quarries belonging

thereto, except all great trees, wood, and underwood, to hold for forty

years at the yearly rent of 83 pounds 18s. 4d., and an increase rent of 3

pounds 8d."

It appears that, soon after these leases were granted, the miners,

hitherto accustomed to dig for ore in the Forest, resumed their work

without the Earl's consent, and an information was filed against some of

them by the Attorney-General. Upon this, an order, dated 28th January,

1613, was made by the Court, "that those miners, and such others as had

been accustomed to dig ore in the Forest, upon the humble submission for

their offences, and acknowledgment that the soil was the King's, and that

they had no interest therein, and upon their motion by counsel that they

were poor, and had no other means of support, and praying to be continued

in their employment, should be permitted, \_out of charity and grace\_,

\_and not of right\_, to dig for mine ore and cinders, to be carried to his

Majesty's iron-works, and not to any other place, at the accustomed

rates; if the farmers of the King's iron-works should refuse to give

those rates which, as well as the number of diggers, were to be

ascertained by Commissioners to be named by the Court, that then they

might sell the ore to others; but no new diggers were to be allowed, but

only such poor men as were inhabitants of the said Forest." It was not

intended that this order should always continue in force, but only until

such time as the cause brought in the name of the foresters should be

heard and determined. This, however, appears never to have been done, as

no decree was obtained, probably from the miners considering it best to

accept the terms offered, regarding the above order as a record in their

favour, since it provided that "no new diggers were to be allowed, but

only such poor men as were inhabitants of the said Forest;" a view, it

may be remarked, agreeing with that which the free miners took in their

memorial of 1833. {25}

The cinders adverted to were the ashes or refuse left by a former race of

iron manufacturers, whose skill was too limited to effect more than the

separation of a portion of the metal, but which the improved methods, now

introduced into the district, turned to a good account. A return made in

1617, by Sir William Coke, &c., to a commission issued out of the

Exchequer, to inquire concerning the Forest of Dean, states that "His

Majesty, since the erecting the iron-works, had received a greater

revenue than formerly." Their structure is described in "The Booke of

Survey of the Forest of Dean Ironwork," dated 1635, from which it appears

that the stone body of the furnace now adopted was usually about

twenty-two feet square, the blast being kept up by a water-wheel not less

than twenty-two feet in diameter, acting upon two pairs of bellows

measuring eighteen feet by four, and kept in blast for several months

together. Such structures existed at Cannope, Park End, Sowdley, and

Lydbrook. Besides which, there were forges, comprising chafferies and

fineries, at Park End, Whitecroft, Bradley, Sowdley, and Lydbrook.

Messrs. Harris and Chaloner, &c., as farmers to the Crown, held all of

them on lease.

The last justice seat in Eyre, or Supreme Court of Judicature for the

royal forests, was held the same year as the above (1635) at Gloucester

Castle before Henry Earl of Holland, on which occasion "the matter

concerning the perambulation of this Forest was solemnly debated," the

counsel for the Crown producing the bounds thereof as settled by the 12th

of Henry III. and 10th Edward I., with the view of obtaining its

re-extension to Gloucester, Monmouth, and Chepstow. On the other hand,

the counsel for the City of Gloucester, &c., brought forward the

perambulations made 26th and 28th Edward I., confirmed by Letters Patent

29th Edward I., and by an Act of 10th Edward III. The Grand Jury, not

being able to agree to their verdict on that day, which was a Saturday,

desired further time in a matter of such weight; and on the Monday

following decided, that the more extensive limits, comprising seventeen

additional villages, were the true ones. But "their inhabitants being

fearful that they would be questioned for many things done contrary to

the Forest Laws, the King's Counsel, in regard of their being but new

brought in, and long usage, thought it not fitt to proceed with any of

them at that justice seat." Amongst some 120 claims to rights and

privileges of various kinds preserved in the Office of Public Records,

{27} and put in at the same Court, was one of Philip Earl of Pembroke to

be Constable of the Castle of St. Briavel's and Warden of the Forest,

under a grant from the King, and, as such, Chief Judge of the Mine Law

Court.

In A.D. 1637 a grant was made to Edward Terringham of "all the mines of

coal and quarries of grindstone within the Forest of Dean, and in all

places within the limits and perambulations thereof, as well those within

his Majesty's demesne lands, and the waste and soil there, as also all

such as lay within the lands of any of his Majesty's subjects within the

perambulation of the said Forest, to his Majesty reserved, or lawfully

belonging, to hold for thirty-one years, at the yearly rent of 30

pounds."

The next year (1638) is marked by the first effort which the Crown seems

to have made to renew the crops of timber in the Forest, rendered

necessary by the report that, on surveying it, a supply of no more than

105,557 trees, containing 61,928 tons of timber, and 153,209 cords of

wood, of which only 14,350 loads were fit for shipbuilding, was found, as

"the trees were generally decayed, and passed their full groath."

Accordingly, under the direction of Sir Baynham Throckmorton, 16,000 or

17,000 acres were ordered to be taken in, "leaving fit and convenient

highways in and through the same." After sundry meetings, the commoners

consented thereunto, few or none objecting, in consideration of 4000

acres set apart for their use on the different sides of the Forest, as

follows:--On the side next Lydney and Awre, 550 acres; towards Ruerdean

and Lydbrook, 350 acres; near to St. Briavel's, 500 acres; towards Little

Dean, Flaxley, Abenhall, and Mitcheldean, and the Lea, 876 acres; in

Abbot's Wood, 76 acres; on the side nearest to Newland and the villages

of Breme, Clearwell, and Coleford, 900 acres; towards Newland, 174 acres;

next to Bicknor, 350 acres; and towards Rodley and Northwood, 100 acres.

The Lea Bailey, containing the best timber, was not included, but left

open. The proportion observed in the size of these common lands is

probably indicative of the way in which the population surrounding the

Forest was distributed. Traces of the bounds of some of these allotments

may yet be made out, by the remains of the ditches and banks with which

they were fenced.

Such a scheme, if judiciously carried out, would have done much to secure

the object in view, only it was connected unhappily with the entire sale

made under the date of 20th February, 1640 (15th Charles I.), to Sir John

Winter, of all the mines, minerals, and stone-quarries within the limits

of the Forest, to work and use the same, together with all timber, trees,

woods, underwood growing in any part thereof, in consideration of 10,000

pounds, and the yearly sum of 16,000 pounds for six years, and of a fee

farm rent of 1950 pounds 12s. 6d. for ever. This bargain was equivalent

to selling the Forest altogether, and the inhabitants of the district,

being greatly dissatisfied, took advantage of the approaching civil

distractions to throw down the fences which Sir J. Winter had already

begun to make.

Of those distractions, the first that occurred in this part of the county

took place on the 20th February, 1643. Clarendon and Corbet record, that

on this day Lord Herbert, the Earl of Worcester's eldest son, and the

King's Lieutenant-General of South Wales, marched through Coleford and

the Forest of Dean for Gloucester, at the head of an army of 500 horse

and 1500 foot, the outfit and preparation of which is stated to have cost

60,000 pounds. At Coleford their progress was impeded by a troop of

Parliamentarians under Colonel Berrowe, aided by a disorderly rabble of

country people. An affray ensued, during which the old market-house was

burnt, and Major-General Lawley, who commanded the foot, "a bold and

sprightly man," with two other officers, were shot dead from a window,

although not one common soldier was hurt. Colonel Brett was then put in

command of the foot, Lord John Somerset continuing at the head of the

horse. They forced a passage through, after capturing Lieutenant-Colonel

Winter, together with some inferior officers and common soldiers, and so,

putting the rest to flight, marched without further molestation for

Gloucester.

In the April following, Sir William Waller, retreating from Monmouth

towards Gloucester through the Forest, narrowly escaped capture by Prince

Maurice, who was at hand to intercept him with a considerable force.

Alluding many years afterwards to this adventure, he writes:--"Upon my

march that night through the Forest of Dean, it happened through the

sleepiness of an officer, that the main body was separated from the fore

troope with which I marched, so that I was fain to make an halt for above

half an hour, within little more than a mile of the Prince's

head-quarter, in broad daylight; the allarme taken, and not 120 horse

with me. Nevertheless, itt pleased God in his infinite mercy to direct

the rest of my troopes to me; and, under the conduct of his providence,

to grant me a safe and honorable retreat to Gloucester, in despight of

the enemy, who charged me in the reare, with more loss to himself than to

me."

But the individual who figured most prominently in these parts at this

eventful period was the ardent royalist Sir John Winter. His case is

thus quaintly stated by Sanderson:--"From the pen, as secretary to the

Queen, he was put to the pike, and did his business very handsomely, for

which he found the enmity of the Parliament ever after;" so that Corbet,

one of their devoted adherents, designates him "a plague," and his house

of White Cross, near Lydney, "a den." This place he had been secretly

strengthening against attack for some time, storing it with arms and

ammunition, and collecting soldiers; but he did not openly declare

himself until the siege of Gloucester was raised, on 5th September, 1643.

During the ensuing winter, and on to the 7th of May following, Corbet

speaks of him as "referring all his industry to his own house," described

as being "in the heart of the Forest," of which, says the same writer, he

had "obtained the entire command," and from whence he succeeded in making

constant attacks upon the adjoining small Parliamentary garrisons of

Huntley and Westbury, who were treacherously sold to him by Captain

Thomas Davis, and he was thus enabled to advance almost to Gloucester.

Upon the day just named, in the year 1644, the following affray happened

at Westbury, occasioned by Colonel Massy's attempt to recover it for the

Parliament. Corbet says:--"Here the enemy held the church, and a strong

house" (understood to be Mr. Colchester's) "adjoining." "The Governor

(Colonel Massy), observing a place not flanked, fell-up that way with the

forlorne hope, and secured them from the danger of shot. The men got

stooles and ladders to the windowes, where they stood safe, cast in

granadoes, and fired them out of the church. Having gained the church,

he quickly beat them out of their workes, and possest himself of the

house, where he took about four score prisoners, slaying twenty others,

without the losse of a man."

Upon the same day a similar but more fatal encounter took place at

Littledean, a village situated under the east slopes of the Forest hills,

and as yet occupied for the King. "Here," says Corbet, "the governor's

troop of horse found the enemy stragling in the towne, and, upon the

discovery of their approach, shuffling towards the garrison, which the

troopers observing, alighted and ran together with them into the house,

where they tooke about 20 men. Neere unto which guard,

Lieutenant-Colonel Congrave, Governor of Newnham, and one Captain

Wigmore, with a few private souldiers, were surrounded in some houses by

the residue of our horse. These had accepted quarter, ready to render

themselves, when one of their company from the house kils a trooper,

which so enraged the rest, that they broke in upon them, and put them all

to the sword: in which accident, this passage was not to be forgotten

that expressed in one place an extreame contrariety in the spirits of men

under the stroke of death: Congrave died with these words, 'Lord receive

my soule!' and Wigmore cryed nothing but 'Dam me more, dam me more!'

desperately requiring the last stroke, as enraged at divine revenge."

The spot where these officers fell is considered to have been at Dean

Hall, in the dining-room, near the fireplace.

Corbet next goes on to recite how Colonel Massy followed up these

exploits by marching to Newnham the next day, "where," says he, "a strong

party of Sir John Winter's forces kept garrison in the church, and the

fort adjoining," (on a spot which has been turned lately into public

pleasure grounds,) "of considerable strength, who at that instant were

much daunted and distracted by the losse of Congrave, their governor.

Our men were possest of the town without opposition, and recovered the

houses, by which they got nere the workes. The Governour (Massy)

commanded a blind of faggots to be made athwart the street, drew up two

pieces of ordnance within pistoll shot, and observing a place not well

flanked where he might lead up his men to the best advantage, himself

marched before them, and found that part of the work fortified with

double pallisadoes; the souldiers being provided with sawes to cut them

down, and having drawn them close within a dead angle, and secure from

their shot, and drawing the rest of his forces for a storme, the enemy

forthwith desires a parley, and to speake with the governour, which he

refused, and commanded a sudden surrender. In this interim some of the

enemy jumpt over the workes, and so our men broke in upon the rest, who

ranne from the out worke into the churche, hoping to cleare the mount

which we had gained. But our men were too nimble, who had no sooner

entred the mount, but rushed upon them before they could reach home, and

tumbled into the church altogether. Then they cryed for quarter, when,

in the very point of victory, a disaster was like to befall us: a barrell

of gunpowder was fired in the church, undoubtedly of set purpose, and was

conceived to be done by one Tipper, a most virulent Papist, and Sir John

Winter's servant, despairing withall of his redemption, being a prisoner

before, and having falsified his engagement. The powder-blast blew many

out of the church, and sorely singed a greater number, but killed none.

The souldiers, enraged, fell upon them, and in the heate of blood slew

neere 20, and amongst others this Tipper. All the rest had quarter for

their lives (save one Captaine Butler, an Irish rebell, who was knocked

down by a common souldier), and an 100 prisoners taken. The service was

performed without the losse of a man on our side."

Emboldened to proceed, and anxious to take advantage of Sir John Winter's

absence at Coleford, Colonel Massy marched on forthwith to Lydney House.

He did not attack it, however, so well was it fortified and provided, and

courageously defended, by Lady Winter, who, upon being pressed to

deliver, answered--

"Sir,--Mr. Winter's unalterable allegiance to his King and Sovereign,

and his particular interest to this place, hath by his Majesty's

commission put it into this condition, which cannot be pernicious to

any but to such as oppose the one and invade the other; wherefore

rest assured that in these relations we are, by God's assistance,

resolved to maintain it, all extremities notwithstanding. Thus much

in Mr. Winter's absence you shall receive from

"MARY WINTER."

To inconvenience so daring a lady would be contrary to the Colonel's

gallantry, and he drew off to the adjoining hills towards the Forest, the

better to meet Sir John Winter and Colonel Mynne, who were reported to be

returning with a considerable strength of horse, assisted by the Lord

Herbert's forces. But the Royalists not appearing, Massy contented

himself with setting fire to Sir John's iron-mills and furnaces, and in

the evening marched back to Gloucester.

Lydney House and Berkeley Castle remained the last strongholds of the

Royalists in the county of Gloucester. The restless proprietor of the

former was perpetually engaged in attempts to restore the King's

declining cause, and in particular to reduce the inhabitants of the

Forest, which was an object of some importance, as their iron-works, &c.,

afforded supplies to Bristol, then besieged by the Parliament forces.

The foresters had declined in their loyalty, through Sir John Winter's

occupying their woods, from which his enclosures excluded them.

Accordingly his name is rarely absent from the accounts given by

contemporary writers, of efforts made in this neighbourhood for the

Crown. Most likely he assisted Prince Rupert in his first attempt made

in the month of September, 1644, to fortify and establish a permanent

guard on the promontory at Beachley, but from which they were quickly

dislodged by Massy. We know he was present when the same effort was

renewed a month later, and had a second time to be relinquished, Sir John

Winter only effecting his escape by hard riding, and making a desperate

descent upon the river Wye, by which he was only just enabled to reach

the Prince's ships lying at its mouth.

So favourable an opportunity as this defeat gave for the capture of

Lydney House was not to be lost, and it was invested forthwith. Timely

aid was however rendered about the 2nd of April, 1645, by the arrival of

Prince Maurice with a force of 2,000 horse and 1,500 foot, who, as they

marched towards it from Hereford, took advantage of the occasion to lay

waste the Forest, as a retribution on the inhabitants for having deserted

the King's cause. Corbet says that "they plundered the houses to the

bare walls, driving all the cattell, seizing upon the persons of men, and

sending them captives to Monmouth and Chepstow, except such as escaped to

us by flight, as many did with their armes, and some few that saved

themselves in woods and mine pitts." The same authority adds that "the

King's forces returned a second time into the Forest, and took the

gleanings of the former harvest." In the course of the month of May the

royalists retired, and Sir John Winter, resolving that his house should

never harbour his enemies, burnt it to the ground. He then joined the

King, by whom he was presently despatched with letters to the Queen, in

France, and mentioning him in these terms--"This bearer, Sir John Winter,

as thy knowledge of him makes it needlesse to recommend him to thee, soe

I should injure him if I did not beare him the true witnesse of having

served me with as much fidelity and courage as any, not without much good

successe; though some crosse accydents of late hath made him (not without

reason) desire to waite upon thee, it being needfull that I should give

him this testimony, least his journey to thee be misinterpreted."

The estate which Sir John Winter thus vacated in this neighbourhood was

soon after assigned to his opponent by the House of Commons, who ordered

on the 29th of September, 1645, "that Major-General Massy, in

consideration of his good and faithful service which he hath done for the

kingdom, shall have allowed him the estate of Sir John Winter (who is a

delinquent to the Parliament) in the Forest of Dean; all his iron-mills,

and the woods (timber trees only excepted not to be felled), with all the

profits belonging to them; and ordered that an order at once should be

brought into the House to that purpose." Eventually, however, Sir John

Winter recovered his property, through the influence probably of the

Lords in Parliament, who appear to have favoured him. On his return to

this country he nevertheless seems to have been imprisoned, for on the

7th of September, 1652, we find him liberated from the Tower, upon bail

for three months, on account of sickness; a term of liberty which was

enlarged upon the 7th of December, on the same security, to three months

longer, with permission to go where he pleased within twenty miles of

London. On the 17th of the same month he was remanded back to the Tower.

Evelyn tells us that at this time Sir John Winter amused himself with a

project for charring coal. "July 11th, 1656.--Came home by Greenwich

Ferry, where I saw Sir John Winter's new project of charring sea-coale,

to burne out the sulphure and render it sweete. He did it by burning the

coals in such earthen pots as the glasse-men mealt their mettal, so

firing them without consuming them, using a barr of yron in each crucible

or pot, which barr has a hook at one end, that so the coales being

mealted in a furnace wth other crude sea-coales under them, may be drawn

out of the potts sticking to the yron, whence they are beaten off in

greate halfe-exhausted cinders, which being rekindled make a cleare

pleasant chamber fire, deprived of their sulphur and arsenic malignity.

What successe it may have, time will discover."

Reverting to Sir John Winter's retreat from Lydney, it may be remarked

that, with his retirement from the Forest district, its south side became

quiet; not so its north, for there the following incidents occurred. The

first of them arose from Colonel Massy's efforts to retake Monmouth,

which he strove to accomplish by feigning a sudden retreat from before it

towards Gloucester, as though he had received unfavourable tidings. With

this view he and his forces drew off some three miles into the thickets

of the Forest, sending out scouts at the same time to prevent his being

surprised by the enemy. Intelligence of their disappearance being

reported within the garrison to Lieutenant-Colonel Kyrle, who was in the

secret, he speedily set out in pursuit, but was himself surprised with a

troop of thirty horse, near midnight, by Massy, in Mr. Hall's house, at

High-Meadow. A combination of their forces being effected, they returned

to Monmouth, and with mutual aid, favoured by a dark and rainy night,

recaptured the town, much to the joy of the Colonel and his friends.

Kyrle, an ancestor of "the Man of Ross," lived at Walford, where he was

buried, and where his helmet is still preserved.

The capture of Monmouth proved to be only temporary, as the place was

again lost, thus exposing that side of the Forest to the incursions of

the Cavalier troops. To check these invasions, the garrison of

High-Meadow was carefully kept up. Ruerdean, six miles to the west, and

well situated for guarding the Forest on the north, was made another

military post, being intended to stop plunderers from the King's garrison

at Goodrich, and where there is a spot yet called "Shoot-Hill," adjoining

which many cannon-balls have been found. Probably the site of the old

castle at Bicknor was also converted into an out-station, guarding the

two parallel valleys which there pass up towards the middle of the Forest

from the Wye. This station would likewise assist, from its relative

position, in transmitting signals between Ruerdean and High-Meadow, or

even from Gloucester, if the Beacon, which formerly stood on the crest of

Edge Hill, were included in the range. Such posts would be serviceable

to the Parliamentary Colonel Birch, when engaged in the siege of Goodrich

Castle, not more than four miles north of Ruerdean; for his supplies

would be drawn chiefly from the Forest, as indeed appears from a letter

dated 4th July, 1646, in which he says, "We have supplies of shells for

our granadoes from the Forest of Dean."

Several traditions of violence and blood, referring no doubt to this

period, are preserved by the inhabitants of these parts of the Forest,

one of whom reports an act of cruelty perpetrated on a householder living

in the little hamlet of Drybrook, who was struck down, and his eyes

knocked out, for refusing to give up a flitch of bacon to a foraging

party. Another legend, relative to the same neighbourhood, preserves the

memory of a skirmish called "Edge Hill's Fight," from the spot on which

it occurred. It is true that some of the neighbouring foresters suppose

it to be "the Great Fight mentioned in the almanack," an idea which might

perhaps have given rise to the story, were it not that a small stream

which descends from the place in question bears the name of "Gore Brook,"

from the human blood which on that occasion stained its waters.

The ensuing years of the Protectorate, judging from the frequent notices

in the Parliamentary Journals to that effect, appear to have been

destructive to the timber of the Forest rather than to life or property.

Frequent orders were issued by the Committee of the House of Commons

charged with the care of the Forest of Dean, forbidding the felling of

any more trees whatever, and ordering that any which had been cut down

should be sold for the benefit of the Government. The gentlemen of the

county were invited to assist herein, both by viewing any timber which

had been felled, and also by causing any of it which they judged fit to

be reserved for shipping to be brought into the stores of the Navy. Sir

J. Winter asserts that during the time of the Commonwealth above 40,000

trees were cut down by order of the House of Commons.

In 1650 the above-named Committee ordered all the iron-works to be

suppressed and demolished. Six years later a Bill was brought in and

passed, signed by the Protector Richard, for mitigating the rigour of the

Forest Laws, and for preserving the timber, which all contemporary

testimony on the subject states to have gone miserably to wreck during

the civil wars. On the 11th of May, 1659, Colonel White reported to the

House of Commons, that "upon the 3rd day of this instant month divers

rude people in tumultuous way, in the Forest of Dean, did break down the

fences, and cut and carry away the gates of certain coppices enclosed for

preservation of timber, turned in their cattle, and set divers places of

the said Forest on fire, to the great destruction of the young growing

wood." This riot was probably excited by the efforts which the

Government had recently made for the re-afforesting of 18,000 acres; to

effect which 400 cabins of poor people, living upon the waste, and

destroying the wood and timber, were thrown down.

It would be interesting to know what was the disposition of the

inhabitants of the Forest, and of the neighbourhood generally, towards

the exiled Sovereign, as the way to his restoration began to open out. A

slight clue is afforded by Captain Titus's letter, reporting to the King

that "he had been in the Forest of Dean, and had found the gentlemen very

forward; that several of them had engaged for considerable numbers."

The return of Charles at once restored Sir John Winter to liberty, and to

the benefits of the Patent which the late King had granted him, as also

to his place as Secretary and Chancellor to the Queen Dowager. He

proceeded to act upon the former, by repairing his enclosures, in spite

of determined opposition from the neighbouring inhabitants, who strongly

represented to the Government that the continuance of that grant would

injure both it and the public. Sir Charles Harbord, under date 28th of

December, 1661, thus describes the way in which the above complaint was

preferred:--"His Majesty hath been pleased to be present with my Lord

Chancellor, and Lord Treasurer, &c., at the hearing of this business, and

hath given order that a Commission shall be forthwith issued out of the

Exchequer to inquire into the state of the Forest; intending, upon the

return of the said Commission, to acquaint the Parliament with the true

state of the business; and to recommend it to their wisdom to provide

that the said Forest may be restored to his Majesty's demesne, and

re-afforested, and improved by enclosures for a future supply of wood for

a constant support of the iron-works there, producing the best iron of

Europe for many years, and for the produce of timber for the navy, and

other uses in time to come; which might be of great use for defence of

this nation, the old trees there standing being above 300 years' growth,

and yet as good timber as any in the world; and the ground so apt to

produce, and so strong to preserve timber, especially oaks, that within

100 years there may be sufficient provision there found to maintain the

navy royal for ever." Perhaps the ancient trees here named are those of

which Sir John Winter spoke in the "good discourse" Mr. Pepys had with

him, as "being left at a great fall in Edward the Third's time, by the

name of forbid-trees, which at this day are called 'vorbid trees.'"

Here it may be noted, that there happened on the night of 18th February,

1662, a dreadful storm of wind, alluding to which Pepys writes:--"We have

letters from the Forest of Deane, that above 1,000 oakes and as many

beeches are blown down in one walke there;" and Mr. Fosbroke has recorded

from some other source, that near Newent "the roads were impassable till

the trees blown down were cut away, in some great orchards it being

possible to go from one end to the other without touching the ground."

The Commission mentioned above was directed to Lord Herbert, as Constable

of the Castle of St. Briavel's and Warden of the Forest, and others, to

examine the state and condition thereof. After a careful survey, it was

reported by them that they had found 25,929 oaks and 4,204 beeches,

containing 121,572 cords of wood, fit for being converted into charcoal,

as used at the iron furnaces, and 11,335 tons of ship timber suitable for

the navy. They add, however, that "cabins of beggarly people, with

goats, sheep, and swine, began to invade the same as formerly." A fresh

agreement was forthwith entered into with Sir John Winter on the part of

the Crown, who thereupon surrendered his former Patent, reserving the

woods called Snead and Kidnalls, and nominated Francis Finch and Robert

Clayton to receive a new grant of all such trees as were not fit for

shipping, together with the use and occupation of the King's iron-works,

and liberty to dig for and use iron ore and cinders in the Forest.

Touching the drawing up of this agreement, Mr. Pepys's 'Diary,' under

date 20th June, 1662, supplies us with the following particulars:--"Up by

4 or 5 o'clock, and to the office, and there drew up the agreement

between the King and Sir John Winter about the Forest of Deane; and

having done it, he come himself, whom I observed to be a man of fine

parts; and we read it, and both liked it well. That done, I turned to

the Forest of Deane, in Speede's Mapps, and there he shewed me how it

lies; and the Lea-bayly with the great charge of carrying it to Lydney,

and many other things worth knowing." They evidently enjoyed each

other's society, for in the month of August next following they again met

at "the Mitre," in Fenchurch Street, "to a venison pasty," whither Mr.

Pepys was brought "in Sir John Winter's coach, where I found him" (he

records) "a very worthy man, and good discourse, most of which was

concerning the Forest of Deane, and the timber there, and iron workes

with their great antiquity, and the vast heaps of cinders which they

find, and are now of great value, being necessary for the making of iron

at this day; and without which they cannot work." Evelyn's Diary of 5th

November, 1662, also points to the same topic:--"The Council of the Royal

Society met to amend the Statutes, &c., dined together; afterwards

meeting at Gresham College, where was a discourse suggested by me,

concerning planting his Majesty's Forest of Dean with oake, now so much

exhausted of ye choicest ship-timber in the world."

Sir John Winter lost no time in acting upon the privileges conferred on

him by the late agreement; but just as on the former occasion, it gave

extreme dissatisfaction to the neighbourhood, whose complaints reached

the House of Commons, and forthwith a committee was appointed to

investigate the whole matter; from which committee Sir Charles Harbord

reported to the House, "that Sir John Winter had 500 cutters of wood

employed in Dean Forest, and that all the timber would be destroyed if

care should not be speedily taken to prevent it." The report of the

committee was accompanied by certain propositions, which manifest a

public spirit highly creditable to the neighbourhood, although "the great

difficulty" is noticed "with which the many freeholders that had right of

common and other privileges were prevailed with to submit the same to the

Crown for enclosing the said Forest." These propositions were made the

basis of the ensuing Act, and I insert them without abridgment. They are

headed:--

"Proposals by and on the behalf of the Freeholders, Inhabitants, and

Commoners, within the Forest of Dean, for the preservation and

improvement of the growth of timber there.

"Imprimis, That 11,000 acres of the wastle soil of the Forest of

Dean, whereof the Lea Baily and Cannopp to be part of the said

wastle, may be enclosed by his Majesty, and discharged for ever from

all manner of pasture, estovers, and pannage; and if ever his

Majesty, or his successors, shall think fit to lay open any part of

the said 11,000 acres, then to take in so much elsewhere, so as the

whole enclosure exceed not at any one time 11,000 acres.

"That all the wood or timber which shall hereafter grow upon the

remaining 13,000 acres shall absolutely belong to his Majesty,

discharged from all estovers for ever, and pannage for twenty years

next ensuing. That the whole wastle soil be re-afforested, and

subject to the Forest laws; but that the severity of the Forest laws

be taken off from the lands in several, belonging to the freeholders

and inhabitants within the said Forest, they themselves being

contented to serve his Majesty, according to their several offices

and places, as formerly at the Forest courts.

"That the deer to be kept on the said waste soil may not exceed 800

at any one time; and the fees which belong to the particular

officers, touching venison, may be preserved to them, as to venison

only, and not to wood and trees.

"That it is consented to that the winter heyning and fence month,

according to the Forest law, being such times wherein no kind of

cattle be permitted to abide in any part of the said waste, may be

understood to be from Saint Martin's day in the winter to Saint

George's day in April; and afterwards, from fifteen days before

Midsummer to fifteen days after.

"That all grants of any part of the waste soil of the said Forest be

re-assumed and made void; and that no part of the said waste or soil

be aliened for ever from the Crown, or farmed to any particular

person or persons, by lease or otherwise.

"And that this may be settled by Act of Parliament.

"(Signed) HEN: HALL. DUN: COLCHESTER,

WM. PROBIN. JO: WITT."

The importance of the foregoing propositions appears from the use made of

them, more than a century afterwards, by the Commissioners of Woods and

Forests in 1788, who informed the descendants of those gentlemen who

appended their names to the above document, that they had thereby lost

all claim to any perquisite in the way of bark and windfalls; observing

also, that the important Act of 1668 (20 Charles II.) resulting from it

was approved by and obtained at the desire of the freeholders,

inhabitants, and commoners then living.

Another proposition intended to further the preservation of the Forest

woods was presented to the Lord Warden of the Castle of St. Briavel's by

the freeholders thereof, promising on their part to relinquish claims to

wood and timber for so long a time as "his sacred Majesty" should resolve

to suspend his iron-works therein, whom they implore to call in the

patent granted to Sir John Winter.

Some idea may be formed of the strength of public feeling against Sir

John Winter, on account of his wholesale fellings of the Forest timber,

by the decision which Mr. Pepys records his "cousin Roger" to have given

upon him, viz. that "he deserves to be hanged." In order that the

mischief might be put an end to as soon as possible, late as it was in

the session, a bill was brought into the House for settling the Forest,

and preserving and improving the wood and timber. Parliament was

prorogued, however, before the bill could pass, and its promoters had to

be content with the House "recommending the Lord Treasurer and the

Chancellor of the Exchequer to take care for the preservation and

improvement of the Forest." This recommendation appears to have had no

influence on Sir John Winter, for on a new survey made in 1667 it was

reported to Government that out of the 30,233 trees sold to him, only

about 200 remained standing, and that from 7000 to 8000 tons of timber,

fit for his Majesty's navy, was found wanting. He would seem to have

felt some alarm at this report, for twice about this time he resorted to

Mr. Pepys, who writes, 15th March, 1667--"This morning I was called up by

Sir John Winter, poor man, come in a sedan from the other end of the

town, about helping the King in the business of bringing down his timber

to the sea-side in the Forest of Deane;" and again 30th April, "Sir John

Winter, to discourse with me about the Forest of Deane."

All the propositions sent up to the Government in 1663 were incorporated

in the Act of 20 Charles II., chap. 3, which also provided that the new

enclosures should be perfected within two years, in favourable and

convenient places, the cost of making and maintaining them being met by

the sale of such trees as would never prove timber; that no trees were to

be felled until they had been viewed and marked by two or more justices

of the peace, under a penalty of twenty pounds; that no fee-trees were to

be allowed, and all grants to be void; that every freeholder might do

what he pleased with his land; that no enclosure was to be mined,

quarried, or trespassed in; that the bounds of the Forest were to remain

as settled in 20 James I.; that all lawful rights and privileges relating

to its minerals were to continue, with permission to the Crown to lease

coal-mines and stone-quarries for periods not exceeding thirty-one years;

that the letters-patent granted for a term not expired to Sir John

Winter, Kt., Francis Finch and Robert Clayton, Esqs., should remain good,

as also, certain leases granted to Thomas Preston, Esq., and Sir Edward

Villiers, Kt. After all that had occurred, it seems strange that Sir

John Winter should have obtained permission by Act of Parliament to

retain his patent; he had however several powerful friends, and also

strong claims on the Crown in consideration of his services during the

civil war.

CHAPTER III.

A. D. 1663-1692.

First "Order" of forty-eight free miners in Court--8,487 acres enclosed

and planted--Speech-house begun--Second order of the Miners' Court--The

King's iron-works suppressed--The six "walks" and lodges planned out--All

mine-works forbidden in the enclosures--Third order of the Miners'

Court--Enclosures extended--Fourth order of the Miners'

Court--Speech-house finished--The Forest perambulated--Fifth order of the

Miners' Court--Proposal to resume the King's iron-works rejected--Sixth

and seventh orders of the Miners' Court--Riots connected with the

Revolution--Eighth order of the Miners' Court--Dr. Parsons's account of

the Forest.

Contemporaneously with the important Parliamentary enactments noticed in

the preceding chapter, there took place, on the 18th of March (1663), the

earliest session of a local but very significant court, that of "the Mine

Law," whose date and proceedings have been preserved. It was held at

Clearwell before Sir Baynham Throgmorton, deputy constable of St.

Briavel's Castle, and a jury of forty-eight free miners, and shows that

the Forest Miners of that day were a body of men engaged in carrying on

their works according to rule, so as to avoid disputes or unequal

dealing.

The Court ordered and ordained, as respects the western half of the

district, that the minerals of the Forest could only be disposed of,

beyond the limits of the Hundred, by free miners; that no manner of

carriage was to be used for transporting them, nor more than four

horses kept by any one party; that the selling price was to be

determined by six "Barganers"; but that any free miner might carry "a

dozen" of lime coal to the lime slad for 3s., to the top of the

Little Doward for 5s. 6d., to any other kilns thereon for 5s. 4d., to

the Blackstones for 5s., to Monmouth for 5s. 6d., to the Weare over

Wye for 4s., to Coldwall for 3s. 6d., to Lydbrook for 3s., and to

Redbrook for 4s. 4d.; that no young man who had not served an

apprenticeship for five years should work for himself at the mine or

coal, nor should any of the "labourers" do so unless they had worked

seven years, neither was any young man to carry coal, &c., unless he

was a householder; and that none should sue for mine, &c., but in the

Court of the Mine, under the penalty "of 100 dozen of good sufficient

oare or coale, the one-half to be forfeited to the King, and the

other halfe to the myner that will sue for the same." The originals

of this foregoing, and of the seventeen succeeding "Orders," written

on parchment, are preserved in the office of the Deputy Gaveller at

Coleford. The forty-eight signatures to it are almost effaced, and

about half have "marks" affixed to them, but the whole are written in

the same hand.

The new Act of 1668 was soon brought into operation. Immediately after

it had passed, upwards of 8,487 acres of open land were enclosed and

planted, the remaining 2,513 acres being taken in some time afterwards.

The following statement of Mr. Agar, then surveyor of the woods, shows

that the cost of making the enclosures was raised as the Act directed.

He said that he "received several sums of money by the sale of cordwood

to Mr. Foley and divers others, and of the timber that did happen to

arise out of the old oaks and beeches felled for the cordwood and other

uses, and of wood that I \_sold\_ to the colliers for their pits, in the

whole amounting to 5 pounds,125 8s. 9.25d., which money was expended in

buying Cannope, &c., of Banistree Maynard, Esq., at 1,500 pounds; in

setting up his Majesty's Enclosures in the said Forest, of 8,400 acres,

with gates, stiles, &c., and some reparations of them; in employing a

sworn surveyor to admeasure them; in building part of the Speech House;

in divers repairs at Saint Briavel's Castle; in the charge of executing

two several commissions, and other services in the said Forest."

In allusion to the item of timber \_sold\_ to the colliers, the

commissioners, in their report of 1788, remark:--"Immediately after the

passing of the Act of 1668, the colliers, who, it is said, now pretend to

have a right to whatever timber they find necessary for carrying on their

works in the Forest, without paying anything for it, then purchased it

from the Crown." It seems also that "the Speech House" was then

commenced, although it was not finished until 1682.

The \_second\_ existing Order of the Mine Law Court states that it met in

1674, on the 9th March, at Clowerwall, before Sir George Probert, deputy

constable of St. Briavel's Castle, chiefly with the design of raising a

fund for defending in a legal way the rights of the free miners, and

affording them support when injured at their work.

To these ends a payment of 6d. per quarter was levied upon each

miner, digging for or carrying mineral, if fifteen years of age, as

also upon every horse so used, payable within fourteen days, under a

fine of 2s. Six collectors were to receive the above payments, to be

remunerated at the rate of 1s. per quarter for each pound they

gathered. Twice a year they handed in their accounts, under a

penalty of 5 pounds, and perpetual exclusion from any office of

trust, if such were found defective. It appears therefore that the

free miners valued their rights, and not only took thought for the

morrow, but provided for it. They added a proviso that the servants

of the Deputy Constable should have the benefit of always being

supplied first at the pits, showing that they knew something also of

public diplomacy. This "Order" has the names of forty-eight miners

attached, all severally sealed, but written in one hand.

In this year also (1674) it was suggested that if the King would put the

old iron-works of the Forest in repair, and also build one furnace and

two forges, all which might be done for 1,000 pounds, a clear profit of

2,190 pounds could be made upon every 8,000 long and short cords of wood,

of which the Forest was in a condition to supply a vast quantity. This

proposal was nevertheless not acted upon, it being judged desirable

rather to pull down the old iron-works than erect new, lest the waste in

supplying the necessary quantities of wood should ultimately prove

destructive to the Forest, now in a flourishing condition. Accordingly

the iron-works then standing were ordered to be pulled down, and the

materials sold. The greatest attention is admitted by the commissioners

of 1788, who examined the office papers relating to this period, to have

been given by the then Ministers of State, by Sir Charles Harbord,

surveyor-general of the Crown lands, and by his son and successor Mr.

William Harbord, to the protection of the young wood and the enclosures;

and they affirm that "it is chiefly in those parts of the Forest which

were then enclosed that the timber with which the dockyards have been

since furnished from this Forest has been felled, and in which any

considerable quantity of useful timber may now be found."

On the 28th of September, 1675, at the recommendation of Sir Charles

Harbord, to whom the plan was probably suggested by the precedent of the

ten bailiwicks into which the district had been anciently divided, the

Forest was formed into six "walks," or districts, a keeper being

appointed to each. Six lodges were built for their use in convenient

situations, with 30 acres of land attached, "for the better encouragement

and enabling of the said keepers to attend and watch over the said

enclosures within their several walks, and to preserve the same, and the

young springs of wood and trees thereon growing, and to grow from time to

time, from spoil and harm." The names given to each of the six divisions

were derived from some of the most eminent living characters of that day.

Thus, the Speech House, or King's Walk, was so called after Charles II.;

York Walk and Lodge after the Duke of York; Danby Walk and Lodge after

the Earl of Danby, prime Minister at the time; Worcester Walk and Lodge

after Henry Marquis of Worcester, the then constable of the Castle of St.

Briavel's, and warden of the Forest; Latimer Walk and Lodge after

Viscount Latimer; and Herbert Walk and Lodge after Lord Herbert; in the

two last instances, out of compliment to the Worcester family apparently.

The Speech House was so called from its being intended for the use of the

ancient Court of "the Speech," as mentioned in the Laws and Franchises of

the Mine. Now also a grant of sixty tons of timber was made by the King

towards rebuilding the parish church of Newent, as a tablet therein

declares.

How strictly the enclosures were preserved at this time against all

mining operations, is shown by the refusal which Sir Charles Harbord gave

to a petition presented to the Treasury by several gentlemen and

freeholders of the parish of Newland, for leave to make a coal level

through an enclosure, although they were backed by Sir Baynham

Throckmorton, Deputy-Governor of St. Briavel's Castle, who had also been

one of the Commissioners first appointed for carrying out the Act of

1668, and who gave it as his opinion that agreeing to the prayer of the

petition would conduce to the preservation of the woods in the Forest,

and the convenience and advantage of the country. The wording of the

refusal was very peremptory, to the effect that "the enclosures could

only be preserved for timber by being kept discharged from all claims;"

that "although miners and quarrymen had been long permitted to dig where

they pleased, yet that they could not prove their right to do so; and as

to coal-works, any such claims were unknown, much less any liberty of

cutting his Majesty's woods for the support thereof; and the same ought

to be totally suppressed, and would be so by a good officer, as Colonel

Wade was in the time of the Usurpation, and that only by the Forest Law,

and the ordinary authority of a Justice of Peace." It is not unlikely

that in the last observation a hint was intended to be given to Sir

Baynham Throckmorton, lest he should compromise his independent position

with the colliers in the Forest by publicly accepting, as he had done the

year before at their Mine Law Court, "their thankfull acknowledgment of

the many favors received by them from him," in return for which they

agreed that, when he "should send his own horses or waynes to any of the

colepitts for cole, the miners shall presently seame and load them before

any other person whatever."

Passing over an interval of three years, we come to the date of the

\_third\_ of the Mine Law Courts, held on the 8th September, 1678, at

"Clowerwall," before Sir Baynham Throckmorton, &c., whose favour it shows

the free-miners were most anxious to preserve, since, upon understanding

that the former order of 1668, forbidding any foreigner to convey or

deliver minerals, had proved prejudicial to him and his friends and

tenants, they now revoked the same, allowing any foreigner to carry fire

or lime coal for his own use; besides which, they constituted the Marquis

of Worcester, the then Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, as well as Sir

Baynham Throckmorton, his Deputy, "free miners to all intents and

purposes."

This same Court decided that "the Winchester bushell, three of which

were to make a barrell," should be the constant measure for "iron ore

and coale," 4d. being the smallest price allowed to be taken for "a

barrell of fire coale." Pits having become numerous, they decreed

that "none should presume to sink a pit within 100 yards of one

already made without the consent of the undertakers, under a penalty

of 100 dozen of good fire coale" (which is the earliest regulation

for protecting coal-works). Lastly, six "barganers" were to fix the

price at which iron ore should be sold or carried to the different

works. The names of forty-eight miners are appended to this "order,"

all written in the same hand opposite their respective marks.

The importance of securing a supply of timber for the navy led to

frequent Commissions of Inquiry, and the issue of Instructions, with

respect to the royal forests. The Marquis of Worcester, Warden of Dean

Forest, made a Return, on the 23rd of April, 1680, minutely describing

the condition of the older trees, as well as of those planted ten years

before, together with the state of the fences surrounding the new

plantations. Parts of several of the enclosures are reported to have

trees which were grown up out of the reach of cattle, and therefore fit

to be thrown open, an equal quantity of waste land being enclosed

instead, which was accordingly done by warrant, dated 21st July, 1680,

not more than eleven years from the time they were taken in: consequently

the young trees must have grown with rapidity, or else were left to take

their chance very early. With the design as it would seem of making room

for the new plantations, it is further stated that "there were remaining

about 30 cabins, in several parts of the Forest, inhabited by about 100

poor people, and that they had taken care to demolish the said cabins,

and the enclosures about them." It should be remarked that these poor

people must not be classed with the "free miners" of the Forest, although

"they had been born in it, and never lived elsewhere," but as "cabiners,"

who had to work seven years in the pits before they could become "free."

[Picture: The Speech House]

The \_fourth\_ Record of the Mine Law Court informs us that it sat before

Sir Baynham Throckmorton on the 27th April, 1680, at the Speech House,

yet barely completed, unless it were the spacious Court-room, devoted to

the public business of the Forest, for which it has been used ever since.

The "Order" then passed implies, that although the last Court had

appointed six "bargainers" to deal with the difficult question of valuing

the minerals offered for sale, inconvenience was yet experienced on this

head.

It was therefore decreed that a dozen Winchester bushels of iron ore

should be delivered at St. Wonnarth's furnace for 10s.; at

Whitchurch, for 7s.; at Bishopswood, for 9s.; at Linton, for 9s.; at

Longhope, for 9s.; at Flaxley, for 8s.; at Gunsmills (if rebuilt),

for 7s.; at Blackney, for 6s.; at Lydney, for 6s.; at those in the

Forest lately demolished (if rebuilt), for the same as before; at

Redbrooke, for 4s. 6d.; at the Abbey, viz. Tintern, for 9s.; at

Brockweare, for 6s. 6d.; at Redbrooke Passage, for 5s. 6d.; at

Gunspill, for 7s. So also no house or smith's coal was to be

delivered on the banks of the Wye, below Huntsam Ferry, for less than

8s. a dozen bushels, or for 4s. 6d. if only lime coal; and if above

Huntsam, 3s. 6d., on a forfeiture of 100 dozen of good iron ore, the

one half to his Majesty, and the other to the miner that will sue for

the same, together with loss of "freedom" and utter expulsion from

the mine-works--a very heavy penalty for such an offence, showing the

arbitrary power assumed by the court, at one time conferring

free-minership upon strangers and foreigners, and at another deposing

the free miner merely for an over or even an under charge.

This "order" likewise informs us that the instructions given in 1674, to

pull down the King's iron-works in the Forest, had been so thoroughly

executed, that all the furnaces were ere this demolished, leaving such

only to be supplied with ore as were situated beyond the Forest limits.

These furnaces seem to have taken about 600 dozen bushels of ore at one

time, during the delivery of which no second party was allowed to come

in. It is signed by fourteen out of the forty-eight free miners in their

own hands, which is so far an improvement; but if the iron trade was

unpromising, owing to the course which the Government felt constrained to

take, lest its development should endanger the timber, it was not so with

the coal, the getting of which the Crown would obviously regard with

favour, in the hope that it would relieve the woods from spoliation.

Accordingly, we shall find that from about this period on through the

next century coal-works were constantly on the increase, so as eventually

to throw the getting of iron-ore into the shade. This last "order"

cancelled an agreement passed by the Mine Law Court on the 9th of March,

1675, to the effect that a legal-defence fund be raised; but it confirmed

the decree of a former court forbidding any young man to set up for

himself as a free miner unless he was upwards of twenty-one years of age,

and had served by indenture an apprenticeship of five years, and had also

given a bond of ten pounds to obey all the orders of the said court.

One of the most minute of the various perambulations of this Forest dates

from about this time, and serves to identify several spots, the early

names of which have long passed away. On this occasion nineteen

"regarders" went the rounds, preserving much the same course as the

bounds of 28 Edward I.

The next, or \_fifth\_ session of the Mine Law Court was held at Clearwell,

on the 19th of September, 1682, Henry Melborne and William Wolseley,

Esqrs., acting as joint deputies for the Marquis of Worcester, constable

of St. Briavel's Castle.

It confirmed, for the most part, the "orders" already issued, and

further exacted the payment, within six days, of 6d. from every miner

thirteen years of age and upwards, and an additional 6d. for every

horse used in carrying mineral, "for raising a present sum of money

for urgent occasions," and required all coal-pits which had been

wrought out to be sufficiently secured. Only fourteen signatures are

attached to this "order," the remaining thirty-four free miners

making their "marks."

In the course of the next year, A.D. 1683, a scheme resembling that

proposed ten years before was started by Sir John Erule, supervisor or

conservator of the Forest. His project was to raise 5,390 pounds a year

for the Crown, upon an outlay, in the first place, of no more than 1,000

pounds, to be spent in building iron-works, and an annual consumption of

8,000 cords of wood out of the Forest, care being taken that no oak or

beech-tree, fit or likely to become fit for shipbuilding, be used. The

Lords of the Treasury referred the plan to Mr. William Harbord and Mr.

Agar, to be investigated and reported on. They rejected it however, as

was done in the former case, and for the same reason, namely, that if

carried out it would prove injurious to the woods and timber.

The \_sixth\_ order of the Court of Mine Law records that it assembled on

the 8th of December, 1685, at Clearwell, before William Wolseley, Esq.,

deputy to the Duke of Beaufort, constable of St. Briavel's Castle.

Its principal design seems to have been that of confirming the former

6d. rate, and authorizing the same to be raised to 10s., if

necessary, towards keeping up a fund for supporting the miners'

claims at law, which of late they had been obliged to do in the Court

of Exchequer against Mr. Beck and others. The order concludes with

the following direction: "That one-half of the jury should be

iron-miners, and the other half colliers," so rapidly had coal-mining

advanced, and so important had its condition become. An examination

of the original document shows this order to have been signed by one

person writing down the names of the forty-eight free miners, since

they all exhibit the same hand-writing.

The \_seventh\_ of the orders still extant reports the Court of the Mine to

have been held at Clearwell on the 5th of April, 1687, before William

Wolseley, Esq., and commences by stating that more money was wanted for

legal purposes, and that every miner must pay two shillings, with two

shillings besides for every mine-horse, towards meeting them.

It likewise directed that each coal-pit and dangerous mine-pit, if

left unworked for a whole month together, should be fenced with a

stone wall or posts and rails, under a penalty of 10s. All previous

orders, fixing the prices at which the minerals of the Forest were

alone to be sold, were now abolished, not having been found to

answer; and all miners were left at liberty to sell or carry and

deliver their ore and coal to whom, where, and how they pleased; and

whereas previously all colliers were entitled to be first served at

the pits, now it was ordained that the inhabitants of the hundred

should precede the trade, and that those miners only should keep

horses who had land sufficient to feed them. The following provision

speaks for itself--"For the restrayning that pernicious and

abominable sinne of perjury too much used in these licentious times,

every myner convicted by a jury of 48 miners in the said Court shall

for ever loose and totally forfeite his freedome as touching the

mines, and bee utterly expelled out of the same, and all his working

tooles and habitt be burnt before his face, and he never afterwards

to be a witness or to be believed in any matter whatsoever." Of the

forty-eight jurymen whose names are appended to the above, sixteen

signed.

It was in the month of January following (1688) that a riotous assemblage

of the people pulled down Worcester Lodge and York Lodge, besides much

defacing and spoiling the Speech House; an outrage connected probably

with the unpopularity of James II., after whom the Speech House and York

Lodge were called. With reference to the general feeling of the

neighbourhood respecting the principles of the Revolution, Mr. Pyrke, of

Dean Hall, states that the release of Lord Lovelace, a supporter of the

Prince of Orange, out of Gloucester prison, was effected by "a young

gentleman of that county," an ancestor of his, "who took up arms for the

Prince, and drove out all the Popish crew that were settled in that

city," and that the exploit has been handed down in the following rude

lines, sung by his haymakers at their harvest supper:--

"A health to Captain Pyrke, who in Little Dean was bred,

And of a thousand men he was the head;

He fought for the truth and the Protestant faith;

We drink his good health, and so do rejoice.

He down in the West King William did meet,

And to him he sent both oxen and sheep,

Till he had an order which from him did come,

And with honour to Gloucester he brought him along.

When he came to Gloucester he had but forty men,

The city of Gloucester all barred unto him;

The city was guarded with soldiers about,

But he brought Lord Lovelace from his prison quite out.

With sword in his hand he before them did go;

He was not ashamed his face for to show:

'They who have anything to say to Lord Lovelace,' said he,

'O then, if they have, let them speak it to me.'

Then up to the Mayor away he did get,

And his wooden god to pieces did beat;

And the big golden chair where King James sate

He threw in the fire, which made a brave heat.

Then up into Oxfordshire away he did ride,

To bring Lord Lovelace safe home;

He plundered the Papists along as he goes,

He could not endure to see us abused."

Two years later than the date of the above outrages, wood-fellings to the

extent of 6,186 short cords were made, pursuant to their Majesties'

letters of Privy Seal. They were sold, it is said, for six shillings a

cord, which was considered a good price for the county of Gloucester.

A period of about five years from the time that the last was held brings

us to the date of the \_eighth\_ record of the Mine Law Court, viz. the

17th of January, 1692. It was held at Clearwell, before the three

deputies of the Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, \_i.e.\_ Tracy Catchmay,

John Higford, and George Bond, Esqrs.

The Court levied a further contribution of 12d. upon every miner,

with an additional 1s. on every mine horse, with which to clear off

certain charges incurred in a recent suit in the Court of Exchequer

at Westminster. It extended the protective distance of 100 yards,

within which every pit was guarded from being encroached upon by any

other work, to 300 yards. It also provided that no iron ore intended

for Ireland should be shipped on the Severn or Wye for a less sum

than 6s. 6d. for every dozen bushels. This order was signed by

sixteen out of the forty-eight miners with their own hands, the rest

making their marks only.

To this period is assigned Dr. Parsons's quaint remarks on the Forest.

"It abounds," he says, "with springs for the most part of a brownish or

umber colour, occasioned by their passage through the veynes of oker, of

which there is a great plenty, or else through the rushy tincture of the

mineralls of the ore. The ground of the Forest is more inclined to wood

and cole than corn, yet they have enough of it too. The inhabitants are,

some of them, a sort of robustic wild people, that must be civilized by

good discipline and government. The ore and cinder wherewith they make

their iron (which is the great imployment of the poorer sort of

inhabitants) 'tis dug in most parts of ye Forest, one in the bowells, and

the other towards the surface of the earth. But, whether it be by virtue

of the Forrest laws, or other custome, the head Gaviler of the Forrest,

or others deputed by him, provided they were born in the Hundred of St.

Briavel's, may go into any man's grounds whatsoever, within the

limitation of the Forrest, and dig or delve for ore and cinders without

any molestation. There are two sorts of ore: the best ore is your brush

ore, of a blewish colour, very ponderous and full of shining specks like

grains of silver; this affordeth the greatest quantity of iron, but being

melted alone produceth a mettal very short and brittle. To remedy this

inconvenience, they make use of another material which they call cinder,

it being nothing else but the refuse of the ore after the melting hath

been extracted, which, being melted with the other in due quantity, gives

it that excellent temper of toughness for which this iron is preferred

before any other that is brought from foreign parts. But it is to be

noted that in former times, when their works were few and their vents

small, they made use of no other bellows but such as were moved by the

strength of men, by reason whereof their fires were much less intense

than in the furnaces they now imploy; so that, having in them only melted

downe the principal part of the ore, they rejected the rest as useless,

and not worth their charge: this they call their cinder, and is found in

an inexhaustible quantity throughout all the parts of the country where

any glomerys formerly stood, for so they were then called."

CHAPTER IV.

A.D. 1692-1758.

Condition of the Forest described, and management

examined--Depredations--Ninth and tenth orders of the Miners'

Court--Timber injured by the colliers--The Forest in its best state,

1712--Eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth orders of the Miners'

Court--Fourteenth order of the Miners' Court--Swainmote Court

discontinued--Extension of coal-works and injury of trees--Forest

neglected--Fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth orders of the Miners'

Court--Grant of 9200 feet of timber to the Gloucester Infirmary.

Reverting to the general condition and management of the Forest, an

important commission was issued this year, 1692, to the Crown officers

and some of the neighbouring gentry, directing them to examine and

inquire into the six following particulars:--I. The quantity of

coppicewood fit for being cut from year to year for twenty-one years to

come--II. The annual charge for the next twenty-one years of maintaining

the enclosures--III. What the cost would be of disenclosing certain

coal-pits, with which some of the plantations were encumbered--IV. What

the salaries of the Crown officers of the Forest amounted to, and the

cost of making such repairs as the buildings they occupied required--V.

As to the way in which the timber fellings of 1688 had been disposed of,

with the state of the enclosures, if those who had charge of them had

duly protected them from injury--and VI. How far trespass and pounding

had been enforced, or unlawful building permitted.

These were all very important questions, and under the first head, as to

wood fit to be cut for cording, &c., the commissioners report, that

"there are great and valuable quantities of scrubbed beech and birch,

with some holly, hazel, and orle, fit to be cut and disposed of, being

192,000 cords, worth at 4s. 10d., amounting to 46,488 pounds, of which

12,000 cords might be cut every year, worth 2,900 pounds. Or, as the

total quantity of such wood was 615,500 cords, their worth at 4s. 10d.

was 148,745 pounds 16s. 8d., to which 60,000 pounds may safely be added

for future clearings if a twenty-one years' lease be granted. 100 pounds

a year would suffice to keep the enclosures in repair." The

commissioners, in contemplating the expediency of making a grant adapted

to the requirements of iron-making, supposing the King's furnaces to be

restored, considered that it "would utterly destroy the Forest, now the

best nursery for a navy in the world;" since the party obtaining such a

lease would be sure to consider their own advantage rather than the

preservation of the district. They also urged that a grant like that

intimated was opposed to the intentions of the Act of 20th Charles II.,

as also to the previous decisions of 1662 and 1674, and would cause much

dissatisfaction amongst the freeholders of the Forest, who were prepared

to petition against it. The commissioners recommended that "the making

of the fellets, if put in execution, should certainly be intrusted to the

present officers, who had given sufficient testimony of their care in

such matters." Their report adds that "the Lea Bayly is now a spring of

oak and beech of four, five, and six years' growth, but much cropped and

spoiled by cattle, by reason the enclosures made for the preservation

thereof have in the night been several times pulled down and destroyed by

persons unknown." The other places mentioned in the Act of 1668, called

"Cannop Fellet, Buckholt, Beachenhurst, and Moyey Stock," are described

as "generally very well grown with oak and beech of fifty, forty, and

thirty years' growth, and under, many thousand of them being forty foot

and upwards, without a bough to hurt them." They further state, that

some of the enclosure fences, especially those on the north-east side of

the Forest, would cost 137 pounds 10s. to repair, and 30 pounds a year

afterwards, perhaps, to keep them good, the other parts formerly enclosed

not needing reparation, the trees being grown up past danger from deer or

cattle, "unless in case of some accident, or pulling down by the rabble,

as hath been sometimes done." Viewing the places where the last fellets

for cordwood were made in 1690, the commissioners state that "a very

great stock has been left upon the ground for timber, and all imaginable

care taken by the officers employed in making the said fellets, and

preserving all the stores and saplings, with the principal shoots of such

beech as grow upon old stools well sheltered by other woods, for the

improvement thereof." With reference to the expediency of throwing open

such of the enclosures as contained coal-pits, we learn that no

inconvenience was felt on that account, as "not more than six pits had

ever been so situated, and now not one, those plantations having grown

up, and their fences down." The sum total of salaries paid to the

conservators and six keepers was 210 pounds per annum, arising from wood

sales. Various repairs are stated to have been necessary. The Castle of

St. Briavel's, it is said, "hath been a very great and ancient building,

but the greatest part is ruined and fallen down, and only some part kept

up for a place to hold the courts in for the King's manor and hundred

thereof, and also for a prison for debtors attached by process out of the

said courts, and for offenders and trespassers within the Forest. The

same is very necessary to be repaired; and for mending the roof and

tyling, and in glazing, plaistering, repairing the prison windows, and

building a new pound, &c., will cost the sum of 10 pounds 14s. 2d. The

cost of rebuilding Worcester and York Lodges, pulled down by the rioters

in 1688, and repairing the Speech House, which was likewise much injured

at that time, will be, they calculate, 219 pounds 10s."

As to injury done to the woods, the following presentments amongst many

others made by the keepers were instanced:--"John Simons of Blackney, for

cutting green orle wood. Edward Revoke and James Drew of Little Dean,

for cutting and carrying away a young oak. The same Edward Revoke, for

building some part of his house with wood out of the said Forest."

Respecting these depredations the commissioners recommend that, in

consideration of the colliers having, time out of mind, had an allowance

of wood, but not timber for the support of their pits, but which has been

stopped for some time, it may be again allowed to them by order of the

verderers, and taken by view of a woodward or keeper. The Attachment and

Swainmote Courts are stated to have been "duly kept, although

ineffectually to the preservation of the Forest, as they can only

convict, but cannot punish; and that the trespass-money paid into the

said courts in this reign does not exceed 5s., the only remedy being in

having a justice seat held for the purpose once a year, for six or seven

years." The report is signed by Wm. Cooke, Re Pynder, Wm. Boevey, J.

Viney, Jo. Kyrle, Phil. Ryley.

The \_ninth\_ Mine Law Court was held on the 25th of April, 1694, at

Clearwell, before John Higford and George Bond, Esqrs.

It confirmed the punishment already awarded against "the abominable

sin of perjury," to prevent which it directs that "no person shall be

permitted to sweare in his own cause unless it be for a matter

transacted underground, or where it was difficult to have any

witnesses;" nor shall any bargain be binding unless it be proved by

two witnesses.

All causes of debt or damage amounting to 40s. were to be heard on

both sides as in other courts, the verdict being given by a jury of

twelve miners; but in lesser causes by the Constable of the Court.

Provision was also made that "every defendant have twenty-four hours'

notice to provide for his defence," every witness being allowed 12p.

a-day, the fees of the Court remaining the same as before, all which,

as well as the defendant's time, the plaintiff losing the cause, or

being non-suited, had to pay. This "Order" also reduces the price of

ore for Ireland from 8s. to 5s. a dozen bushels, pitched at

Brockwere, or if at Wye's Green for 4s. ditto; fire-cole at 8s. a

dozen bushels; smith's-cole, 6s., and charking at 8s., "without

handing, thrusting, kicking, or knocking the same," under the usual

penalty. Eighteen miners out of the jury of forty-eight signed their

names themselves "to this Order," the remaining thirty only making

their marks.

The earliest particular recorded in the next century bears date 1701, on

the 27th January, in which year the \_tenth\_ Miners' Court of forty-eight

sat at Clearwell, before Serjeant Powlett and George Bond, Esq., deputies

to Charles Earl of Berkeley.

Its proceedings were as follows:--Certain temporary orders, dated the

12th March, 1699, and 11th November, 1700, regulating the loading of

horses and carts, forbidding any coal to be sent off by the river Wye

below Welch-Bicknor, authorizing the raising of money for paying the

costs of the miners' debts in law, securing the Records of their

Court, and making the present deputy constable of St. Briavel's

Castle a free miner, were confirmed and made perpetual. Mention is

also made for the first time of "the utmost seventy" being the

greatest number ever comprised in the miners' jury. The order

further directs that the Records of Mine-law, used at the hearing of

the suit in the Exchequer, be recorded, and put into a chest, to be

left in the custody of Francis Wyndham, Esq., whom the court had made

a free miner, and that in paying any of the costs incurred in that

cause a legal discharge be taken. Now the ton of 21 cwt. was fixed

as a weight of coal, to be sold for 5s. to an inhabitant of the

hundred, or for 6s. to foreigners; and every pit was to be provided

with scales. Upwards of twenty of the forty-eight miners who formed

the jury at this court put their names to the above verdict, the

remainder being marksmen.

In the year 1705, Edward Wilcox, Esq., Surveyor-General to the Royal

Forests, having carefully examined the condition of the woods in the

Forest of Dean, stated that he found them very full of young trees, of

which two thirds were beech, overtopping the oaks, to their injury; and

he recommended that one sixteenth part, or about 700 acres, should be

annually cleared and fenced in, which would yield a profit to the Crown

of 3,500 pounds a year, and leave the standard oaks and beech to grow to

perfection. Lord Treasurer Godolphin consented to this proposal, and

granted a warrant for carrying it into execution; but it was petitioned

against by those who claimed a right of common, whose free-pasturage

would thereby be lessened; at the same time, however, others were

desirous that it might take effect, as they would get a living by cutting

the underwood, and preparing it for the furnaces. At length on the 4th

of July, 1707, the Attorney-General, Sir Simon Harcourt, decided--that

"no claim or right of common could prevent the enclosing, keeping in

severalty, or improving, as her Majesty should direct, the 11,000 acres

mentioned in the Act of 20 Charles II., and preserving the same as a

nursery of wood and timber only."

Another event of this year was the holding a Court of Mine Law, on the

1st of July, at Mitcheldean, but afterwards by adjournment at Coleford,

before George Bond and Roynon Jones, Esqrs., deputies.

It confirmed the directions of a former court of forty-eight, that

the law-papers produced at the late suit in the Court of Exchequer,

with all the other records of the Mine Law Court, be collected

forthwith, and consigned to the care of Francis Wyndham, Esq.; and

that the law debts then incurred be at length paid, out of a 1s. rate

upon every miner and mine-horse. The 20s. penalty for leaving pits

unfenced was also reimposed. This "Order" bears the genuine

signatures of nineteen out of the forty-eight jurymen, the rest

merely making their marks.

In the next year, A.D. 1708, Mr. Wilcox, the Surveyor-General,

represented to Lord Godolphin that the inhabitants of the neighbourhood

had been stripping some of the trees of their bark, whereupon those

trees, with any others not likely to be of any use to the navy, were

ordered to be cut down and used for gates, stiles, and fences, or sold

for the benefit of the Crown. Three years later a similar charge was

preferred against certain colliers for cutting trees and wood, but we do

not find that it came to anything.

Sir Robert Atkyns, to whom this Forest was well known, describes its

condition at this time, as "containing only six houses, which are the

lodges for so many keepers. There had been many cottages erected, but

they had been lately pulled down;" not that there were literally no other

dwellings in it, for the ancient "assarted" lands were probably so

occupied, but the mining population lived for the most part in the

surrounding villages. Speaking of the different Forest courts, he

says--"the Swainmote Court is to preserve the vert and venison, and is

kept at the Speech-house, which is a large strong house, newly built in

the middle of the Forest for that purpose. There is another court called

the Miners' Court, which is directed by a steward appointed by the

constable of the Forest, and by juries of miners, returned to judge

between miner and miner, who have their particular laws and customs, to

prevent their encroaching upon one another, and to encourage them to go

on quietly in their labour in digging after coals and iron-ore, with

which this Forest doth abound." The room in which most of these courts

were held retains its original character, only it has been floored with

wood, and is no longer divided by rails into compartments for the jury

and the accused. Stains of human blood once marked the ceiling over the

north-east corner of the apartment, said to have dropped down from the

room above, where an unfortunate poacher, who had been much injured by a

gun, was confined. It is asserted that for many years no water could

remove nor whitewash hide the unsightly marks.

[Picture: Court Room in "the Speech House."]

In the Commissioners' Report of 1788 it is said that about this time

(1712) the Forest was probably in its best state, although its courts had

not been so regularly held since the Revolution as before, yet that the

greatest attention had been given to it by the different authorities

under the Crown. And as the commissioners deplore the unfavourable

change which had subsequently taken place, we may contrast the state into

which the Forest had then fallen, with its present condition, so much

more hopeful and lucrative than it had been at that the brightest period

of its past history. There are no public documents relating to this

Forest to be met with for many years from this time; indeed it is hardly

ever mentioned in the book of the Surveyor-General of the Crown lands,

which only contained warrants for felling timber for the navy or for

sale. The produce was for the most part directed to be applied to the

repairing of lodges, roads, or fences, or the payment of salaries to

officers, or fee-gifts from the Crown. The proceedings of the Court of

the Miners, on the contrary, remain recorded, and serve to fill up the

interval. They show that one was held at the Speech-house on the 7th of

January, 1717, before Richard Machen and William James, Esqrs., deputies.

By it a 6d. levy was made on every miner, and on every working horse,

towards meeting any law expenses which the Society of Miners might

incur in defending their rights; and should more money be required,

authorizing a jury of only twelve miners, with the consent of the two

deputy-constables, to order the paying of the same. It further

imposed a fine of upwards of 30 pounds on any miner who should sue

another respecting any matter relating to the mine in any other

court. It also constituted the Honourable Matthew Ducie Morton,

Thomas Gage, John Wyndham, Richard Machen, William James, and

Christopher Bond, Esqrs., free miners, "out of the due and great

respect, honour, and esteem borne towards them." We need not call in

question the truthfulness of such protestations; but doubtless, had

these worthy miners perceived the inconsistency of such admissions,

they would not have so readily dispensed with the ancient regulation

which restricted the fellowship of the mine to those who had worked

therein. They were well intended at the time, but long afterwards

weakened in a legal point of view the free miners' rights. This

"Order" exhibits only eleven original signatures, the thirty-seven

other jurymen making their marks.

Only two years intervened between the holding of the Court just

mentioned, and the one which followed it, held at the Speech House, on

10th November, 1719, before Richard Machen and William James, Esqrs.,

Deputies.

On this occasion certain previous orders were cancelled, and in their

stead it was determined that no one living out of the Hundred of St.

Briavel's should convey any coal out of the Forest unless he belonged

to the Forest division of the county, and carried for his own private

use. A penalty of 5 pounds was imposed upon any person under

twenty-one years of age carrying ore or coal. All traffic in coal,

either up or down the Wye, was to stop at Welch Bicknor, between

which and Monmouth Bridge no coal was to be pitched. At Monmouth,

fire-coal was to be sold at 9s. the dozen bushels; smith's-coal at

8s.; and lime-coal at 5s. 6d. Above Lydbrook, on the Wye, fire-coal

was to be sold at 8s. a ton, or the dozen barrels; smith's-coal at

6s.; and lime-coal at 3s. One free miner was not to sell any

fire-coal to another under 5s. per ton of 21 cwt. Roynon Jones and

Edmund Probyn, Esqrs., were made free miners. Lastly, any former

orders in private hands, together with all writings relating to the

Free-miners' Court, were to be delivered to William James, Esq., to

be kept in the said miners' chest, at the Speech-house. Perhaps this

direction was, with few exceptions, complied with, not, it would

seem, in every case, as several of those alluded to in the existing

orders of the forty-eight cannot be found. Nineteen signatures made

by the parties themselves occur at the end of this Order; the rest

are only marks.

Nine years passed away before another full Mine Law Court is recorded.

This was on the 12th November, 1728, by adjournment, at the Speech House,

before Maynard Colchester, Esq., and William James, Gent.

The following gentlemen were made free miners:--Thomas Wyndham, of

Clearwell; Maynard Colchester, of Westbury; William Hall Gage, son

and heir to Lord Viscount Gage; William Jones, of Nass, Esqrs.;

William Jones, of Soylewell, Gent.; Robert James, of the same place,

Gent.; Thomas Wyndham the younger, of Clearwell, Gent.; Thomas Pyrke

the younger, of Little Dean, Gent.; and William Lane, Deputy Clerk.

A forfeit of 10 pounds was laid upon any miner who had received a

"forbidment" from another, if he persisted in carrying on his work in

that place. The distance of 300 yards, which, by a former order,

made in 1692, protected every pit from interruption, was now enlarged

to 500 yards in all levels in all parts of the mines called "beneath

the wood," under the same penalty; and further, the giving away of

coals was forbidden under a fine of 5 pounds. Twenty-two original

signatures appear at the foot of this Order; the other names are

merely marked.

The extension of the Forest coal-works, in depth and underground

operations, as indicated by the enlargement of the protective distance,

effected a corresponding change in the kind of timber required for

propping the mine. That is, as the pressure from above increased, owing

to the workings being carried deeper, stronger stays and supports were

necessary than cordwood or saplings supplied. Nothing less than the

stems and main limbs of timber trees would suffice. How the colliers

obtained these requisites, the particulars given in the following

complaint, made in 1735 by the Surveyor-General, show:--"A practice has

prevailed among the colliers of boring large holes in trees that they may

become dotard and decayed, and, as such, may be delivered to them gratis

for the use of their collieries." The only notice, it cannot be called a

remedy, which this evil obtained, was that, for the future, directions

were given that "such bored trees as appeared to be dead and spoiled

shall be felled, taking care that none be cut down that may be of use to

the navy."

It is, however, further stated, that the colliers frequently obtained

from the keepers the best trees in the Forest, although their claims

merely extended to pit-timber. The existence of so serious an evil

proves that many things were going wrong, and we are prepared for the

representations made the next year (1736) to the Treasury by Christopher

Bond, Esq., Conservator and Supervisor of the Forest. He reported that

"after the Act of the 20th Charles II., 11,000 acres had been enclosed;

that the officers were duly elected, Forest courts held, and offenders

prosecuted and punished, to the successful rearing of a fine crop of

wood; but that within the last 30 years these elections had been

neglected, the Courts discontinued, and offenders left unpunished; the

Officers of Inheritance had grown remiss and negligent, so that some

enclosures, and those of only a few acres of the 11,000, were kept up,

and these not carefully repaired; a great number of cottages were erected

upon the borders of the Forest, the inhabitants whereof lived by rapine

and theft; that there were besides many other offences committed, such as

intercommuning of foreigners, surcharges of commoners, trespasses in the

fence month and winter haining, and in the enclosures; keeping hogs,

sheep, goats, and geese, being uncommonable animals, in the Forest;

cutting and burning the nether vert, furze, and fern; gathering and

taking away the crabs, acorns, and mast; and other purprestures and

offences; carrying away such timber trees as were covertly cut down in

the night time; by which practices several hundred fine oaks were yearly

destroyed, and the growth of others prevented; and that it was feared

that some of the inferior officers of the Forest, finding offenders to go

on with impunity, were not only grown negligent, but also connived at, if

not partook in, the spoil daily committed."

To remedy this bad state of things, Mr. Bond proposed that a new law

should be passed, explanatory of the Act of 1668, by enforcing the Forest

officers to do their duty, and by superseding the odious, because

unlimited and arbitrary, proceedings of the former Chief Justices in Eyre

by a jury, and convictions before the verderers at their Swainmote Court,

with a power lodged in those officers to fine, under a certain sum, all

offenders. The Surveyor-General of the Crown Woods had the above

proposal submitted to his consideration, and was directed to attend the

Attorney and Solicitor-General, Sir John Willis and Sir Dudley Ryder, to

take their opinion thereon, which was, that "the offences were chiefly

owing to the neglect of putting the Stat. 20th Charles II. in execution;

and they recommended, therefore, that the several vacant offices of the

Forest should be filled up, that the Forest Courts should be regularly

held, and that the officers should be strictly enjoined to do their

duty." It is disappointing to find no evidence that anything was done in

consequence of this opinion.

About this time the \_fifteenth\_ of the series of "Orders" enacted by the

Mine Law Court of forty-eight, informs us that it met by adjournment at

the Speech House on the 6th of December, 1737, before William Jones,

Esq., Deputy Constable of St. Briavel's Castle.

Owing to the injury which it was considered foreigners had done to

the free miners by carrying coal out of the Forest for merchandise,

it was decided that for the future no such carrying should be allowed

except to certain persons named, under a penalty of 5 pounds, or

property to that amount, or imprisonment in St. Briavel's Castle for

a year, to the perpetrator or any cognizant thereof. From this it

seems perfectly plain that the free miner regarded the carrying of

coal as much a part of his profession as getting it, and therefore

equally requiring protection. The "Order" proceeds to direct that in

every suit before the Mine-Law Court the plaintiff and defendant were

to pay 6d. to the Clerk for entering the same, which was to form his

salary. The rights of free-minership were conferred upon the

Honourable Thomas Gage, Christopher Bond the younger, Esq., Thomas

Crawley, Esq., James Rooke, Esq., Thomas James, Gent., Thomas Barron

the younger, Gent., Thomas Marshall, Yeoman. John Wade was to be

made "free" on his working a year and a day in the mine; and making

it a rule that a foreigner's son, being born in the Hundred, and

seeking to become a free miner, was to serve by indenture an

apprenticeship of seven years. The above "Order" has only

twenty-three marks attached to it, more than half the jury signing

their own names.

Proceeding to the date and objects of the next "Order" of the same Court,

we find that it had been adjourned to the 2nd March, 1741, at the Speech

House, before Edward Tomkins Machen, Esq., Deputy. It commences by

explaining the terms "above" and "beneath the wood" to be two ancient

divisions of the Forest, "beginning at the river Wye at Lydbrook, where

the brooke there leading from the forges falls into the said river, and

so up the said brooke or stream unto a place in the said Forest called

Moyery Stock, and from thence along a Wayn-way at the bottom of a place

called the Salley Vallett, and so along the same way between the two old

enclosures that did belong to Ruardean and Little Dean Walks unto

Cannop's Brooke, and down the said brooke to Cannop's Bridge; and from

thence along the road or highway to the Speech-house, and from thence

along the said highway to Foxe's Bridge, and from thence down Blackpool

Brooke to Blakeney."

It is worthy of remark, that the same boundary line, with only a trifling

difference, defines the two townships of East and West Dean, into which

the Forest is now divided for the purposes of the Poor Law Amendment Act.

The connexion of this division with the Court of Mine Law consisted

simply in this, that the attendance of a free miner on the jury was

regulated by the position of his works and habitation in one or other of

them.

A 5 pounds penalty was laid upon all miners who should send or carry

any coals to Hereford or Monmouth by the Wye, except lime-coal at

"the New Wears," at 4s. a dozen bushels. A similar fine was

inflicted on any inhabitant of the Forest division of the county who

should "presume" to carry coal otherwise than for their own use; so

also no miner was to work more than two pits at one time; nor to

carry coal for any person not a free miner; neither to sell fire-coal

or stone-coal charks under 7s. a dozen bushels, or 5s. if smith's

coal, at Redbrook, which, if refused there, a "forbid" shall be

declared until the former coal should be accepted. This "Order"

further enacted that if coal was found in any bargeman's boat, and he

refuse to say from whom he had it, a general "forbid" shall be

declared that no miner serve him with any more. A free miner is

briefly defined to be "such as have lawfully worked at coal a year

and a day." A foreigner selling coal at Hereford for less than 13s.

per ton was to be summoned, or abide the consequences of a general

"forbid." Should there be at any time more than a sufficiency of

coal for the trade on the Wye, the barge-owners were to employ the

services of the miners, or be fined according to their wages. A

horse-load to the Wye was fixed at 2 cwt. and a quarter for 6d., ten

such making a ton, to be weighed, if required, under a forfeit of 2s.

6d. Miners beneath the wood were bound to sell not less than a cwt.

of coal for 4d.; 3 bushels of smith's coal for 5d.; and 1 bushel of

lime coal for 1d. at the pit. No team was to be served with less

than 2 cwt. nor more than 21 cwt., to be weighed, if desired, or

forfeit 5 pounds. This Order constituted Richard Clarke and Edward

Tomkins Machen, Esqrs., free miners, and exhibits at the end the

penmanship of only 18 of the jury, all the rest merely making their

marks.

We now arrive at the \_seventeenth\_ or last "Order" issued by the Mine Law

Court. It dates 22nd October, 1754, and sat at the Speech House, before

Maynard Colchester and Thomas James, Esqrs.

It records the election to free-minerships of the Right Honble.

George Augustus Lord Dursley, Charles Wyndham of Clearwell, Esq.,

Rev. Roynon Jones of Monmouth, John Probyn of Newland, Esq., his son

Edmund, Maynard Colchester the younger, Esq., Roynon Jones the

younger, of Nass, Esq., Kedgwin Webley of London, Gentleman, Kedgwin

Hoskins the elder, of Clearwell, Gent., William Probyn the younger,

of Newland, Gent., Mr. Kedgwin Hoskins the younger, of Clearwell, Mr.

Edmund Probyn the younger, son of the said William Probyn, Mr. Thomas

James the younger, Mr. Thomas Baron the younger, son of Mr. Thomas

Baron of Coleford, Herbert Rudhall Westfaling, of Rudhall in

Herefordshire, Esq., John Clarke, of "The Hill," in Herefordshire,

Esq., Thomas Foley the elder, of "Stoke Eddy," in the said shire,

Esq., Thomas Foley the younger, of the same, Esq., John Symons, of

the Mine, in the same county, Esq., Ion Yate, of Arlingham, Esq.,

William Lane, of "King's Standley," and Barrow Lawrence, of Bruen's

Lodge, Gent.

So full a list of persons of position and influence as this Order

exhibits, lending their names to the Free Miners' Society, indicates the

existence of considerable importance in that body; and yet this was the

last Court having forty-eight free miners on the jury whose proceedings

have been preserved, the fact being that they failed to agree in their

verdicts, and then gentlemen refused to attend, owing, it is said, to the

violent quarrels and disputes which arose between foreigners possessed of

capital, who now began to be admitted to the works, and the free miners.

It is also reported that the decisions of the court were seldom observed,

no Act of Parliament having passed to render them valid. The former

protective distance between one mine and another was increased from 500

to 1000 yards of any levels, and enforced by a 5 pounds penalty. The

order concludes with directing that

"The water-wheel engine at the Orling Green, near Broadmoor, be taken

to be a level to all intents and purposes." This machine was

evidently the first of its kind erected in the Forest, as was also

the steam-engine which superseded it, each manifesting the

improvements going on in the method of working the mines. The

signatures appended to this final "Order" show twenty-five marksmen,

and twenty-three names written by their possessors.

The Benefaction-Boards of the Gloucester Infirmary record, in reference

to this period, the following particular:--"A gracious benefaction from

his Majesty King George II. of 9,200 feet of rough oak timber from the

Forest of Deane."

CHAPTER V.

A.D. 1758-1800.

Mr. John Pitt suggested 2,000 acres to be planted--The Forest

surveyed--Great devastations and encroachments--The roads--Act of 1786,

appointing a Commission of Inquiry--New plantations recommended--Messrs.

Drivers employed to report on the Forest--Corn riots--Mitcheldean market.

Reverting to the state of the woods and timber in the Forest, it appears

that ere this the old enclosures had been thrown open, the trees planted

early in this century having attained to considerable size, and some

parts so far cleared as to suggest the formation of new plantations. In

1758 John Pitt, Esq., then Surveyor-General of Woods, &c., proposed to

the Treasury that 2,000 acres should be enclosed, which was ordered to be

done accordingly; but probably it was executed in part only, since Mr.

Pitt was removed from his office five years afterwards, when a survey of

the timber was made, and it was computed that there were 27,302 loads of

timber fit for the navy, 16,851 loads of about sixty years' growth, and

20,066 loads dotard and decaying. To this period also belongs the first

opening of the old Fire-engine colliery, or Orling Green coal-work, galed

to "foreigners," but subsequently conveyed by them at different times in

shares to various persons, including the gaveller, by whom the first

fire-engine was put up about 1777, a date also memorable as being the one

on which the Court of Free Miners wholly ceased to act.

Mr. John Pitt was reinstated in 1763, and represented that he found

"great spoil had been committed, and great quantities of wood and timber,

amounting in value to 3,255 pounds, cut by order of Sir Edmund Thomas,

the late Surveyor-General, without warrant." The year following, Mr.

Pitt presented a second memorial to the Government, proposing that 2,000

acres more should be taken in, at an estimated cost of 2,077 pounds. The

usual warrant was issued for the purpose, authorizing wood-sales to that

amount, although the expense ultimately came to 3,676 pounds 5s. 6.5d.

The attention of Parliament was directed at this time to the best means

of increasing the supply of timber to the Royal dockyards. A committee

formed for investigating the matter produced the clearest evidence of

decrease of navy timber throughout the kingdom, to the extent of at least

two-thirds within the last forty years, according to the experience of

thirty different dealers. The annual amount of such timber supplied from

Dean Forest is stated to have averaged at this time about 2,000 loads.

Probably the most correct view of the disposition of the woods,

plantations, &c., and of the district in general, is afforded by Mr.

Taylor's map of the county of Gloucester, published in 1777. It

indicates the enclosures formed since the beginning of the century, as

well as a considerable extent of woodland; indeed we know, from the

return made to a Parliamentary survey taken in 1783, that the Forest

contained 90,382 oak-trees, amounting to 95,043 loads, besides 17,982

beech-trees, in which were 16,492 loads; to protect which more

effectually, Mr. Pitt instituted the place of "watch-man," attaching to

it a dwelling-house on Oaken Hill, and a small quantity of land, with a

salary of 10 pounds, and any fines or rewards obtained on the conviction

of timber stealers.

Very mischievous devastations and encroachments were nevertheless still

continued. For instance, Mr. Slade, the purveyor to the navy, stated to

the Treasury, that "he had discovered and was informed of most shameful

depredations of the oak timber, which was cut every day by persons living

round the Forest; and that for some years it had been the custom to steal

the body of the tree in the night, and cut it into cooper's wares,

leaving the top part on the spot, which the keepers took as their

perquisite; and that whole trees were conveyed every spring tide to

Bristol; and that when he was at Gatcomb, in one day there were five or

six teams came with timber, planks, and knees, winter-felled, and other

timber, among which were several useful pieces for ships of fifty and

sixty-four guns." It was also stated by Mr. Pitt, the Surveyor-General,

that "everything in his power had been done to put a stop to them, but

that the offenders had become so desperate and daring as to bid defiance

to his deputies, and render every attempt of his in a summary way totally

ineffectual," adding that, "not long before, a number of persons in

disguise had openly cut down two large timber-trees at Yorkley, in Dean

Forest, and wounded several keepers who attempted to oppose them." Mr.

Colchester likewise informed the Government that "the greatest part of

the fine timber this Forest has been so famous for has been cut down, and

the large and extensive tract of land formerly covered with the noblest

timber is now become a barren waste and heath."

Mr. Thomas Blunt, the deputy-surveyor, also reports, in allusion to this

period, that, "having formerly pulled down and destroyed many cottages,

fences, and enclosures, he had latterly been obliged to desist, fearing

his life and property were endangered by the repeated threats and insults

of the encroachers and their party." He adds that "about 1000 loads of

oak timber were annually being felled for the use of the miners, of which

at least one-fifth part was fit for naval purposes; and that the great

waste, spoil, and destruction of timber and wood on the Forest is and

hath been occasioned by an improper application of the timber delivered

to the miners for the use of their works, one-half of which would have

been more than sufficient, for that he had frequently seized large

quantities of offal timber, and such other timber as the miners could not

use in their works; and in particular that on or about the 28th of

January, 1783, he seized and took 586 feet of oak-timber, and more than

200 cleft pieces of oak, called kibbles, from one George Martin, who

acknowledged that they had been stolen. He had also seized at the

Fire-Engine in the Forest between two and three waggonloads of timber,

hewn up and converted by the colliers into cooper's wares for market, as

the neighbourhood, being a great cinder country, would require." Joseph

Pyrke, Esq., a verderer and deputy-constable, further stated that

"numberless encroachments, enclosing one, two, or three acres, were taken

in for gardens by the idle poor, and also by people in good

circumstances," and that "nothing short of a capital offence would ever

preserve the remaining timber."

We obtain information on the subject of pit-timber from Mr. Hartland's

evidence before the Parliamentary Commissioners. He says that "the sorts

of wood or timber delivered to the miners were oak and beech, and none

other; chiefly oak in the summer, more pits being sunk in the summer than

in the winter, and the keepers having the bark; more beech is allowed in

the winter than oak. But oak timber is necessary, and is always allowed,

for sinking the pits, and for making what the miners call the gateway, or

gangway, from the body of coal to the pit, and also for the gutters in

the levels, for draining off the water; but beech, birch, orle, holly, or

any other kind of wood, would serve for the purpose of getting coal, and

supporting the earth after the coal is taken away, but none is ever

delivered to them but oak and beech." He goes on to say that "the evil

of the colliers misapplying the timber served to them by the keepers

could only be remedied by refusing it for the future to such parties as

had been detected therein. Fining them was found impracticable, owing to

the difficulty of proving the timber to have been the King's, without

which proof the justices could hardly act."

Rewards of 20 pounds, and in gross cases of 50 pounds, were offered to

any persons making a discovery whereby any of the offenders should be

convicted; but without much effect, for the sufficient reason, as stated

in the official report of 1788, that the resident officers derived

advantages from the continuance of the abuse. Thus the Deputy-Surveyor

took as perquisites the tops of all timber rejected by the navy, as well

as of all stolen timber; all trees found felled by wood-stealers; one

moiety of the cord-wood made from the offal-wood of timber delivered to

the miners, and of stolen timber, besides from four pence to six pence

for every tree felled for the use of the miners; whereby his salary was

raised from 50 to 500 pounds a year. It was much the same with the six

keepers, who received one shilling on every order for delivery of timber

to the miners or colliers; the moiety of all offal-wood of timber cut for

the miners; the moiety of all cord-wood of stolen timber; all lengths or

pieces of trespass, and the bark of timber delivered to the miners,

stolen timber called kibbles, and of all stolen timber found within their

respective walks, by means of which their stipends were increased 100

pounds a year each.

Mr. Miles Hartland, the assistant-deputy-surveyor, in his examination, on

the 15th of May, 1788, before the Dean Forest Commissioners, also stated

that "he believed the cottages and encroachments in the Forest have

nearly doubled within the last forty years. The persons who inhabit the

cottages are chiefly poor labouring people who are induced to seek

habitations in the Forest for the advantages of living rent free, and

having the benefit of pasturage for a cow or a few sheep, and of keeping

pigs in the woods; but many encroachments have been made by people of

substance. The cattle of the cottagers are impounded when the Forest is

driven by the keepers, as all other cattle are; and when the owners take

them from the pound, paying the usual fees to the keepers, they turn them

again into the Forest, having no other means of maintaining them. The

greater number of the cottagers are from the neighbouring parishes; but

there are also a great many from Wales, and from various parts of

England, remote from the Forest. They are detrimental to the Forest by

cutting wood for fuel, and for building huts, and making fences to the

patches which they enclose from the Forest; by keeping pigs, sheep, &c.,

in the Forest all the year, and by stealing timber."

Speaking of the Forest roads, on which 11,631 pounds 3s. 10d. had been

expended within the preceding twenty-five years, Mr. Hartland stated that

"the principal were the road from Mitcheldean to Monmouth, and from

Little Dean to Coleford. These two are public high roads, not necessary

or useful to the Forest, but rather detrimental to it by affording the

readier means to convey away the coal in waggons and carts, in which

timber has sometimes been found concealed. Besides the above, there are

several roads leading from the Forest to Newland, Coleford, and St.

Briavel's, which have been kept in repair at the charge of the Forest,

but are of no use to it--rather the contrary. The only road now used for

conveying the navy timber is the Purton Road, which is the most

convenient for carriage to the water side from all parts of the Forest

except the Chesnuts in Edge Hills, and the Lea Bailey; but there is no

navy timber now in either of these places except the Lea Bailey. If the

repairing of the public roads at the charge of the Forest were to be

discontinued, the public would be obliged to put up turnpike gates on the

roads, and collect tolls for repairing them, as in other parts of the

country."

The parts of the Forest which Mr. Hartland described as being "bare of

timber and yet fittest to be enclosed as being of a very proper soil,

were Hazle Hill and Edge Hills, including Tanner's Hill, Green Bottom and

Greenhill, Badcock's Bailey and Chesnuts, East and West Haywood, part of

Great Staple Edge, Meezeyhurst, Howbeach and Putmage, Buckhall, Moor and

Bradley Hill, Bircham Dingles and Mason's Tump, Blakevellet, Breames Eves

and Howell Hill, the Perch and Coverham, Great and Little Bourts, the Lea

Bailey, Bailey Hill and Lining Wood, Great and Little Berry, Pluds and

Smithers Tump, Blackthorn Turf and Serridge, Kensley's Ridge, Daniel Moor

and Beechenhurst, 'forming in short twenty plantations,' which might, he

thinks, be enclosed by a ditch about 3 feet deep and 3.5 wide, with a

quick hedge planted upon the bank."

The detection of the various abuses which the above extracts exhibit

constitutes the first fruit of the enactment of the 26th George III.

(1786) for appointing commissioners to inquire into the state of the

woods, forests, &c., of the Crown, and to report thereon, adding such

observations as should occur to them for their future management and

improvement.

Upwards of 2,000 pounds worth of timber out of the Forest was granted,

26th of April, 1786, towards building a gaol in Gloucester, as well as a

penitentiary house and houses of correction within the county, at a total

cost of 30,000 pounds, upon the plea that the old castle, on the site of

which the gaol was to be built, belonged to the King, and also that one

of the houses of correction was to be erected within the Forest, whereby

the rights of the Crown would be supported. The execution of this grant

required 1,690 trees.

The gentlemen appointed to act in the commission above named were, Sir

Charles Middleton, John Call, Esq., and Arthur Holdsworth, Esq., who

forthwith proceeded to collect information on the history and management

of the Forest of Dean, as well as the claims and usages of the mining

population. Their report, being the third of the series, was published

on the 3rd of June, 1788. Commencing with an introduction respecting the

Royal Forests generally, it proceeds to this Forest in particular, "as

being in proportion to its extent by far the most valuable and the most

proper for a nursery of naval timber," and refers first to the origin and

results of the important Act of the 20th Charles II.; then to the abuses

which have since crept in, with their disastrous effects; and, thirdly,

to the best way of settling the claims of commoners, and how to render

this Forest a very valuable nursery of timber for the royal navy.

All particulars bearing upon the two former heads have been as fully

stated in the preceding pages of this work as circumstances permitted:

under the last head, the suggestions of the commissioners amounted

briefly to this,--that, agreeably to the plan begun about the year 1638,

under the supervision of Sir Baynham Throckmorton, a commission should be

created to superintend the enclosing of about 18,000 acres. The most

wooded parts of the Forest were to be selected, and where the soil was

best fitted for the growth of timber, avoiding the coalworks, and leaving

out all necessary roads to be made and kept in repair by turnpikes,

unless required for the carriage of timber only; the rights of commoners

were to be discharged by allotting an equitable extent of land suitable

for pasture, and the colliers to pay for all pit timber; the deer were to

be disposed of, as demoralizing the inhabitants and injuring the young

wood; and lastly, the commissioners recommended ejecting the cottagers

who had established themselves in the Forest, as often before, in

defiance of authority, and who numbered upwards of 2,000, occupying 589

cottages, besides 1,798 small enclosures containing 1,385 acres. As to

defraying the cost of executing the above works, the commissioners

recommended the sale of about 440 acres of detached pieces of Crown land

adjoining the Forest, and if necessary dotard and decayed trees, or such

as would never become fit for naval use.

The surveyors, Messrs. A. and W. Driver, calculated the fencing,

planting, and keeping up the contemplated enclosures, for the whole of

the ensuing 100 years, at 564,330 pounds, by which time the timber would

probably be worth 10,680,473 pounds, and yield an annual net revenue of

52,052 pounds. According to the Report of these gentlemen, the Forest

then contained about 24,000 oak-trees averaging one and a half loads

each, and 24,000 oak-trees measuring about half a load each, not

including unsound trees, of which there were many, besides a considerable

number of fine large beech as well as young growing trees. The principal

stock of young timber, from which any expectation could be formed, was in

the Lea Bailey and Lining Woods, which were in general well stocked, and

would produce a considerable quantity of fine timber, if properly fenced

and protected from the depredations of plunderers. As to the names,

extent, and character of the plantations then existing, they report as

follows:--

"\_The Great Enclosure\_, which contained 743 acres 35 poles, was begun

to be made about twelve years ago, with post and rail; but before the

whole was completed, a great part was taken away, and nothing now

remains but the bank; there are no young trees of any kind."

"\_Stonedge Enclosure\_ was made about twelve years ago; it contained

125 acres 1 rood 10 poles, and was fenced with a dry stone wall,

which is, for the most part, destroyed; there are a great many thorns

and hollies, with some very fine large oaks, but no young timber of

any kind coming up."

"\_Coverham Enclosure\_, which contained 350 acres 2 roods 34 poles,

was made about fifteen years ago, part with a dry stone wall, and

part post and rails; nothing but the bank now remains. There was a

great quantity of young timber, particularly birch, in this

enclosure, which is nearly all destroyed in consequence of the fences

being pulled down."

"\_Serridge Enclosure\_ was made about twelve years ago. It contained

409 acres 3 roods 20 poles, and was fenced with a dry stone wall, of

which but little remains, being quite open in many parts; there are

no young trees of any sort, and but few old trees."

"\_Heywood Enclosure\_ contained 715 acres 3 roods 38 poles, and was

made about ten years ago, part with a dry stone wall, and part pales;

very few traces remain, and in some parts none at all. We have been

informed that great part of the wall was pulled down, or fell, before

the whole was completed, and the pales carried away by waggons, &c.,

soon after they were put up; and from its present appearance it is

evident no advantage has been derived from this enclosure, as there

are no young trees in any part of it."

The three following enclosures, containing together 323 acres 1 rood 33

poles, are all that remain enclosed and in good repair, except the

Buckholt Enclosure mentioned last, viz.:--

"\_Stapleage Enclosure\_, containing 183 acres 1 rood 3 poles, has been

made about five years, part with dry stone wall, and part dead hedge;

in general in good repair. In some parts of it there are a few small

oak and beech plants, and also a few large oaks and beeches."

"\_Speech House Enclosure\_, containing 5 acres 6 poles, was made four

years ago by the Deputy Surveyor, and planted with acorns which have

produced some young oaks."

"\_Birchwood Enclosure\_, containing 135 acres 24 poles, has been made

about five years, part with dead hedge and part dry stone wall, which

in general is in good repair; there are but few young oaks coming

up."

"\_Buckholt Enclosure\_, which contains 352 acres 3 roods 20 poles, has

been made about eighty years, the greatest part with a stone wall,

the rest hedge and ditch. The fences of this enclosure have of late

years been kept in good repair. There are some very fine large oaks

in it, but in general it contains a great quantity of fine young

beech. There are also some oak-trees of about ten or fifteen years'

growth, and young oaks are coming up from acorns which have been set

in vacant places. A few Weymouth pines have also been planted in

this enclosure, which grow very well."

The total acreage of these enclosures was 3,220 acres 6 poles, and their

position is shown pretty accurately by Mr. Taylor in his map of the

county. Messrs. Driver's report also informs us that there were now 589

houses, 1,798 pieces of land encroached from the open Forest, comprising

1,385 acres 3 roods 21 poles, thus distributed in the six "walks:"--

Number of Number of pieces Their extent.

Cottages. of land

A. R. P.

Speech-House Walk 1 2 0 0 21

Worcester do. 218 455 295 2 36

Herbert do. 95 487 325 2 22

Latimer do. 53 257 122 3 22

Danby do. 367 1201 744 1 21

York do. 98 173 195 3 15

Ellwood do. 113 397 417 3 10

Detached parts.

Wallmore 2 3 0 1 24

Northwood Green 3 4 0 1 33

The Bearce - 3 1 1 13

Mawkins Hazles - 5 15 1 28

The Tence 6 10 10 0 9

Glydden - 2 0 0 28

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589 1798 1385 3 21

Upwards of seventeen different Reports on the condition of "the Forest

and Land Revenues of the Crown" were made to Parliament by the Commission

of 1788, a fact which will partly explain the delay which took place in

carrying out the plans recommended in the Commissioners' Third Report

with reference to the Forest of Dean. The chief improvements effected

were in the roads, under an Act passed in the year 1795, for mending,

widening, and altering the existing roads, and making new ones through

the Forest to places adjoining, in the parishes of Newland, Lydney, and

Awre. Mr. John Fordyce, now the Surveyor-General, alluding to the

subject in his Report, dated 1797, says, that an arrangement had been

made with the principal inhabitants in the neighbourhood, whereby the

cost of keeping up the roads was to be met by means of turnpikes, the

Crown constructing them in the first instance.

The year 1795 is associated with the disturbances commonly called, even

now, for they are not forgotten, "the Bread Riots." They arose from the

circumstance of the foresters being mainly dependent upon the adjacent

farms for their corn, but which was now, owing to war, largely bought up

by the Government, mostly at Gloucester and Bristol, for the supply of

the army and navy. Hence the inhabitants of the Forest district were

left destitute of those supplies which the miners and colliers of the

Forest considered they were entitled to, in return for the fuel which

they furnished to the farmers.

The following extracts from the contemporary numbers of 'The Gloucester

Journal' minutely relate the acts of violence which ensued:--

"On Saturday morning, 30th October, 1795, as Mr. King's waggon, of

Bollitree, was bringing a load of barley to the Gloucester Market, it

was beset by a number of colliers from the Forest of Dean near the

Lea Line, who inquired what the bags contained, and when told that it

was barley, they cut the bags to examine; whilst this was passing, a

waggon, loaded with wheat, came up the hill belonging to Mr. Dobson,

of Harthill, in the parish of Weston, which was taken to in the same

manner, and both waggons with the grain were taken off to a place in

the Forest of Dean, called Drybrook, where the people divided the

corn, and sent back the waggons and horses to the owners." The next

Saturday "a party of foresters, chiefly from the neighbourhood of

Lidbrook, stopped a waggon belonging to Mr. Prince, of Longhope,

loaded with ninety-two bushels of wheat, and lodged it in Ross

Market-house, professedly with the intention of selling it out on

Monday morning at eight shillings per bushel. A magistrate, however,

reached Ross early on Monday, and, accompanied by ten of the Essex

Light Dragoons, saw the grain reloaded into Mr. Prince's waggon, and

sent it off under their escort. In about an hour upwards of sixty

foresters collected together, and set off in pursuit of the waggon.

The magistrate followed on horseback, and at the Lea he came up with

the waggon, which he sent on, and ordered the cavalry to stop till

the approach of the mob. They soon made their appearance, and being

at first somewhat refractory, the ringleader was taken into custody;

when, after the most persuasive remonstrances of this very active

magistrate, and the patient forbearance of the soldiery, they were at

last prevailed upon to give up the desperate idea of rescuing the

grain, and returned peaceably to Ross."

A reputed highwayman, and noted deerstealer, named William Stallard,

living on the Upper Purlieu, above the Hawthorns, is stated to have been

the instigator of these outrages, and others of a similar kind on Mr.

Prince's flour-mill at Longhope. His lawless career, however, brought

him to the gallows at Gloucester for horse-stealing, at the age of forty,

on the 16th August, 1800, as appears by the records of that gaol. The

decline of the market in Mitcheldean is said to date from the above

disturbances, which naturally deterred the neighbouring farmers from

sending their grain thither for sale. {85}

Nor were the bread riots confined to the northern side of the Forest, as

upon "the evening of the same day, November 9th, many persons assembled

at Hanstell, in the parish of Awre, in this county, where a vessel

belonging to Eversham, and bound to Bristol with a cargo of pease, oil,

flour, leather, and wheat, was waiting for the tide. About twenty men

boarded her, examined the lading, and, upon discovering the flour, gave

loud huzzas, when the bank was instantly covered with their comrades, who

had many horses in waiting, with which they proceeded to carry off the

flour, though the trowmen (unable to defend the vessel, and menaced with

instant destruction) had offered to sell it to them at a reasonable

price. About 7 o'clock one of the trowmen contrived to slip ashore, ran

to Newnham, and sent off an express to Gloucester for immediate military

aid; but fortunately that assistance was nearer at hand. In consequence

of some apprehension of a disturbance at Mitcheldean, an officer, with a

serjeant and ten file of the Essex Fencibles Cavalry, had marched into

the place early in the morning, and upon the arrival of the express from

Newnham instantly set forth for the scene of depredation, under the

command of Lieutenant Wood, and headed by Mr. Pyrke, a magistrate of

Little Dean. The freebooters fled in every direction, but five men,

named Thomas Yemm, Thomas Rosser, Richard Brain, George Marfell, and John

Meek, being the most active ringleaders, were apprehended, some in the

act of conveying away the flour upon packhorses, some had sacks of it

upon their shoulders, some were just landed from the vessel; and many

were busied on the bank, which was strewed with flour, dividing the sacks

into smaller quantities to render it more portable, for even women and

children were of the number." The five men already named were fully

committed on the following Tuesday to Gloucester Castle, there to be

tried at the Spring Assizes, being guarded thither by one hundred of the

Surrey Fencibles, who had arrived in Newnham at 3 o'clock previously.

Shortly afterwards, the serjeant of the military, called out on this

occasion, was desperately bruised by a stone thrown at him by some

desperadoes as he was riding near Mitcheldean, and, on a subsequent

Thursday, some villains fired a piece loaded with slugs into the

bed-chamber of Mr. Pyrke. At the ensuing Assizes, Thomas Yemm and Thomas

Rosser were left for execution, which, although, from the excellent

character they previously bore, some gentlemen of the Forest, and of the

Grand Jury, interceded with his Majesty on their behalf, they underwent

on the 11th April, 1797, acknowledging the justice of their sentence.

The extraordinary scarcity, and consequent high price of provisions about

this time, were so acutely felt in this neighbourhood, that the Crown

distributed 1,000 pounds worth of grain amongst the distressed Foresters.

CHAPTER VI.

A.D. 1800-1831.

Lord Nelson's remarks on the Forest--Free miners endeavour to restore

their Court of Mine Law--White Mead Park planted--Act of 1808,

authorising the replanting of the Forest; six commissioners appointed for

that purpose--Six enclosures formed in 1810--Mice--Inquiry as to the best

mode of felling timber--Last of the enclosures formed 1816--First Forest

church consecrated--High Meadow Woods purchased--General condition of the

Forest--Unsuccessful efforts to restore the encroachments to the

Crown--Plantations mended over--Ellwood and the Great Doward Estates

purchased--The blight--Single trees planted out by the roads--Blight on

the oaks.

There is a statement of Lord Nelson's relating to this Forest, written

about the year 1802, {87} in which he says: "Nothing in it can grow

self-sown, for the deer bark all the young trees. Vast droves of hogs

are allowed to go into the woods in the autumn, and if any fortunate

acorn escapes their search, and takes root, then flocks of sheep are

allowed to go into the Forest, and they bite off the tender shoot." He

speaks of "a set of people called Forest free miners, who consider

themselves as having a right to dig for coal in any part they please,"

adding that "trees which die of themselves are considered as of no value

to the Crown. A gentleman told me," (he says,) "that in shooting on foot

(for on horseback it cannot be seen, being hid by the fern, which grows a

great height), the trees of fifty years' growth, fit for buildings,

fencings, &c., are cut just above ground entirely through the bark, and

in two years die," so becoming a perquisite to the authorities. Lord

Nelson calculated that the Forest would sell for 460,000 pounds. He

forcibly concludes: "The reason why timber has of late years been so much

reduced has been uniformly told me--that, from the pressure of the times,

gentlemen who had 1000 to 5000 pounds worth of timber on their estates,

although only half grown (say fifty years of age), were obliged to sell

it to raise temporary sums--say to pay off legacies. The owner cannot,

however sorry he may feel to see the beauty of his place destroyed, and

what would be treble the value to his children annihilated, help himself.

It has struck me forcibly that if Government could form a plan to

purchase of such gentlemen the growing oak, it would be a national

benefit, and a great and pleasing accommodation to such growers of oak as

wish to sell."

Mr. Fordyce's second report, as Surveyor-General of the Land Revenues of

the Crown, appeared on the 14th of December, 1802; but neither this nor

his third, dated the 4th of March, 1806, says anything about the Forest

of Dean. In 1807 the free miners of the district held a meeting, at

which a resolution was passed, earnestly requesting the wardens of the

Forest to hold a Court of Mine Law, as soon as possible, with the view of

regulating the levels, pits, and engines.

Mr. Fordyce's fourth and final report appeared on the 6th of April, 1809,

but it only speaks of the Forest so far as related to the lands called

"Whitemead Park," hitherto in the occupation of Lord Berkeley, but whose

lease would expire in January, 1808, and was sought to be renewed. The

Surveyor-General declined complying with the request for renewal, upon

the ground that the Park was unfavourably situated for farming purposes,

and that the buildings on it were in very bad repair; whereas a large

quantity of very fine timber, valued at 11,736 pounds, had grown up on

the land, proving the excellence of the soil for that purpose; besides

which, it was situated in the midst of the Forest, and Mr. Fordyce

determined to plant the whole of it with oak at the earliest opportunity.

This circumstance appears to have stimulated the Government to commence

in good earnest the forming of plantations, in accordance with the

suggestions made in the Commissioners' Report of 1788, {89} which had

been kept in view ever since, and as authorized by the old Acts of the

20th of Charles II. c. 3, and 9 and 10 William III. c. 36.

The propriety, however, of acting upon these old enactments was now

doubted, as they had been so long overlooked or irregularly executed; and

hence the declaratory Act of the 48th of George III., c. 72, was passed

in 1808, confirming the original power to enclose 11,000 acres, as well

as legalizing the enclosures of Buckholt, Stapledge, Birchwood, and Acorn

Patch, formed a few years previously, containing altogether 676 acres,

and making it felony to persist in breaking down any of the fences

belonging to the same. The above-named enclosures were the only ones

then existing. The Buckholt principally contained beech; Stapledge was

thinly stocked with oak, except on the north side, and there called

Little Stapledge, on which there was plenty; and Birchwood had some

clusters of natural young oaks scattered about it. The Acorn Patch was

well filled with thriving young oaks about 25 years old. The same Act

likewise directed that the contemplated plantations should be marked out

under the supervision of not less than six Commissioners, who were named

as follows:--

Lord Glenbervie, Surveyor General

of Woods, &c.

R. Fanshaw, Esq., of Plymouth

Dockyard.

Right Hon. C. Bathurst, Lydney }

Park,

The Rev. Thomas Birt, Newland, } Magistrates

The Rev. Richard Wetherell, }

Westbury,

Sir William Guise, Highnam, }

Joseph Pyrke, Esq., Little Dean, } Verderers

Edmund Probyn, Esq., Newland, }

Roynon Jones, Esq., Hay Hill, }

Edward Kent, Esq., Itinerant

Deputy Surveyor.

Edward Machen, Esq., Deputy

Surveyor.

The connexion with the Forest of two of these gentlemen, viz. Lord

Glenbervie as Surveyor-General, and Mr. Machen as Deputy-Surveyor, dates

from this period; and to their joint exertions, aided by the official

labours of Mr. Milne, his Lordship's excellent secretary, and at length

one of the three Commissioners of Woods, &c., the existing enclosures owe

their formation as well as their present promising condition; but

especially to Mr. Machen is the credit due, as being the result of his

able and conscientious management of the Forest for well nigh half a

century.

With a prospective reference to the plantations shortly to be made, the

most laudable pains were taken by Lord Glenbervie to ascertain the best

mode of planting and raising the young trees. He truly remarks that "the

space of nearly 100 years must elapse before the success or failure of

any plan adopted in the cultivation and management of oak timber for the

navy can be clearly ascertained, during the whole of which time a

persevering attention and uniformity of system in the execution of the

plan adopted would be equally requisite, in fact through a succession

perhaps of three or four generations." His Lordship made extensive

inquiries whether acorns or plants should be first used, or rather some

of each; what was the best age and size for transplanting; if plants or

trees of any other kind should be set with them, or in places where oaks

would not thrive; at what distance apart should they be planted; ought

the soil to be cleared or dug, or how prepared; are the old trees to be

removed, and the stumps of oak or beech suffered to remain?

On the 23rd of July, 1808, the general principle agreed upon in these

respects was, "to plant an intermixture of acorns and oak-trees, with a

very small proportion of Spanish chesnuts; so that, if either the acorns

or young oaks should succeed, a sufficient crop might be expected, and to

plant no trees of any other sorts, except in spots where it should be

thought that oaks would not grow, and which it might be necessary to

include, in order to avoid the expense of fencing, or for shelter in high

and exposed situations." The first enclosures were planted agreeably to

this method, only afterwards it was found necessary to set young oaks

instead of acorns, few of these only coming up.

Lord Glenbervie also interested himself in some experiments for testing

the transplanting of young trees of various ages, selecting Acorn Patch

in the centre of the Forest for the purpose. The annexed table, carried

on to 1846, gives the result:--

A. transplanted at 16 years of age }

B. transplanted at 23 years of age } girth at 6 ft. from the ground.

C. not transplanted at all }

A. B. C.

Sep. 14, 1809 7.625 Inches. 7 Inches. 11.75 Inches.

Oct. 5, 1814 14.75 ,, 11 ,, 15.625 ,,

Oct. 20, 1820 23.825 ,, 19 ,, 19.825 ,,

,, 1826 32.125 ,, 27.75 ,, 23 ,,

,, 1830 40.5 ,, 35.75 ,, 26.5 ,,

,, 1836 48.75 ,, 39.5 ,, 30 ,,

,, 1840 53.25 ,, 42.5 ,, 32.5 ,,

,, 1846 60.5 ,, 47.75 ,, 36.5 ,,

More as a satisfaction to the Government before making the new

plantations, than as a guide to the commissioners, most of whom knew the

Forest intimately, Messrs. Driver were now directed to examine the

condition and situation of the woods and woodlands, and to report

thereon. They began by numbering the timber trees in succession, and had

reached 1,000, when the proceedings were put a stop to, on account of the

consumption of time and money which such an elaborate plan was found to

involve, and they briefly reported that the Forest seemed to contain

22,882 loads of oak timber, that only one third of the existing

enclosures were fully stocked, and that encroachments were rapidly

spreading.

On the 15th of September in the ensuing year, 1809, the first meeting of

the above-named commissioners was held at Newnham, when 2,000 acres in

various parts of the Forest were selected for planting, and such

directions given that the 240 acres of White Mead Park were actually

planted this season, just in time to afford Mr. Fordyce the satisfaction

of living to know that the good work of renewing the Forest with oak, in

accordance with his recommendation made twenty years before, was in fact

begun, for at this date his useful life was brought to a close.

Referring to the list of licences granted by the Crown this year, 1809,

it appears that the first effort was now made to prepare the slag and

cinders from the iron furnaces for the use of the Bristol bottle-glass

manufacture, by reducing them to powder in a stamping mill, one of which

was erected at Park End by Messrs. Kear, under a licence dated 23rd of

September. To this year also is to be referred the introduction of

tramways by two companies, designated "The Severn and Wye Railway

Company," and "The Bullo Pill Company." The road belonging to the former

of them traverses the western valley of the Forest from Lydney to

Lydbrook, a distance of fourteen miles, and the latter the eastern, but

both communicating with the Severn, although at points six miles apart.

The licence for the line ascending from Bullo Pill describes it as

designed to extend up to the Churchway engine, seven miles off. It was

constructed under a private Act obtained by Sir James Jelf and his

partners.

In the course of the next year, \_i.e.\_ 1810, the Enclosure Commissioners

authorized the construction of the following five plantations:--

A. R. P.

Barn Hill, 353 2 3 near Coleford.

containing

Serridge 387 3 24 ,, Lydbrook.

,,

Beechen 308 2 36 ,, Serridge.

Hurst ,,

Haywood ,, 407 1 34 ,, Abbenhall.

Holly Hill 41 0 38 ,, Cinderford.

,,

---- -- --

1498 3 15

The planting of them was intrusted to Mr. Driver, upon his own plan,

which was to dig holes four feet apart every way, or 2,722 in an acre,

and to plant an acorn in every hole but the tenth, in it substituting an

oak-tree of five years old. The holes for the acorns were dug fifteen

inches square and nine inches deep; but those for the young trees were

made eighteen inches square and twelve inches deep. The acorns cost 8s.

per 1,000, and the trees 70s. per 1,000. One tree out of every 100 was a

five years old Spanish chesnut. So that planting the enclosures in this

way cost about 3 pounds 15s. per acre, and the seedlings about 4 pounds

5s., which Mr. Driver was to mend over, and to keep the plants good for

three years. The fences were to consist of a bank five feet high, with a

row of French furze at the top and bottom, or where impracticable a dry

wall instead. The most flourishing timber in the Forest at this period

appears to have been that growing on Church Hill, averaging 73 trees to

the acre, each tree containing 58 feet of timber. The Severn and Wye

Tramway, commenced last year, was extended in this, with the addition of

a line from Monmouth up to Howler's Slade.

In 1811 only one plantation, viz. "Crab-tree Hill," comprising 372 acres

2 roods 34 poles, was formed, and planted similarly to the last; but the

Enclosure Commissioners set out a considerable extent of land to be taken

in and planted. On the 28th of November steam engines were licensed to

be erected at Birches Well, Ivy Moorhead, "the Independent," Upper

Bilson, two at "the Old Engine," and two at "No Fold." In the next year

also two steam engines were licensed to be put up at Churchway Colliery,

and a third at "Strip-and-at-it" Colliery. The following enclosures were

made in 1812, viz.--

A. R. P.

Shute 158 3 35 near Bream.

Castle

Bromley 258 3 13 ,, Park End.

Chesnuts 163 2 13 ,, Flaxley.

Sallow 397 2 33 ,, Lydbrook.

Vallets

Ruerdean 313 3 19 ,, Ruerdean.

Hill

Additional 14 3 29 ,, Coleford.

to Buckholt

---- -- --

1307 3 22

These enclosures were not planted, however, like the former ones; since,

from the exuberance of weeds, and the ravages of mice, &c., that method

had failed, three-fourths of the acorns never appearing, and many of

those that did come up were too weak to make their way through the other

more luxuriant growth that overwhelmed and choked them. But these

enclosures, according to a second agreement made with Mr. Driver, as

likewise all the future ones, were planted with seedling oaks instead of

acorns, care being taken to clear the holes once or twice, and only the

tenth trees were introduced as before. The Buckholt was planted with

three years old oaks, from the woodmen's nurseries.

The first general report of the Commissioners of Woods, &c., appointed

under the Acts of 34th George III., c. 75, and 50th George III., c. 65,

was made on the 4th of June, 1812, and was signed "Glenbervie, W. D.

Adams, Henry Dawkins."

It says little respecting this Forest, merely alluding to it in common

with the other royal forests, as fitted to take its place in supplying

timber to the navy, which required 88,659 loads annually, a quantity so

large as to be equivalent to 1,000 acres of oak a century old. In their

present state the Royal Forests could not supply a tenth part of this

amount, and would always be deficient unless 1,000 acres were planted

every year for the next 100 years, by which time the above quantity might

be annually felled. Ere this year ended, the Enclosure Commissioners

concluded their labours of setting out the rest of the 11,000 acres in

Dean Forest.

The plantations made the ensuing year of 1813 were--

A. R. P.

Oaken Hill 477 2 11 near Park End.

Park Hill 141 0 26 ,, Park End.

Blakeney 816 1 0 ,, Blakeney.

Hill

---- -- --

1434 3 37

Permission was also given to the Severn and Wye Tramroad Company to

construct a branch to the colliery at the Ivy Moore Head, as well as to

Messrs. Protheroe to erect a steam engine at "Catch Can." The area of

the encroachments in the Forest in 1813, and which had at that time been

taken in more than twenty years, amounted to 1,610 acres 2 roods 18

poles, divided into 2,239 patches, on which were 785 houses, occupied by

1,111 persons.

In 1814 the three following extensive enclosures were made:--

A. R. P.

Stapledge 943 2 17 near Cinderford.

Nag's Head 809 2 4 ,, Coleford.

Hill

Russell's 990 0 16 ,, Park End.

The last of them, being the largest in the Forest, was not regularly

planted, but left for the most part to natural growth.

It was during this year especially, but to a certain degree also in the

preceding and succeeding ones, that this Forest and the New Forest were

visited with an enormous number of mice. They appeared in all parts, but

particularly in Haywood enclosure, destroying a very large proportion of

the young trees, so much so that only four or five plants to an acre were

found uninjured by them. The roots of five years old oaks and chesnuts

were generally eaten through just below the surface of the ground, or

wherever their runs proceeded. Sometimes they were found to have barked

the young hollies round the bottom, or were seen feeding on the bark of

the upper branches. These mice were of two kinds, the common long-tailed

field mouse, and the short-tailed. There were about fifty of these

latter sort to one of the former. The long-tailed mice had all white

breasts, and the tail was about the same length as the body. {95} These

were chiefly caught on the wet greens in the Forest, and the short-tailed

were caught both on the wet and dry grounds.

A variety of means were resorted to for their destruction, such as cats,

poisons, and traps, but with little success. A Mr. Broad, who had been

employed by the Admiralty, and had been successful, in killing the rats

and mice in the fleet, was sent down, and tried several plans, all of

which failed. At last, a miner living on Edge Hills, named Simmons, came

forward, and said that he had often, when sinking wells or pits, found

mice fallen in, and dead, in consequence of their endeavours to extricate

themselves, and he had little doubt that the same plan would succeed in

the Forest. It was tried, and holes were dug over the enclosures about

two feet deep, and the same size across, and rather hollowed out at the

bottom, and at the distance of about twenty yards apart, into which the

mice fell, and were unable to get out again. Simmons and others were

employed, and paid by the numbers of tails which they brought in, which

amounted in the whole to more than 100,000. In addition to this it may

be mentioned that polecats, kites, hawks, and owls visited the holes

regularly, and preyed upon the mice caught in them; and a small owl,

called by Pennant, Strix passerina, never known in the Forest before or

since, appeared at that time, and was particularly active in their

destruction. The mice in the holes also ate each other.

Four more steam engines were allowed to be erected about the close of

this year at Palmer's Flat and at Hopewell.

Proceeding to the following year, we find that in 1815 the number of

plantations was increased by the addition of--

A. R. P.

Leonard's 66 0 32 near Cinderford.

Hill,

containing

Edge Hills 494 1 36 ,, Little

Dean.

Cock Shot 598 0 22 ,, Blakeney.

Yew-tree 183 0 0 ,, Cinderford.

Brake

---- -- --

1341 3 10

Two years before this time the Admiralty had called the attention of the

Commissioners of Woods, &c., to the most proper means of improving the

durability of oak timber, which had always been supposed to be best

secured by its being felled in winter, although, owing to its involving

the loss of the bark, the practice had not become general. To avoid such

loss it was determined, on the 15th of March this year, that the bark

should be stripped in the spring from the trees standing, leaving them to

be felled in the ensuing or some subsequent spring, five shillings per

load being allowed for the additional trouble occasioned thereby. But

this determination was not formed without careful investigation and

experiment. Thus in the previous year (1814) thirty trees were marked

and set apart in each of the Royal Forests, "which were divided into five

classes: three of the classes were stripped standing, but with some

variety in method, and left to be felled in winter; the second class was

felled, but left with the bark on; and the third felled, and then

immediately afterwards stripped in the usual way." But the results of

these different methods are not stated.

Licences to erect machinery were granted in the preceding year to Messrs.

Kear for a waterwheel at Park End in connexion with a mill for pounding

slag from the iron furnaces, and to Mr. Mushet for a steam engine at

Deepfield, and to Mr. John Protheroe for an engine at Whitelay Colliery;

and in the present year two steam engines were licensed at Upper Bilson

by Mr. Thomas Bennett, and one at Smith's Folly by Mr. Glover.

In the course of the succeeding year (1816) the last of the enclosures,

as set out by the commissioners appointed under the Act of 1808, were

completed, viz.--

A. R. P.

Perch, 386 1 15 near Coleford.

containing

Aston 475 0 4 ,, Lydbrook.

Bridge

Kinsley 376 1 27 ,, the Speech

Ridge House.

---- -- --

Total 1237 3 6

The second report of the Commissioners of Woods, dated the 18th of May,

and signed by Wm. Huskisson, Wm. Dacres Adams, Henry Dawkins, states

"that 9,389 acres of this Forest had been enclosed and planted, the

remaining 1,611 acres, making up the 11,000, being partly fenced, and

would be shut in the next year, viz. 1816, making the total number of

enclosures upwards of thirty. Besides which 240 acres of Whitemead Park

had been appropriated (1809) to the growth of timber, as also 120 acres

adjoining the different lodges, as well as 120 acres of the open Forest,

where trees twenty-five or thirty feet high had been planted, and were

doing very well. The cost of these operations, since 1808, was 59,172

pounds 5s. 10d."

To this period belongs the interesting circumstance of the then Bishop of

Gloucester, the excellent Dr. Ryder, paying his first official visit to

the Forest, for the purpose of consecrating Christ Church at Berry Hill.

The building was commenced, in 1812, as a chapel schoolroom, by the Rev.

P. M. Procter, the Vicar of Newland, assisted by the Duke of Beaufort,

the Lord Bishop, and Mr. Ryder his secretary, aided by 100 pounds from

the National Society, being the first grant made by it. But the

structure was enlarged to twice the original size previous to its

consecration.

The next year (1817) the Bishop had the satisfaction of being called upon

in the month of April to repeat his visit to the Forest, for the purpose

of dedicating the Church of the Holy Trinity, on Quarry Hill, to divine

worship, for which it was first used on the previous 5th of February,

having been commenced the summer before. Its erection was principally

accomplished by the exertions of the Rev. H. Berkin, assisted by

contributions from the Earl of Liverpool, the Right Hon. N. Vansittart,

the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Kenyon, Lord Calthorpe, W. Wilberforce, Esq.,

M.P., and other benevolent persons. The site, comprising five acres, was

given by the Crown.

On the 15th of May this year the purchase of Lord Viscount Gage's estate,

adjoining the Forest and the Wye, was concluded, as stated in the

Commissioners' Report, which appeared on the 18th of June. It contained

2,229 acres of wood, which, "if preserved, would (they said) very soon be

stocked with a succession of trees of the first quality, as they were of

the most thriving description, the oldest being from sixty to eighty

years old." The whole property contained 4,257 acres 15 poles, and,

including all the timber and underwood, with certain forges, mills,

limekilns, iron and tin works, was valued by the referees at 155,863

pounds 3s. 2d., the timber being prised at 61,624 pounds 4s. This

agreement was confirmed by Act of Parliament, 57 George III., c. 97,

which authorized the raising of the money by sales of Crown property to

the amount of 101,945 pounds 6s. 3d., with the view of enabling the

purchase money to be paid by five equal yearly instalments. A corn-mill,

two forge-houses with appendages, the tolls of the Coleford Market-house,

and about 423 acres of arable or meadow land, were sold for the most part

at higher prices than were given for them, leaving 2,925 acres for the

growth of timber.

[Picture: Norman Capital in Staunton Church]

On tracing the history of this property as far back as existing records

permit, it appears that "the High Meadow Estate," although naturally

included in the district constituting the Crown property of the Forest,

had been at remote period detached from it as appears by the

perambulations of 28 Edward I., with which the bounds of the shires of

Gloucester and Monmouth here coincide. Its ancient village church,

partly of Norman architecture, and its still more antique font,

apparently Saxon, sufficiently attest the early location of inhabitants

on the spot. This estate constituted one of the ten bailiwicks of the

Forest as early as 10 Edward I. (1282), when it was held by John Walden,

called John de Staunton, by the service, as the Rev. T. Fosbroke has

ascertained, "of carrying the King's bow before him when he came to hunt

in the bailiwick, and by homageward and marchat," and "he had for his

custody housbote, heybote, of every kind of tree given or delivered by

the King; all broken oaks, and all trees of every sort thrown down by the

wind." After passing through the families of the Baynhams, Brains,

Winters, and Halls, who purchased the manor of English Bicknor early in

the 17th century, it became by marriage the property of Sir Thomas Gage,

created Viscount Gage of Castle Island, in the county of Kerry, and Baron

Gage of Castlebar, in the county of Mayo, September 14th, 1720. It must

also be noticed, that licences were issued this year for the erection of

steam-engines at "No Coal" and at "Churchway Coal" Mines.

[Picture: Ancient Font in Staunton Church]

The following minute and interesting account of the state of the several

plantations in the year 1818 is by permission abstracted from Mr.

Machen's private papers.

Speaking of the Buckholt (one of the older enclosures), he observes--

"The large timber in it has been cut, and parts of it planted with

young oaks, obtained from places where they had sprung up

spontaneously, but it is still imperfectly stocked. Stapledge

(another of the earlier plantations) has been filled up by

transplanting from the thick parts, and is tolerably well stocked on

the whole. Birchwood (the third of the previous enclosures) has been

planted in the vacant parts, and is fully stocked and very

flourishing. From the Acorn Patch (the last of the old plantations)

a large quantity of young oaks have been transplanted into the open

parts of the Forest and the upper part of Russell's Enclosure. The

trees drawn out are thriving, and many of them grow faster than the

trees remaining in the Acorn Patch. There is a great quantity of

holly and other underwood scattered on the parts where the trees are

planted, and which serves for shelter and protection, and the soil is

very good. The trees, though never transplanted before, came up with

bunches of fibrous roots; and though of so large a size, being from

10 to 25 ft. high, scarcely any of them failed. Several experiments

were tried as to pruning closely, pruning a little, and not at all;

and it appears that those pruned sufficiently to prevent the wind

from loosening the roots answer best, although many of those which

were reduced to bare poles, and had their heads cut off, are now

sending up vigorous leading shoots, and have every appearance of

becoming fine timber: those unpruned did not succeed at all."

Alluding to the earthen banks, with which the plantations were mostly

surrounded, Mr. Machen observes that "In most parts they appear to

succeed very well, and the furze on the top of them grows very

luxuriantly; but in some places, and those where the bank of mould

has accumulated by being washed there in floods, the banks are

mouldering, and in the last two years hawthorn-quick has been planted

in those parts, and now looks very flourishing. There has not been a

good year of acorns, that is, where a quantity have ripened in the

Forest, since the commencement of the plantations until the present,

and the trees are now loaded, and with every prospect of ripening.

The young trees in all the new enclosures are looking remarkably well

this year, and some of them have made shoots so long that they more

resemble willows than oaks. The six first-named enclosures, in

addition to the acorns and five years old oaks, have had the same

quantity of five years old oaks planted in addition, in lieu of the

mending over, viz. 270 on an acre; but there are parts of all these,

and almost the whole of Crab-tree Hill and Haywood, which suffered

not only from the failure of the acorns, but from the ravages made by

the mice, that will require to be filled up as soon as there is a

stock of plants sufficient for the purpose. Russell's Enclosure is

left to nature: only 10,000 Spanish chesnuts have been planted in it,

and some young oaks from the Acorn Patch at the north end. There is

a good deal of large timber over the whole, particularly the south

and centre parts, and a vast quantity of natural young oaks sprung up

in the neighbourhood of the large trees. The fern has been cut to

relieve and encourage them for the last three years. The Lea Bailey

Copse (north) consists of young copsewood well stored with oaks,

growing on their own butts. The Lea Bailey Copse (south) has more

large timber in it: this has not been regularly planted, but some

trees have been transplanted from the thick parts of the north copse,

and from the woodmen's nurseries. The lower Lea Bailey Enclosure has

a considerable quantity of growing timber in it, and a large quantity

of young oaks springing up. No planting has been done here. The

fencing round these consists of a large ditch and bank, and a dead

hedge at top, with hawthorn-quick planted within. The hedge having

stood three years is decayed, and another will be required this year,

which it is expected will last until the quick becomes a fence. The

addition to the Buckholt of about fifteen acres was planted with 3

years old oaks from the woodmen's nurseries, and looks very thriving.

All the other enclosures were planted with seedlings and tenth trees,

according to the second agreement with Mr. Driver, in 1812, 13, 14,

and 15, and are this year looking very well. Parts of all the

enclosures will require mending over, but I should think more than

half are sufficiently stocked with oaks well established, and that

will require no further attention until they want thinning. On the

high land of Haywood, Edge Hills, and Ruerdean Hill, firs and a

mixture of other trees have been planted, and are thriving and

growing fast, particularly on Ruerdean Hill, where the Scotch and

larch take the lead. Firs, &c., have also been planted in the wet

and bad parts of most of the other enclosures, and succeed. The

nurseries we have in cultivation are the Bourts, 161 acres; Yew-tree

Brake, about 5 acres; Ell Wood, 11 acres; and about 26 in the

Vallets, or middle, and Sallow Vallets Nurseries, previously occupied

by Mr. Driver. In these there are now about four millions of young

oaks, three, two, and one year old, and about 600,000 firs and other

trees of different sorts. The plants in Whitemead Park are thriving

very well in all parts which are situated at a distance from the

brook, but near to it they are very thin, stunted, and unhealthy, and

are constantly killed down by spring frosts. Ash and fir trees have

been planted amongst them, but with little success at present. The

principal part of the large timber now in the Forest is about Park

End, on Church Hill, Ivy More Head, Russell's Enclosure, Park End

Lodge Hill, and at the Lea Bailey. That at the Bailey appears

younger, and some of it shook by frost, and rather drawn up by

standing too thick. The timber about Park End is very fine, and I

should suppose from 150 to 200 years old. There is a considerable

quantity of young oak, from 15 to 40 years old, about Tanner's Hill,

&c., near Gun's Mills, on the outside of Edge Hill Enclosure, and

some within it in the lower part. Chesnuts Enclosure is covered with

hazel, that was cut down when the oak was planted, and is now growing

up with the young oaks and chesnuts, both of which are more rapidly

growing in this enclosure than in any other; a double quantity of

chesnuts are planted in this enclosure. There are scarcely any

natural trees in the Forest but oak and beech; birch springs up

spontaneously in every enclosure, and overruns the whole Forest. The

few ash trees look scrubbed and unthrifty. Since the year 1809,

14,260 oak trees containing 14,546 loads of timber have been felled,

viz. 11,322 trees for the navy, and 2,938 sold by auction. About 50

trees, containing about 50 loads, have been blown down or stolen."

This year, 1818, Mr. Trotter obtained the permission of the Crown to

erect steam engines at Vallets Level and Howler's Slade, and in the

following year the first corn mill was constructed at Cinderford, by Mr.

Brace, out of an old water-wheel, and the adjoining buildings. In the

year 1819 also, through the exertions of the Rev. H. Poole, the small

chapel at Coleford, erected there in the reign of Queen Anne, was taken

down, and a building more equal to the religious wants of the place was

erected, and duly set apart for Christian worship, by Bishop Ryder, on

the 18th of January, 1821.

The Third Triennial Report of the Commissioners of Woods was issued on

the 18th of June, 1819. It states that three portions of land had been

granted in trust for church purposes to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester,

Lord Calthorpe, and the Right Honourable Nicolas Vansittart, one piece

being attached to Christ Church, Berry Hill, a second to Holy Trinity

Church, and the third for a proposed church at Cinderford. It also

affirms that the whole of the 11,000 acres specified in the Acts for

enclosing the Forest had been taken in and planted, and that the

plantations were generally in a very flourishing state, comprising with

the recent purchases 14,335 acres, the whole of which lands were, from

the nature of the soil and the conveniences of water-carriage, probably

better adapted for that purpose than any other tract of land in the

kingdom lying together and of equal extent. The report concludes by

alluding to the efforts which the commissioners had been making to induce

such parties as occupied encroachments on the Forest to accept leases for

thirty-one years, at an almost nominal rent, with the view of effecting

the ultimate restoration of these lands to the Crown, but regrets that so

liberal a proposal had been refused by nearly all; nevertheless further

steps were about being taken in the matter.

The following particulars relating to this period are abstracted from Mr.

Machen's Memoranda:--"29th May, 1819. The frost was so severe that the

verdure around White Mead, and throughout all the low parts of the

Forest, was entirely destroyed. There was not a green leaf left on any

oak or beech, large or small, and all the shoots of the year were

altogether withered. The spruce and silver firs were all injured: in

short all trees but Scotch fir and poplar suffered severely.--August

10th. The plantations had recovered from the effects of the frost--the

oak more effectually than the beech, and had made more vigorous and

thriving shoots than I ever saw. We measured several shoots in Serridge

and Birchwood more than five feet long, and one in the Bailey Copse seven

feet. We measured an oak planted in Whitemead Park near to the W. hedge,

and in the second field planted below the house, seventeen feet six

inches high: Lord Glenbervie was present. Shutcastle in the upper part,

and the eastern part of Serridge, were looking best of all the new

plantations, though all appear in a very thriving state this year." From

the same source we learn that Ellwood, purchased from Colonel Probyn, and

containing 110 acres, was planted this year. The holes were dug four

feet apart in rows, and five feet between the rows. The trees planted

were 30,000 Scotch firs, 1,600 pineasters, 3,600 larch, 6,000 Spanish

chesnuts, 120,000 oaks of three and four years old, and 4,500 seedling

oaks planted by way of experiment in one corner of the large field on the

south side of Ellwood, and with no large plants amongst them. A few of

the enclosures had oaks planted in them also, viz.-

Ruerdean Hill 35,000

Beechen Hurst 52,000

Bromley 35,000

Sallow Vallets 12,000

Park Hill 30,000

and some more, from each of the woodmen's nurseries in their respective

enclosures.

In the spring of 1820, 15,000 Scotch firs were planted in Ellwood, in the

place of those that died. During the autumn and the following spring,

about two million trees, which had been raised in the different Forest

nurseries, were also planted out to mend over the different enclosures,

viz.--

Oaks. Firs.

In Whitemead Park 51,000 50,000

Shutcastle Enclosure 25,500

Ellwood 8,000 16,000

Bromeley 80,000 3,500

Nagshead 460,000 5,000

Aston Bridge 81,000

Ruerdean Hill 120,000 63,000

Haywood 240,000

Edge Hills 10,000 70,000

Crab-tree Hill 115,000

Russells 25,000

Kensley Ridge 210,000 80,000

Yew-tree Brake 125,000 35,000

Blakeney Hill 100,000 13,000

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1,625,500 360,500

Under the usual official permission, the Howler Slade Colliery was

connected, by a tramway 350 yards in length, with the Severn and Wye

Railways at Cannop, and Mr. J. Scott was permitted to lay down 102 yards

of tramway to his coal-works at the Moorwood, and Mr. Thomas Phillips to

put up a steam engine at the Union Colliery, in Oaken Hill Enclosure.

There was also another tramway extension by the Bullo Pill Company to the

Folly and Whimsey Collieries at the head of the Dam Pool. A junction was

effected in 1823 between the Severn and Wye, and the Bullo Pill Tramway,

by means of the Churchway Summit, parallel to Serridge, thus connecting

the eastern and western lines of traffic.

In the year 1822 the consecration of the third of the Forest Churches,

St. Paul's, for which a site had been given by the Crown on Mason's Tump,

at Park End, took place on the 25th of April, Bishop Ryder attending.

The Fourth Triennial Report of the Commissioners of Woods, dated 1823,

intimates disappointment at the little growth made by the new

plantations, now eight or nine years old; but, on the other hand, it was

observed that "they were doing well, and that slowness of growth was

inseparable from their nature, particularly at that age." We learn from

Mr. Machen's Notes that at this time, and again in the two succeeding

years, very severe frosts, in one instance as late as the 23rd of June,

greatly injured the young trees, more especially such as grew in low,

moist situations, although in some degree it also touched those on higher

lands.

The property known as "the Great Doward Estate" was purchased by the

Crown, in 1824, from the Miss Griffins, for 15,000 pounds. Although

separated by the river Wye, and situated in Herefordshire, and never

before included within the limits of the Forest, it certainly groups with

the High Meadow Woods, clothing the same valley; and it moreover forms a

definite part of the geological basin of the district.

In March, 1825, the well-known and prosperous Nelson Colliery was

commenced by Messrs. Bennett and Meek. A branch line of tramway was also

made up to Mr. Mushet's Mine, near the Shute Castle Hill Enclosure, from

the Severn and Wye line at Park End.

In each of the seasons of 1824-25 and 1825-26, Mr. Machen states that

about 500 acres of the High Meadow property was planted with oak, Scotch

fir, and larch, in proportions varying with the nature of the soil and

openness of the situation. In the parts where shelter was most

requisite, two-thirds of fir and one-third of oak were planted, in others

half of each, and in sheltered situations oak alone. A great many of

these plants perished in the spring and summer of 1825 from heat and

drought, and still more in 1826, which was the driest spring and summer

ever remembered. In some high and shallow parts nearly every tree died;

a great many also were eaten off and destroyed by the hares and rabbits.

There were now 3,000 acres of wood on the High Meadow estate, viz. 2,000

acres of old woods, and 1,000 acres lately planted. In the year last

mentioned the Fifth Triennial Report of the Commissioners of Woods, &c.,

was issued, signed by Charles Arbuthnot, Wm. Dacres Adams, and Henry

Dawkins.

By the spring of 1827 Mr. Edward Protheroe effected the opening of

collieries at Ivy Moore Head, Park End Main, Park End Royal Pits, and at

Birch Well, at most of which pumping and winding engines were put up, a

tramway 1,500 yards in length connecting them with the main road of the

Severn and Wye Company. The same year saw a reduction of the landed

property of the Crown by the sale of its rights in the Fence Woods,

Mawkins Hazels, and Hudnalls, comprising a total of 1,273 acres 3 roods 9

poles, for 925 pounds. The Crown's right in Hudnalls, although it

contained 1,200 acres, was of little value, as the inhabitants of St.

Briavel's had the right of cutting wood on it.

Passing over the next year, the earliest circumstance in order of time is

the opening of the important colliery at Crump Meadow, and the

construction of 1,200 yards of tramway, uniting it with the main line of

the Bullo Pill Company above Cinderford, all which was executed by Mr.

Protheroe.

We next find, under the date of March 16th, 1829, Mr. Machen

observing--"Although the Scotch firs have succeeded so well as nurses for

the oaks, and have brought them forward, making them healthy and thriving

on land that without shelter would only have produced them stunted and

unthrifty, yet I am inclined on the whole to prefer larch. They are a

shelter available for the purpose, although not so complete; but by that

means the oaks are not kept too warm and brought too forward, and the

larch is more valuable in itself. In some of our cold valleys, however,

the larch will not grow, the spring frosts cutting them off." He also

remarks--"We are now planting the oaks by the side of the road from 'Jack

of the Yat' to Coleford Lane End, those at the White Oak, and opposite

the Buckholt, and those leading to Eastbatch, having been planted in 1827

and 1828. The space of road left is about fifty feet. Most of the trees

are brought from the Vallets Enclosure, and do not cost more than four

pence each to replant them. They are twelve to fifteen feet high, and a

man can carry about two of them at a time. We are also planting the

Lodge Hill about York Lodge, at the rate of 300 to an acre, leaving them

without any fence."

Upon the 6th of June this same year the sixth and last of the "Triennial

Reports of the Commissioners of Woods," &c., came out, signed Lowther,

Wm. Dacres Adams, Henry Dawkins.

With reference to 1830, Mr. Machen's note-book supplies the following

memoranda:--"2nd March, planted trees on each side the road to Breem,

also on the side of the Coleford Road below Bromley Enclosure, and about

Catchcan Coal-works, continuing the avenue down the Long Hill, planting

also the delves between Serridge and Sallow Vallets, at a cost of about

four pence per tree, no fences being put round them. We planted also in

the Greens of Russell's Enclosure. Some pineasters and larch were

likewise planted on the old Quarry Mounts, by the sides of the road

leading from Park End to Coleford, as likely, if successful, to produce a

good effect.

"(March, 1831, all died; renewed March, 1834--these mostly alive and

flourishing.)"

"May 28th.--The most extraordinary blight is now upon the trees that I

believe ever was known: it is confined entirely to the oak, and chiefly

to the large trees, although in some parts it is extending to the young

plantations. The whole of the High Meadow woods and great part of the

Forest, particularly Russell's Enclosure, and where the timber is thick,

are entirely stripped of their leaves, and look as if fire had passed

through them. Where a beech stands amongst them, it is perfectly green,

and the oaks all around quite brown. The grubs and their webs are so

thick, that it is disagreeable to ride amongst the trees, and like going

into a net."

On the 8th June, 1830, the First Annual Report of the Commissioners under

the 10th Geo. IV., c. 50, was issued. It was signed by Lord Lowther, Wm.

Dacres Adams, and Henry Dawkins. Mr. Machen states in his Memoranda,

that "this winter single trees were planted on Breem Eaves; triple rows

on Clearwell Meend, by the roads on Coverham, on the Delves. We mended

over the spots that have failed in Oaken Hill, Stapledge, Acorn Patch,

Crab-tree Hill, Sallow Vallets (chiefly by drawing out where the trees

are too thick). Most of the enclosures are now quite filled up." And

under date Nov. 1831, he gives the following statement of the several

plantations:--

Acres.

Land now under plantation in Dean 11,000

Forest, enclosed by Act of

Parliament

Whitemead Park 240

Ellwood 90

Old Keeper's Land (3) 90

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11,420

High Meadow and Doward 3,288

Planted with single trees 1,114

Young trees of natural growth 150

Old timber 528

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Total 16,500

CHAPTER VII.

A.D. 1831-1841.

Riots--Sessions of the Dean Forest Commissioners relative to St.

Briavel's Court--Free miners' claims--Foreigners' petition--State of the

woods--Perambulation--Rights of Commonage--Relief of the poor--Free

miners' petition--Parochial divisions--Fourth and Fifth Reports of the

Dean Forest Commissioners--Acts of 1838 and 1842--Award of the coal and

iron mines--Enclosures thrown open, and new ones formed--Provision for

the poor--Mr. Machen's memoranda.

The year 1831 is chiefly remarkable for the riotous destruction committed

on the fences and banks of the enclosures, recorded by Mr. Machen as

follows:--"In May, 1831, several of the single trees planted near

Parkend, and on Breem's Eaves, were wilfully cut off in the night, and no

discovery was made of the offenders. In the end of May a part of the

wall of Oaken Hill Enclosure was thrown down in the night. When the

workmen were rebuilding it, some of the colliers passing by threw out

hints that it would not stand long, and in one or two instances horses

and cattle were turned into the enclosures, and the woodmen were told

that they had been shut up long enough, and they ought to be thrown open.

The gates of several plantations had been broken in the night. On Sunday

the 5th of June I saw Henry and Richard Dobbes pull away the bushes out

of a gateway, and turn their cow into Cockshoots Enclosure, and when I

went and expostulated with them they said they had been deprived of their

rights long enough. Warren James had for some time been urging others to

join him in the recovery of their rights, which they considered to be

usurped by foreigners, in whose hands the principal coal-works of the

Forest are, by purchase or lease from free miners; and on the 3rd June he

had a hand-bill printed, calling upon all persons to meet and clear the

Forest on Wednesday June 8th. I spoke to him on the 5th, and told him in

the presence of numbers the folly and danger of his proceedings; but he

paid no attention, and said the Forest was given up to them in Parliament

the year before; that he had a charter, which he would bring and show me.

I published a notice, warning all persons not to join an unlawful

assembly, and on Tuesday the 7th Mr. Ducarel and I issued a warrant to

apprehend him; but it could not be executed. We swore in a number of

special constables, and with the woodmen mustered about forty at the

scene of action where they were to begin; but the rioters mustered nearly

200, with axes, &c., and began their work of destruction about 7 o'clock,

and we found it useless to attempt to stop them. They were soon joined

by others, and supplied with cider, and continued their work Wednesday,

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, in which time they destroyed nearly

one-third of the fences in the Forest, the reparation of which cost about

1,500 pounds. On Sunday military arrived, and they all dispersed.

Warren James was apprehended and sentenced to transportation for life,

and seven or eight others to different periods of imprisonment from one

month to two years. {111} Those who escaped suffered by lying in the

woods and concealed where they could, and I believe all now repent and

see the folly of their conduct. I suppose altogether nearly 2,000,

including children, were employed in the work of devastation. None of

the trees in the enclosures were injured, and where the cattle and sheep

that were let in had eaten the grass in the drives and open places, they

went back into the unenclosed Forest, and would not remain amongst the

trees. In 1838 a pardon was sent out to Warren James, but he is not yet

come home (June, 1839), and he has not written to any one. (1848:

nothing heard of or from Warren James.")

The above disturbance shows that an unsettled state of feeling existed in

the minds of the foresters with regard to certain supposed rights of

free-common, and which prevailed also on other points, such as the nature

and extent of the coal-gales, and the fact that the various works were

fast passing from the hands of the native free miners into those of the

foreigners; all which grievances a mischievous periodical called 'The

Forester,' published at Newnham, set forth in an exaggerated and exciting

manner. Under such circumstances the Act of 1831 (1 and 2 Gul. IV., c.

12), authorizing the appointment of Commissioners to investigate such

complaints, was well timed. The Commissioners were instructed to

ascertain the boundaries of the Forest and the encroachments thereon; to

inquire into the rights and privileges claimed by free miners of the

hundred of St. Briavel's, the constitution, powers, jurisdiction, and

practice of the court held there, as well as respecting a court called

"the Mine Law Court," and to report on the expediency of parochializing

the Forest.

It appears from the annual Report of the Commissioners of Woods, &c.,

dated the 8th August, 1831, and signed by Lord Duncannon, Wm. Dacres

Adams, and Henry Dawkins, that no new works were commenced this year,

except the erection of a water-mill for grinding ochre, near Sowdley,

arising probably from the unsettled condition of the district. It

states, however, that the Crown had created an endowment of 30 pounds per

annum towards keeping the three existing churches of the Forest in

repair, the congregations using them being considered too poor to do so.

On the 21st January, 1832, the following gentlemen were appointed to act

as Commissioners of Inquiry under the late Act:--

Robert Gordon, Esq., M.P., Kemble.

Ebenezer Ludlow, Esq., Serjeant at Law.

Charles Bathurst, Esq., Lydney Park.

Edward Machen, Esq., Whitemead Park.

Henry Clifford, Esq., Over Ross, Herefordshire.

\_Clerk\_, Thomas Graham, Esq., Mitre Court, Temple.

\_Surveyor\_, Mr. John Hosmer.

They held most of their sittings at the Bear Inn, in Newnham, although

they also sat occasionally at Coleford, the Speech House, St. Briavel's,

and Westbury. They were thus occupied most of the days in the months of

February, March, April, and September, in hearing evidence "as to St.

Briavel's Court and Prison," or "as to making the Forest parochial," or

"as to the rights and privileges claimed by free miners," and "as to the

rights to open or work quarries."

Of all these sections of inquiry, the only one which the Commissioners

found they could at this time bring to a close was that having reference

to St. Briavel's Court, respecting which it appeared in evidence that out

of the 402 suits brought into it during the last twelve months, all but

five were for debts mostly under 5 pounds, to recover which a charge of 6

or 7 pounds might be incurred.

The prison attached to the Court is thus described:--"There is only one

window, which is 1 foot wide, and in a recess. It does not open. The

size of the room is 16.5 feet by 17.5 feet; 13 feet high; three corners

cut off. In one corner is the doorway, 2.5 feet broad, but no door,

leading into the passage about 6 feet long, out of which the privy opens.

There is a door at the outer end of the passage, and in it a hole which

is considered necessary for air. The floor and ceiling are of wood, and

in the former are several crevices and holes. There is a space between

the ceiling of the parlour beneath and the floor of the prison-room

above, which is so filled with fleas and dust that in summer time it

cannot be got rid of by any cleanliness. The privy is a dark winding

recess, about 6 feet from front to back, taken out of the solid castle

walls. It leads to a hole going down to the bottom of the building,

which is always inaccessible for cleaning, but which till six years ago

had a drain from it into the moat; the air draws up through it into the

passage and room. There is no water within the prisoners' liberty, and

they are therefore obliged to get some person to fetch it for them. The

Courtroom is in a bad state."

[Picture: Interior of the Debtors' Prison in St. Briavel's Castle]

In consideration of these facts, the Commissioners in their Report upon

it, which was published 7th July, very properly declared that the said

Court was an evil, and required remodelling altogether, and they

suggested its conversion into a Court of Requests, in which the strict

forms of law might be dispensed with, parties appearing and being

examined in person, without the intervention of professional agents. Its

Commissioners might comprise the Constable of the Castle of St.

Briavel's, the verderers of the Forest, the magistrates of the

neighbourhood, and about thirty other persons, any two of whom, under the

presidency of one of the former, should form a Court, and decide cases of

debt from 10s. to 10 pounds, with power to direct payment of the debt by

instalments, or levies upon goods on failure of payment, there being no

imprisonment of the person except for fraud, which should then take place

in the county gaol at Little Dean, where, or at Coleford, the Court

should meet the first Monday in every month. Such was the purport of the

Report the Commissioners made to Parliament on the 7th July in this year.

[Picture: Court Room in St. Briavel's Castle]

The Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Woods, &c., dated the

28th of August, 1832, states that Messrs. Hill had obtained the

permission of the Crown, under a lease for thirty-one years, and a rental

of 25 pounds, to remove all that they could find of the slag, cinders,

and refuse of the ancient ironworks; thus resuming an occupation which

had been discontinued for many years. The new Fancy Pits were now

furnished with two engines and we also find that for a time timber ceased

to be supplied from this Forest to the Royal Dockyards.

The Dean Forest Commissioners resumed their sittings the next year (1833)

on the 12th of April at Newnham, and proceeded to hear further evidence

"as to the rights and privileges claimed by free miners;" but the only

important occurrence which ensued was the presentation of a "Memorial,"

by Mr. Mushet, on behalf of parties not free miners, specifying the

claims which such proprietors and occupiers of coal and iron mines in the

Forest had to the support of Government in maintaining their position in

the district. The Memorial states that "foreigners" had possessed coal

and iron mines time out of mind, as appeared by the case of several

gentlemen and freeholders of the parish of Newland, who, as long since as

the year 1675, claimed the right to open certain works without any

objection being made by the free miners, a liberty which, whenever it was

acted upon, seems always to have benefited the public; that none of the

documents of the Mine Law Court appear to exclude foreigners from working

the mines; on the contrary, the Resolutions of that Court, passed 1775,

establish such a right, allowing the free miner to sell or bequeath his

property in the mines to any persons he may think proper; that the old

gale-books contain the names of many persons not free miners, which, with

similar testimony from Messrs. Tovey, James, &c., showed such to have

been the uniform practice for sixty years; that the foreigners have

always carried on their works with the full knowledge and authority of

the Crown; that the free miners do not possess the necessary capital for

carrying on the works, in which the foreigners have invested 700,000

pounds; and, lastly, that the Crown has gained several thousand pounds

per annum in consequence. Twenty-one persons signed this Memorial, as

also the representatives of the Forest of Dean and the Cinderford Iron

Companies.

Another Memorial was likewise presented by a dozen of the inhabitants of

the Forest, showing that, instead of their cottages and gardens tending

to throw a burden on the adjoining parishes, the very contrary was the

case, as many were therefore enabled to support themselves without

applying to those parishes. The petitioners also prayed that no further

part of the Forest might be enclosed for the supposed benefit of the

adjacent parishes, as thereby many persons would be deprived of

grazing-land for their cattle, and in consequence be necessitated to

apply to the next parishes for assistance.

Alluding to the state of the woods at this time (1833), Mr. Machen's

Notes, under the date of the 29th of May, state:--"This is now the fourth

year in which the blight has been so prevailing upon the oak and in the

Forest. I think this year it is worse than ever, and now the young

plantations suffer most, the large timber being comparatively free. Park

Hill, Oaken Hill, Nag's Head, Barn Hill, Stapledge, &c., and especially

all the higher parts of them, are leafless, except where a beech or a

chesnut shows its green foliage amidst the brown oaks. I saw a few rooks

in Russell's to-day, and last year I noticed great numbers. They seem to

be drawn to the Forest to feed on the grubs, for they are not generally

here, and I only hope they will increase. The woodmen complain that in

some situations the running of the bark has been checked; but considering

it has now been four years, it seems wonderful that more injury is not

done to the trees: they put out new leaves at the midsummer shoot, and

appear to recover. June 4th: found the grubs changed into a chrysalis,

enclosed in a leaf, with a kind of web round it. June 18th: the moths

appeared in vast numbers. The rooks are still about in Park Hill."

The usual Report to Government, being the fifth annual one, was issued on

the 28th August, 1833, signed "Duncannon, W. D. Adams, B. C. Stephenson."

Licence was granted to construct 600 yards of tramway from the Severn and

Wye line up to the Church Hill Colliery at Park End, and the Dean Forest

Commissioners appointed under the Act of Parliament (1 & 2 Gul. IV. c.

12) had their commission extended.

In the autumn of 1833 the Dean Forest Commissioners directed their

attention to the important object of settling the limits of the Forest,

in doing which they wisely determined to be governed by the Messrs.

Driver's maps of 1787, according to which the Forest boundaries had for a

length of time been regarded as practically settled, comprising the soil,

timber, and herbage actually belonging to the Crown. Its boundaries as

thus defined were perambulated in due ancient form, commencing on the

10th of September. {118} The cavalcade included Commissioners Robert

Gordon, Esq.; Mr. Serjeant Ludlow; Charles Bathurst, Esq.; and Edward

Machen, Esq., the Deputy-Surveyor; with Mr. Graham, their Clerk; and Mr.

Hosmer, their Surveyor; followed by the keepers and woodmen. "We began"

(writes Mr. Machen) "on Tuesday at Little Dean, and ended at Breem;

Wednesday we ended at Hoarthorns, Thursday at Drybrook, Friday at the

Stenders, and Saturday at Little Dean. We were occupied eight or nine

hours each day, accomplishing about nine miles daily by the map, but the

actual distance must have been nearly double."

The year 1834 is marked by the Dean Forest Commissioners issuing their

second Report, dated 1st of May, in which, after briefly explaining the

data on which the late perambulation had been conducted, they proceed to

state that, as respects the various encroachments, 1,510 acres 2 roods 32

poles were taken in before 1787. Since that date, and up to the year

1812, further encroachments to the extent of 573 acres 10.5 poles had

been made, and again from 1812 to the present time 24 acres 2 roods 9.5

poles had been taken in. In consideration of the Crown never having

reclaimed the old encroachments, the Commissioners recommended that all

such lands "should be declared to be freehold of inheritance," provided

no additional dwelling-houses were erected on them without the licence of

the Crown. They advised that the next oldest encroachments "should be

granted to their present possessors for three lives, not renewable except

at the pleasure of the Crown, and paying rents varying from one shilling

to two shillings per acre." As to the latest encroachments, they gave

their opinion that "their possessors should have terms varying from

fourteen to twenty-one years, paying rents varying from four to eight

shillings per acre; the condition as to building dwelling-houses to apply

to these classes also." The following table, showing the acreage of the

encroachments, classed as stated above, with the number of houses situate

in the six "Walks" of the Forest, serves to exhibit the localities of the

population of the district for the last hundred years.

Name of Houses. Previous Between Since

"Walk." to 1787. 1787 and 1812.

1812.

A. R. P. A. R. P. A. R. P.

Worcester 404 324 1 38 160 2 3 0 1 19

Park End 304 473 0 18 43 3 34 14 2 6

Blakeney 249 180 2 25 62 0 35.5 2 0 9.5

Little 196 174 1 6 104 0 33 4 3 26

Dean

Speech 0 2 7

House

Ruerdean 290 353 0 26 199 3 36 2 1 11

Hillier's 17 5 3 39 1 2 22

Lane

Yorkley 2 1 0 0 0 1 18

Lane

--- ----- ----- --- ---- ---- --- ---- ---- ----

1462 1510 2 32 573 0 10.5 24 2 9.5

During the greater part of September this year the Dean Forest

Commissioners were engaged either at Newnham, Westbury, or the

Speech-house hearing evidence "as to forming the Forest into a Parish,"

and respecting "Rights of Common." With the design of eliciting the

opinions of the neighbourhood on the first head, for civil purposes only,

"a circular was drawn up on the subject of enclosing lands on the outward

boundaries of the Forest, with a view of relieving the conterminous

parishes from the support of the Forest poor." It was sent to the

parishes bordering on the Forest, requesting the attendance of the

clergymen, overseers, and landowners, for the purpose of discussing such

a plan. This courteous invitation was responded to by the parish

authorities of Westbury, Flaxley, Little Dean, Mitcheldean, Awre,

Staunton, Ruerdean, the Lea hamlet, Bicknor, and St. Briavel's, the Rev.

H. Berkin attending on the part of the Forest clergy, when the scheme of

the Commissioners was unanimously approved. By the evidence taken under

the second head, it appears that the parishes or tithings of Westbury,

Little Dean, Awre, Ruerdean, Bicknor, Lea hamlet, Breem, Clearwell,

Newland, Lydney, St. Briavel's, Newnham, Woolaston, and Purton, claimed

the right of Common of Pasture.

In the same month "the Free Miners of the Forest" presented to the

Commissioners an able memorial of their rights, in reply to that

preferred the year before by persons not free miners, but who were

proprietors and occupiers of coal and iron mines in the Forest; its

object being to prove that "foreigners possessing and working mines

therein was in direct violation of the rights and privileges of the free

miners, contrary to their customs and franchises, and are acts of

injustice and usurpation." They affirmed that the present usage of

foreigners possessing mines was not of long standing,--that it dated from

the discontinuance of the Mine Law Court in 1777, by which all such

intrusions were strictly checked and prevented; that this Court had been

in full operation upwards of 500 years, as they verily believed, and so

continued until the last 60 years, meeting periodically under the

presidency of the Constable appointed by the King, and attended by his

deputies and by the King's Gaveller; and that, if this Court were

re-established, and their rights and privileges restored to them, there

would be no difficulty in finding capital for the proper working of the

mines. The memorial was signed by 1,036 persons, professedly free

miners. But, as to this being the fact, a further memorial was presented

to the Commissioners on the 23rd of December, urging "that no person

should be considered a free miner whose birth from parents free miners

cannot be proved, in addition to their having been born in the Forest,

and worked in the mines a year and a day." According to such rule, the

original number of 1,036 would be reduced to 798. On the 24th of

December this year (1834) another memorial, coming from free miners in

the occupation of stone-quarries within the Forest, was laid before the

Commissioners, pleading in few words for similar rights and customs in

respect of stone-quarries as were claimed in regard of mines. The names

of thirteen quarrymen were attached thereto.

Upon the 9th and three following days of June in the ensuing year (1835)

the Dean Forest Commissioners, at meetings held in London, received

letters from the Bishop of the diocese, from the clergymen of the Forest,

and of the Lea and Flaxley parishes, recommending the parochializing the

Forest for ecclesiastical purposes, either by means of curates with small

chapels, or by dividing the whole into a certain number of distinct

districts severally provided with a church and an incumbent. The

Commissioners reported unanimously in favour of making the Forest

parochial; and for all spiritual purposes they recommended an assignment

of districts to each of the churches already built, as also the erection

of a church and parsonage at Cinderford, with a stipend of 150 pounds

annexed, to which amount the salaries of the three existing ministers

should also be raised. They further recommended the enlargement of the

Lydbrook school-room into a chapel, with 80 pounds stipend to the

clergyman serving it; and they likewise advised forming Viney Hill,

having a population of nearly 800, into a district, or annexing it to

Blakeney, the church there, and minister's salary, being enlarged

accordingly. They also suggested that the 150 persons residing on Pope's

Hill should be united to Flaxley, with 20 pounds added to the clergyman's

stipend; and that the Lea Bailey, with its 100 inhabitants, should be

annexed in the same manner, and under the same conditions, to the Lea

parish.

In the second place, as to the relief of the poor inhabitants of the

Forest, the Commissioners were of opinion that it would be impossible to

raise a fund for this purpose by means of rates on property, as so much

was in the actual occupation of the Crown, or connected with mining, or

the holders being too poor to bear the burthen. They advised, therefore,

that about 1,600 acres of the Forest land should be enclosed and let out

for the purpose of furnishing such a provision, to be dispensed at the

discretion of a Board composed of the constable of St. Briavel's Castle,

the verderers, clergymen, and deputy-surveyor, and the magistrates acting

for the Forest division, and six inhabitants as coadjutors. {122}

On the 25th of August the Dean Forest Commissioners presented their

fourth and fifth Reports. In the former, which gives a minute summary of

the rights and privileges claimed by the free miners (derived chiefly

from the evidence taken in 1832), the origin of them is stated to be

involved in obscurity, although no doubt iron was manufactured in the

neighbourhood as early as the time of the Romans, and coal was obtained

in the reign of Edward III. Probably before, and certainly soon after,

the Norman Conquest, the soil was vested in the Crown, and all the rights

of a royal forest were in force. The persons by whom the mines were then

worked could not have been, in the first instance, free tenants of the

Crown. It is more likely that they were in a state of servitude, and

subject, in that character, to perform the labour required of them. The

name of "Free Miners," by which they are and have been for centuries

known, seems to refer to some right or privilege distinct from their

original condition; and it does not appear unreasonable to suppose that

certain persons at some distant period, either by having worked for a

year and a day, or by reason of some now unknown circumstance connected

with the origin of the privilege, were considered as emancipated, and

thereupon became entitled or were allowed to work the mines upon their

own adventure, concurrently with or subject to the right of the Crown to

a certain portion of the product.

Noticing in succession many of the historical incidents attaching to the

free miners of the Forest, the Report states that the franchise of the

mine was unquestionably perpetuated by birth from a free father in the

hundred of St. Briavel's, and afterwards working a year and a day in one

of the mines and abiding within the hundred. Doubt is, however, thrown

upon the necessity of birth from a free miner, the more so as the son of

a foreigner could obtain his freedom after working out an apprenticeship

of seven years with a free miner; and it would be difficult, if not

impossible, at the present time, to confine the title to anything beyond

birth and service, to which particular class of individuals the Court of

Mine Law confined all mining operations.

Entering in the next place into a consideration of the actual claims of

the free miners, the Commissioners declare their opinion as to how their

claims are to be settled, suggesting at once the question "whether they

can be now maintained with advantage to the miners themselves, or to the

community," connected as they are with a most defective system of

working, productive of incessant disputes and expensive litigation, and

occasioning constant disputes and never-ending jealousy; and they thus

conclude--"Taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration,

we are of opinion that the monopoly and customary workings are

practically at an end, and that, if individual claims were bought up, the

whole coal-field might then be let by the Crown as between landlord and

tenant, defining the limits and regulating the working."

The fifth and final Report of the Dean Forest Commissioners bore the same

date as the preceding. It contains the evidence produced before them as

to "certain claims of common of pasture" made by the inhabitants of the

following parishes bounding the Forest, and paying a small sum annually,

called "herbage money," to the lessee of the Crown of the manor and

hundred of St. Briavel's, and the manor of Newland, as annexed:--

\_s.\_ \_d.\_

Little Dean 3 4

parish

Newnham ,, 3 4

Staunton ,, 2 0

Longhope ,, 3 4

Abbenhall ,, 3 4

Mitcheldean ,, 7 0

Hope Mansel ,, 1 0

Ruerdean ,, 3 4

Bicknor ,, 1 0

Alvington ,, 5 0 will not pay.

Newland ,, 10 0

Huntisham 7 8 will not pay.

tithing

Bledisloe 3 4

Etloe Dutchy 5 0 }

Etloe tithing 3 0 } In Awre.

Box ,, 3 4 }

Hagloe and 5 5 }

Purton

Blaisdon 6 8

Blakeney 4 0

tithing

Awre parish 8 0

It is highly probable that the above claims, and the payments for the

ancient agistments, originated when the limits of the Forest comprehended

the parishes by which they are made. The earliest authentic trace of

them occurs in the agreement made by Charles I. with Sir John Winter in

1640, according to which about 4,000 acres of Crown land was to be taken

in and attached to the bordering parishes in lieu of their rights of

commonage; and in conformity with the principle of this agreement, the

Commissioners recommended "that these commonable rights should be

comprised in some general arrangement for the purpose of a commutation."

The last subject the Commissioners notice is the stone-quarries, which

persons born within the hundred of St. Briavel's claimed the right of

opening in the waste lands of the Forest, on payment of a fee of three

shillings to the gaveller, and an annual rent of three shillings and

fourpence, according to the custom of at least the last hundred years, a

period too long to justify the withdrawal of any existing gale, unless by

compensation. Hence all that the Commissioners found themselves

justified in recommending to the Crown, with the view of putting the

working of the stone-quarries on a better footing, was to re-issue gales

on liberal leases to all parties born within the hundred who applied for

the same within a specified time.

In bringing their labours to a close, the Commissioners urge the

necessity of passing an Act for definitively settling the several

particulars to which their inquiries had been directed, adding that it

would be well to incorporate the offices of Constable of St. Briavel's

Castle, and Warden of the Forest, with the office of Woods, lest they

should be found to interfere with its future administration, at that time

under the charge of Lord Duncannon, B. C. Stephenson, Esq., and A. Milne,

Esq.; and this was accordingly done in the following year.

We gather from Mr. Machen's memoranda that the nurseries in the Forest at

this time (1835) contained:--

Oak. Chesnut. Larch. Scotch. Spruce. Ash. Quick.

310,000 1,300 66,500 74,700 5,300 120,000 124,000 total.

200,000 1,300 40,000 40,000 5,300 10,000 30,000 fit to

plant out.

and, moreover, that 276,054 trees of various kinds had been planted out

during the previous winter.

On the 27th of July, 1838, the Royal Assent was given to "an Act for

regulating the opening and working of mines and quarries in the Forest of

Dean, and Hundred of St. Briavel's, by the agency of a Board of

Commissioners." Thomas Sopwith, Esq., of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was

appointed by the Board of Woods and Forests a Commissioner for the

purpose on behalf of the Crown; and John Probyn, Esq., of Longhope

Manor-house, Gloucestershire, was selected by the body of free miners to

act on their behalf; and the office of arbitrator between them was filled

by John Buddle, Esq., of Wallsend, in the county of Northumberland;

Thomas Graham, Esq., acting as their solicitor, and Mr. Henry Ebsworth as

his clerk. {126}

Some idea may be formed of the necessity for such a mining Commission,

and of the difficulties it had to overcome, from the following

particulars, as Mr. Sopwith stated them in his valuable Paper on "Mining

Plans and Records," read before the British Association at Newcastle in

1838:--"Great distrust of any interference" (he says) "existed, and some

of the mine-owners refused to allow of underground surveys being made.

Numerous and conflicting parties were then working mines under customs

which were totally inapplicable to the present state of mining;

destructive at once to the interests of the free miners of the Forest;

ruinous, as sad experience had shown, to the enterprising capitalist; and

subversive of the rights of the Crown. So great was the perplexity, and

so numerous and conflicting were the claims of contending parties, that

the law advisers of the Board of Woods deemed it almost impossible to

arrive at any satisfactory adjustment of them within the period of three

years, as named in the Dean Forest Mining Act. The ruinous and

unsatisfactory state of the mines must appear obvious on a slight

consideration. As no plans existed, it was impossible to tell to what

extent or in what direction the underground works were being carried.

The crossing of mattocks, that is to say, the actual meeting of the

workmen underground, was often the abrupt signal for contention; the

driving of narrow headings was a means by which one coal-owner might gain

possession of coal which of right belonged to another; and a pit, though

sunk at a cost of several thousand pounds, had no secured possession of

coal beyond 12 yards round it, that is, a tract of coal 24 yards in

diameter. At 40 or 50 yards from such a work another adventurer might

commence a pit, and have an equal right, if right it could be called, to

the coal. If a long and expensive adit was driven, another one might be

commenced only a few yards deeper; and, from such a state of things, it

is quite clear that great uncertainty and frequent losses inevitably

ensued." Moreover, the receipts from mines and minerals, by the Crown,

upon the average of the six preceding years, were only 826 pounds 2s.

10.5d.

The important Act by which these difficulties were to be removed, under

the auspices of the three Commissioners above named, was framed in

accordance with the suggestion thrown out in the fourth Report of the

Dean Forest Commissioners, viz., that all subsisting mine-works should be

released by compensation to the Crown, and the whole relet on a

well-defined plan to such free miners as might make application for the

same. The Act (1 and 2 Vict. cap. 43) provides that all male persons

born and abiding within the hundred of St. Briavel's, being upwards of

twenty-one years of age and having worked a year and a day in a coal or

iron mine or stone-quarry within the said hundred, should alone have the

right to hold or dispose of such works, a register of all such persons

being kept as "free miners." It suppressed all claims to pit timber,

with all "customs," and assigned to the Commissioners under the Act the

duty of fixing rents and royalties for twenty-one years, and to the

gaveller power to limit and regulate as well as to enter and survey all

works which might be re-awarded or galed. No engines were to be erected

nearer than sixty yards to any enclosure, within which only air-shafts

might be opened, and all unnecessary buildings were to be removed.

On the 16th of August, 1838, the annual Report of the Commissioners of

Woods was issued, signed by Lord Duncannon, B. C. Stephenson and A.

Milne, Esqrs. It mentions that a piece of land in the parish of English

Bicknor had been granted for school purposes, and that the Severn and Wye

Tramway Company obtained the licence of the Crown to lay down a branch

from Brook Hall Ditches to Foxes Bridge.

The only circumstance requiring notice in the following year is the

decease of the second Commissioner of Woods, Sir B. C. Stephenson, who

had long held the office, and he was succeeded by the Honourable Charles

Gore.

The next annual Report bears date 29th July, 1840, and contains nothing

calling for special notice.

The year 1841 is particularly important in the history of the Forest from

its being the date of the present coal and iron mine awards, under the

authority of the Mining Commissioners, the former being signed on the 8th

of March, and the latter on the 20th of July. By these awards no less

than 104 collieries were defined and assigned, together with twenty

iron-mines, and certain rules and regulations were laid down for working

them.

The duties of the Mining Commissioners having now closed, it must have

been highly gratifying to those gentlemen to receive from the Government

the following expressions of commendation, communicated by Mr. A.

Milne:--"I am to convey to you our entire approbation of the zeal,

ability, and sound discretion which appear to have marked all your

proceedings in the performance of the very important, difficult, and

laborious duties which devolved upon you, and their belief that, while

the result will be very beneficial to the interests of the Crown, it will

be attended with equal advantage to the great body of mining adventurers

in securing their titles to the property on very reasonable and moderate

terms, and subject to the regulations and conditions which seem to be

well calculated to protect them from that constant and expensive

litigation which had so long existed."

The total cost of adjusting the working of the coal and iron mines was

10,459 pounds 1s. 3d. The valuable services of the Mining Commissioners

were again noticed in the annual Report of the Board of Woods, published

on the 9th August in the following year, when 408 acres 2 roods were

thrown open in Blakeney Hill (south) and the South Lea Bailey Copse, a

similar extent of open Forest being enclosed at St. Low and Great

Kenseley. It also adverts to an Act passed on 30th of July previous,

dividing the Forest into ecclesiastical districts, constituting them

"Perpetual Curacies," and attaching the churches of Christ Church, Holy

Trinity, and St. Paul's to them, the stipends of each being raised to 150

pounds. The patronage of the two former was vested in the Crown, and the

latter in the Bishop of the Diocese. The Act likewise authorizes the

formation of a fourth district at Cinderford, and the erection and

endowment of a church there: thus each district comprised the following

number of acres:--

St. John's 5934

St. Paul's 7741

Holy Trinity 5859

Christ Church 3149

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Total 22,683

The same Report also notices the provisions now made for the relief of

the poor, and for the abolition of the court and prison of the hundred of

St. Briavel's. The Act for the relief of the poor is dated the 9th of

July, and authorizes the introduction of the new Poor Law, dividing the

Forest into the two townships of East and West Dean, by a line drawn in a

diagonal direction from Lydbrook to Ayleford, being in fact almost the

same boundary which separated the ancient divisions of "above and beneath

the wood." The Act attached East Dean to the Westbury-upon-Severn Union,

and West Dean to that of Monmouth. It also united the Hudnalls, the

Bearse, the Fence, and Mawkins Hazells to the parishes of St. Briavel's

and Hewelsfield, Mailscot and an adjoining tract to English Bicknor, and

Walmore and Northwood's Green to the parish of Westbury-upon-Severn, for

the support of their own poor, by means of rates levied as their

respective overseers for the relief of the poor should direct.

CHAPTER VIII.

A.D. 1841-1858.

Messrs. Clutton's, &c., Report on the Forest timber--Viscount Duncan's

Committee--Supply of 1,000 loads of timber to the Pembroke Dockyard

resumed--Mr. Drummond's Committee--Report of Mr. Brown--Messrs.

Matthews's Report.

By this time (1842) some of the enclosures made in 1814 were become fit

for being thrown open, the young trees having grown up sufficiently, and

the following Commissioners, viz., Lord Lincoln, A. Milne, C. Gore, Sir

T. Crawley, J. Pyrke, M. Colchester, C. Bathurst, E. Machen, P. J.

Ducarel, J. F. Brickdale, Esqrs., proceeded to authorize the laying open

of 163 acres 2 roods 24 poles in Little Stapledge and Birchwood,

directing that an equal quantity of land should be added to the Acorn

Patch and the Bourts.

In the year 1843 Beechenhurst and Shutcastle Enclosures, comprising 467

acres 2 roods 31 poles, were disenclosed, an equal extent of land at the

Delves, Harry Hill, Hangerberry, Old Croft, the Blind Meand, Cleverend

Green, Clearwell Meand, and Birch Hill being taken in. Upon the 22nd of

this October a sale was effected to the Crown, for the sum of 1,260

pounds, of the eligible school premises at Cinderford, erected originally

by Mr. Protheroe for his workpeople. On the 22nd of October in the

ensuing year, 1844, the church adjoining the school just named, to the

erection of which Dr. Warneford and Charles Bathurst, Esq., largely

contributed, was consecrated by Bishop Monk, the Crown endowing it with

150 pounds per annum, making the total sum given by the Government to

church endowments in the Forest upwards of 10,347 pounds. The following

year is almost a blank in the annals of the neighbourhood. The Report of

the Commissioners of Woods was issued on the 5th of August.

In 1846 enclosures to the extent of 1,433 acres 3 roods 5 poles,

comprising Blakeney Hill, Crab-tree Hill (North), Holly Hill, Bromley,

part of Edgehills, and part of Stapledge, were thrown open, and instead

thereof enclosures were made at Light Moor, Middle Ridge, and Phelp's

Meadow, Blaize Bailey, Mitcheldean Meand (North, South), and Loquiers,

the Delves No. 4, Crump Meadow, Bourts No. 1 and 2, Eastbatch Meand, and

Coverham (North and South). The Commissioners of Woods published their

yearly Report on the 25th of August this year, signed by Lord Morpeth.

It states that since 1841 upwards of 291 pieces of encroached land had

been purchased by the foresters for 201 pounds 13s. 3d., and that no less

than 193 grants of coal and iron mine had been galed under 1 and 2 Vict.

c. 48, at a total annual rent to the Crown of 3,783 pounds, in sums

varying from 1 to 250 pounds, as at the Bilson Colliery, besides 315

grants of stone-quarries at a total rent of 87 pounds 9s. 7d. This

includes the following coal-works lately galed, viz., the collieries of

Nash's Folly, New Mill Engine, Unity Colliery, Nag's Head, Smart's Delph,

Gosly Knoll, producing a rental of 16 pounds, and the iron-mines at Old

Park, Scarpit, Easter, Slope Pit, Yew-tree, Bromley Hill, Drybrook,

Prince of Wales, Belt, and Wigpool, bringing 81 pounds 10s. to the Crown,

to all which receipts a royalty of so much per ton on the mineral sold

was added.

Mr. Machen's Notes inform us that in the autumn of 1846 "there was the

most abundant crop of Spanish chesnuts we have ever had, and they ripen

well, but the people injure the trees to get them. No acorns at

all--there are some on the Turkey oaks. The fruit of most kinds has

failed this year, as well as the potatoes; but of some kinds, such as

chesnuts, grapes, blackberries, the crop is abundant. The spruce firs

are looking very bad; many of them are nearly dead."

Except as respects the granting of additional coal and iron gales, the

succeeding year of 1847 may be passed over. It appears by the annual

Report which came out on the 29th of June, that the new iron-mines galed

were those of Wigpool, Dean's Meand, Fairplay, Lydbrook, Symmond's Rock,

Earl Fitzharding's Frog Pit, Penswell's, Eastbatch, and Tufton, paying a

rental to the Crown of 104 pounds, and Morgan's Folly Colliery, rented at

4 pounds.

Proceeding to the year 1848, the Report of the Commissioners of Woods,

which appeared in September, informs us that upwards of 18,000 acres in

the district of the Forest were covered with wood and timber.

Unfortunately blight again prevailed, of which in the month of June Mr.

Machen's MS. records:--"The oak-trees have been attacked for several

years past by a small caterpillar which eats all the leaves, and this

year the destruction has been greater than ever; the whole Forest has

been almost leafless; the high ground and the low, the large timber and

the young plantations, have all suffered alike. The first time I noticed

this blight was in 1830, when the High Meadow woods and many parts of the

Forest suffered, but it was principally confined to the large timber. It

has continued more or less every year since, but this has been the worst

year of any; yet it is remarkable that the High Meadow Woods are free

from it and in fine foliage, but no part of the Forest has escaped. The

grub, a little black caterpillar, comes to life just as the oak is coming

into leaf, and feeds upon the leaves. It attacks no other tree; the

beech, chesnut, &c., stand in full verdure surrounded by the brown and

leafless oaks. They envelop the tree in a web they spin about the end of

May; they enclose themselves in a leaf curled up, and remain in a

chrysalis state until the middle of June or July, when they change into a

pale greenish small moth that flies about the trees in myriads, and lay

their eggs in the bark of the trees for future mischief, and then die.

There seems to be no means of checking their ravages. The rooks come in

great numbers, and they and other birds destroy great quantities. The

trees put forth a second foliage at the midsummer shoot, but not full,

and the shoot of the year and the growth of the trees must be injured."

Under the date of the 30th of April, 1849, Messrs. John Clutton and

Richard Hall report to the Government, on the Forest of Dean, that "there

are about five hundred acres of the open Forest now covered with old

timber, which is for the most part very fine and of very large size, and

is nearly all of good quality. Our opinion is that a large portion of

this timber is fit for naval purposes, and we suppose it to be worth

49,000 pounds. Its precise age we are not enabled to discover, but our

impression is that this timber is about 160 years of age. It has clearly

been planted since 1667, as it is recorded that only 200 trees remained

on the Forest in that time. There is some old timber fit for the navy in

the enclosed plantations, of the probable value of 34,500 pounds. There

are also about 500 acres of land planted in the Forest with single trees,

which are in process of becoming fit for naval purposes; and there is a

further portion occupied with trees of spontaneous growth. These, with

the plantations thrown open, we estimate at 3,000 acres; the value of

these we estimate at 106,000 pounds. The Crown has now occupied with

young and old timber about 14,000 acres of the Forest."

The same reporters speak of "the existing plantations being in a very

good state, having been judiciously and well planted, fully stocked, well

managed, and sufficiently protected. They are properly drained and amply

thinned; so that there is upon the ground, in a state to proceed to

maturity, as good a crop as can be found to exist in any part of England,

taking extent and quality of soil into consideration. The plantations

reflect great credit upon all parties concerned in their management, the

system of which we should strongly advise to be continued. To remove the

young trees with the view of converting the land into arable cultivation

would involve a loss of 280,500 pounds, besides that of the increasing

net annual profit, which official returns prove to be as follows:--

pounds. \_s.\_ \_d.\_

From 1828 to 1531 17 4

1832, or

average of 5

years

,, 1833 to 2475 16 2

1838 ,,

,, 1839 to 3566 17 1

1843 ,,

,, 1843 to 5482 11 3

1848 ,,

Early in this year a select Committee of the House of Commons was

appointed to inquire into the expenditure and management of the Woods,

Forests, and Land Revenues of the Crown, Viscount Duncan being in the

chair. Mr. Machen was examined by the committee with regard to the

Forest of Dean, and amongst other particulars stated that "the fact of

the expenditure on account of this Forest having increased within the

last six years was explained by the circumstance that 3,000 pounds a year

had been laid out on the new plantations, and that the balance in favour

of the Crown had been still further reduced by the recent fall in the

price of bark and also of timber, owing probably to peculiar difficulties

attending its removal." He observed that large immediate profits could

not be obtained from the oak plantations, which would, however, increase

in value at the rate of about 15,000 pounds a year; and moreover that a

considerable revenue from the sale of timber-props for the mine-works,

&c., might be expected. Mr. Machen also reported an improvement in the

order and conduct of the inhabitants of the Forest generally, the fruit,

it may reasonably be assumed, of the many years of pious labour which the

clergy and Christian teachers of the neighbourhood had bestowed on the

people. The Act of 1841, under which the mines of the Forest were

awarded, had, he said, been found most useful. Before the arrangements

under this Act were effected, much quarrelling and litigation were

continually taking place. The royalty paid by the various mines to the

Crown amounted to 4,000 pounds a year, and was steadily increasing; eight

years ago it was only 700 pounds.

The evidence of Mr. Langham, the Assistant Deputy Surveyor, relates to

the mode in which pit-timber and cordwood for the charcoal burner were

supplied, as well as the method pursued in planting, being that of about

1,300 young oaks to the acre, and the same of larch, four feet apart.

Mr. Nicholson, a tenant of the Park End Colliery, forcibly urged the

construction of branch lines of railway, connecting the different works

in the Forest with the leading lines, to the certain benefit of the

coal-master, the consumer, and the Crown, the existing tramways being

inadequate to their purpose.

Mr. Isaiah Teague took the same view, and further supported the

recommendation that greater facilities should be given, not only to the

mineowners to build cottages for their men, but also that the operatives

themselves should be enabled to buy small plots of land for the purpose,

they being now frequently obliged to live far distant from their places

of work, there being few, if any, houses situated near them. These

witnesses, as well as several others, agreed in stating that it was

inexpedient to have deer in the Forest, as unsettling the habits of the

people, and encouraging poaching. They yet admitted, however, that the

deer were highly ornamental.

It was also stated in evidence that the Forest was now fully planted; and

whereas some of the witnesses recommended that the larger portion of the

wood should be cut, and the remainder converted into arable or pasture

land, it was shown by others that to do so would be like cutting a crop

of wheat whilst green, and be defeating the original intention of the

Government, which was to raise timber for the use of the navy, which the

private woods of the kingdom could not supply. Much, too, of the soil

was said to be unsuited for farming purposes, being so precipitous in

some parts, and stony in others, as to be unfit for ploughing. Much of

the timber was reported to be of the finest character, and the young

trees, for the most part, doing very well. No improvements in the

management of the estate were suggested, and at the close of the inquiry

the committee reported that the plantations were growing luxuriantly,

having been well thinned, and did credit to all concerned in their

management.

The succeeding year of 1850 is chiefly noticeable for a general meeting

on behalf of the fund for defraying the expenses of the contemplated

Industrial Exhibition of all Nations, to take place the next year. It

was held upon Wednesday the 12th of June, on the green in front of the

Speech-house, under the presidency of Mr. Machen, supported by the

magistrates and master-miners of the district. The day was fine, and at

least 5,000 people attended--three bands of music accompanying them from

the different sides of the Forest. A large waggon constituted the

platform on which the speakers stood. The sight was a striking one,

amidst the fine foliage of the surrounding Forest, and all passed off in

a manner worthy of the occasion.

The Commissioners of Woods' Report, dated the 27th of June this year,

informs us that gales of coal had been granted, under the names of the

Beaufort Engine, Oaken Hill, New Bridge, East Slade (lapsed), and the

Injunction Iron Mine--paying a total rental of 54 pounds. In November

following this Forest contributed its quota of navy-timber, amounting to

388 loads 22 feet, towards the total of 1,000 loads levied upon the Royal

Forests; which quantity was delivered at the Pembroke Dockyard at the

cost of 992 pounds 8s. for carriage. It may also be mentioned that at

the Gloucester Summer Assizes of this year the action of Lord Seymour, as

Chief Commissioner of Woods, \_versus\_ Morrell, for arrears of dead rent

which accumulated to the amount of 1,291 pounds 1s. 2d., was tried before

Lord Chief Justice Campbell and a special jury, when a verdict was found

for the Crown, subject to the opinion of the Court of Queen's Bench upon

a special case, which proved, however, confirmatory of the original

decision.

On the 30th of July, 1851, the official Report on the Forest was issued.

It gives us the dates of three grants of land made this spring for school

purposes, situated at Viney and Blakeney Hill, and at Ruerdean Woodside.

It also bears fresh testimony to the satisfactory working of the Act of 1

& 2 Vict., c. 43, for regulating the opening and working of mines and

quarries, the litigation to which they had formerly given rise under the

ill-defined and objectionable customs which had so long prevailed having

almost entirely ceased. The actual amount annually paid to the Crown

during the last six years was stated to be 4,281 pounds 17s. 4d., besides

the profit made by the sale of pit-timber. Royalties and tonnage-dues

were its chief sources, although arrears of minimum or dead rent had

accumulated to the extent of 12,805 pounds 8s. 2.5d.--payment having been

refused in some cases on the plea that at certain times no minerals had

been raised. Gales of coal had been granted to Cousin's Engine,

Beaufort, and Fox Hole; and during the previous year 335,687 tons of coal

and 80,531 tons of iron mine had been raised. This autumn arrangements

were made for felling 553 loads of timber in the Forest, and 177 loads in

the High Meadow Woods, for the use of the navy, under the Queen's

sign-manual of the 7th of May.

In the following year (1852) there were two grants of land for

educational and ecclesiastical purposes; one piece was for the site of a

school at the Hawthorns, and the other for a parsonage attached to the

new church at Lydbrook, which was consecrated on the previous 4th of

December by Dr. Ollivant, Lord Bishop of Llandaff, acting for Dr. Monk,

who was unable to attend.

During the months of April and June of this year the Right Hon. T. F.

Kennedy, who, in October, 1851, had been appointed Chief Commissioner,

visited the Forest of Dean, and was much struck with its fine character

and great capabilities. Impressed with the conviction that it might be

brought to yield a larger return to the Crown, he sought the advice of

Mr. Brown, well known in Scotland as a surveyor of woods, who inspected

the several plantations, and suggested that every encouragement should be

given to the extension of railways through the Forest, and also

recommended the erection of circular sawing power, for the purpose of

reducing the timber to a portable size and shape for naval purposes, by

which its value would be much increased, and the expense of carriage

reduced. He likewise advised that the plan hitherto pursued of stripping

the bark from the young oaks, standing, should be discontinued, and that

the bark should be removed after the trees were felled, as being more

convenient, and favourable to the durability of the wood, and likewise as

affording the earliest opportunity to the adjoining trees to shoot out

into the vacant spaces. He also thought that the bark was better cured

on stages raising it above the ground, than merely by setting it upon an

end; and he suggested more frequent and moderate thinnings of the

plantations, which for the sake of uniformity should be marked by the

same person, thinning more on the productive soils than elsewhere. Mr.

Brown considered, moreover, that fewer woodmen and keepers might suffice.

Accordingly the bark was this autumn dried on stages, and the number of

keepers was reduced to three. The whole of the timber in Russell's

Enclosure was felled, and the trees at Howler's Slade, Church Hill, Park

End, and on the side of the road to Blakeney were marked for being so,

with the exception of any very large or picturesque ones. At this time

also the Lydbrook Deep Level Colliery, and the East Dean Deep Colliery,

were awarded; and at the close of the year Mr. Machen resigned his office

of Deputy-Gaveller, which was next held by Mr. Warington Smith.

In the spring of 1853 all the timber on Church Hill, at Howler's Slade,

and between the Blakeney Roads was cut down, forming what is now usually

called "the great fall." The mode of management in the Forest was now

rapidly changing, and Mr. Machen, the Deputy-Surveyor, decided this year

to resign, after a service of well nigh half a century. He was succeeded

by Mr. Brown. The flittern bark of this season was dried on stages,

having been taken off the young oaks after they had been felled; but the

process was not found to answer.

The Hagloe estate, situated between the Forest and the river Severn, was

this year purchased by Government on account of its securing the best

site for railway communication with the South Wales line, as well as for

shipping timber, the river in that part being particularly favourable for

the purpose. The formation of three distinct tramways was now also

licensed, one from near Milkwall down to the Severn and Wye line, another

from Speculation Colliery to the same point, and a third from the

Ruerdean Woodside Colliery to East Slade.

In the next year (1854) a select Committee of the House of Commons sat

during the month of June, under the presidency of Mr. Henry Drummond, to

collect information respecting "the management and condition of the Crown

Forests." So far as related to the Forest of Dean, the inquiry seems to

have arisen from its being supposed that the timber therein, of which

7,800 loads had been felled during the two previous years, might have

been sold at higher prices, and that the mode of stripping and drying the

bark was defective. Yet it appeared in evidence that the price of the

timber was about the same as such timber usually fetched in the

neighbourhood, and that, upon the whole, the method of removing the bark

from the trees whilst standing, and then setting it upright to dry, was

as good as that of first felling the tree, and then stripping it and

drying the bark on stages. Moreover, the portable steam saw, which had

been sent to the Forest with the design of cutting the timber, as

recommended by Mr. Brown, was found to be too small for the purpose,

although it was as large as could be conveniently moved from place to

place, and hence it proved of little or no use.

The Lords of the Treasury, desirous to satisfy the public and the

legislature as to the state of Dean Forest in common with the other Crown

Forests, directed Messrs. J. Matthews, William Murton, and W. Menzies to

make a personal examination of them, and to report their opinion thereon.

This they accordingly did in considerable detail. With regard to Dean

Forest they say--"The enclosures were originally planted with extreme

care, their situations judiciously chosen, the land well prepared, and

the plants protected with nurses." "Viewing these plantations as a

whole," they say, "we feel quite justified in representing to your

Lordships that not only is their state such as to merit approval, but

having reference to their regularity, growth, and prospective ultimate

development, they are not surpassed by any Forest property in the

kingdom."

Whilst the condition of the Forest of Dean was being thus canvassed, its

management had been entrusted to Mr. Brown; but after a few months he was

removed, and at the particular request of Government he was succeeded by

Mr. Machen, until a permanent arrangement should be made, which was not,

however, before the 11th of November, when the office was conferred on

Sir James Campbell, Bart., heretofore Deputy-Surveyor of Bere and

Parkhurst Forests, and now selected for the ability he had shown in their

management. The Treasury Letter announcing his appointment also states

that "after the satisfactory opinion conveyed in the Report of Messrs.

Matthews, Menzies, and Murton regarding the system of management

heretofore followed in this Forest, the time has come when Mr. Machen may

be honourably relieved from the charge which he so long ably fulfilled,

and which he resumed at the request of this Board."

During this year (1854) no less than 4,982 acres 1 rood 20 poles of

plantation were thrown open, comprising the enclosures of Haywood, Edge

Hills, Ruerdean Hill, and Aston Bridge. The following licences were

likewise granted:--To the Messrs. Kingsford for constructing a length of

tramway connecting the Woodside Colliery with a terminus to be formed at

Church-way; to Messrs. Allaway for making a tramroad from the Plumphill

to their iron-mine at Wigpool; to Messrs. Davis, Cooper, and Roberts to

open a brickyard, and to sink additional iron-pits at Cinderford,

Clearwell, and Lamb's Quay.

In 1855 information was sought to be procured as to the expediency of

removing the dead wood from growing oak-trees. The practice hitherto had

been not to do so, a course of which a large number of timber merchants,

whose known experience justified their being consulted, expressed their

unanimous approval, declaring it far better to leave its removal to

nature. Another interesting investigation was now also instituted,

relative to the suitableness of the Deodara pine as a Forest tree.

Upwards of 120,000 plants had been raised from seed, supplied by the East

India Company, in four private nurseries, half of which were distributed

in Dean Forest and the New and Delamere Forests; but it is yet too early

to afford any definite results. The young plants, however, appear to be

particularly susceptible to frost.

On the 31st of March in this year the Hon. James Kenneth Howard was

appointed one of the Chief Commissioners to administer the affairs of the

Royal Forests, the Hon. Charles Gore having for some time, after Mr.

Kennedy's retirement, been the sole Commissioner.

Three additional coal-mines, called Richard White's Colliery, Hollow

Meadow ditto, and Ruardean ditto, besides an iron-mine, called Maxwell

and Brooklyn Mine, were now granted, besides six stone-quarries and

another brickyard. Licence was also granted to Messrs. Crawshay to

connect their extensive colliery at Light Moore with the main line of

railway near Cinderford, on the broad gauge principle, besides four other

licences to connect various other works with the chief lines of traffic

by short lengths of tramway.

It may be here remarked, that two years previously an inspector was

appointed to view the timber intended to be felled for the navy before

its being cut, and the following table exhibits the proportion of timber

received at the Dockyard before and since the adoption of such a plan,

showing its great utility:--

DEAN FOREST. HIGH MEADOW.

1851 48 per cent. 1851 22 per cent.

1852 44 ,, 1852 31 ,,

1853 30 ,, 1853 no fall.

1854 no fall 1854 ,,

1855 65 per cent. 1855 92 per cent.

On Tuesday, the 22nd of January, 1856, an important meeting took place at

the Speech-house, Sir J. Campbell taking the chair, assisted by the Rev.

H. W. Bellairs, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, with the object of

attempting to raise the standard of teaching in the schools of the

district, eighteen in number, the Crown contributing to the support of

each of them. The meeting was largely attended, especially by the

neighbouring clergy, and resulted in a period of five years being allowed

to the managers of such schools to secure the services of certificated or

registered teachers, and to adopt a scale of payments by the children,

graduated according to the rental or rateable value of the tenements

occupied by their parents. The formation of a central school, adapted

for educating youths for filling responsible situations in the iron and

coal works of the Forest, was likewise recommended, and is obviously

desirable. Changes were also now made, with a view to economy, in the

staff of woodmen and labourers on the Forest, whereby an annual saving,

both immediate and prospective, would be obtained.

With the exception of a few decayed timber trees being felled in the

course of the following year (1857), there is nothing requiring further

notice, and I therefore here close the historical account of the Forest,

and shall proceed in the following chapters with the other objects of

inquiry which have been indicated.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ORIGINAL OCCUPIERS OF THE FOREST.

The inhabitants of the Forest--Its Aborigines--Celtic indications in the

names of persons and places--The forty-eight free miners' names appended

to their book of "Dennis," contrasted with the present roll of free

miners--Traces of Saxon and Norman influence--Early civilization

indicated in the methodical character of their mine laws, and in miners

being summoned to several sieges, qualified by their acts of

plunder--Successive notices of the inhabitants during the last 150 years,

with their present improved condition--Kitty Drew, the Forest

poetess--Mining usages described--Order for pit timber--Miners' Court and

Jury--Richard Morse's poem--Intelligence of the present race--Their

superstitions, self-importance, defects of

character--Occupations--Domestic

animals--Beverage--Dress--Dwellings--Diversions--Dialect--Christian

names--Former distribution of population--Present numbers.

The heading of this chapter refers to one of the most interesting

circumstances connected with the Forest of Dean, namely, the origin,

character, customs, and early condition of its people.

The original occupiers of this part of the kingdom, according to Richard

of Cirencester, a writer of the 14th century, were the Silures, an

offshoot of the immense Celtic family by which the middle and western

parts of Europe were overspread. The numerous remains left in the

district by the Romans indicate that there had been considerable

intercourse between them and the inhabitants; but the chief influences of

which any traces are left appear to have descended from the Welsh, with

whom the foresters of the present day still seem closely to assimilate.

Hence their somewhat impulsive temperament, and the occurrence of Celtic

or Silurian names, such as the following, indicative of the character of

the places they designate:--

Dean \_i.e.\_ Woodland.

Lidney ,, Broadwater.

Awre ,, yellowish.

Bicknor ,, above the river.

Lydbrook ,, a river's shore.

Penyard ,, the hill-top, &c.

There are also many families bearing the Welsh names of Williams, Morgan,

Pritchard, Watkins, Roberts, Gwilliam, Hughes, Jenkins, Griffiths,

Lewellyn, &c. The list of the forty-eight free miners constituting the

jury who signed the Book of Mine Laws some 400 years ago, containing so

few of those which are now most common in the neighbourhood, indicates a

considerable change as having taken place in the population; they may be

thus classed:

\_Not now to be found on the roll of free miners\_--Garone, Clarke, Wytt,

Nortone, Mitchell, Lumbart, Ocle, Barton, Heynes, Arminger, Rogers,

Hathen, Miller, Croudfell, Dull, Loofe, Forthey, Walker, Tinker, Witch,

Delewger, Doles, Hinde, Tellow, Backstar, Lawrence, Dolet, Caloe, Holt;

in place of which names the following now occur--Baldwin, Cook, Dobbs,

Hale, Jenkins, Kear, Morgan, Philipps, Harper, Davis, Meek, Brain, Jones,

Jordan, Robins, Rudge, James, Milnes, Marfell, Chivers, &c. The names of

Hathway, Skin, Baker, Holder, and Warr still appear in the Forest,

although they no longer occur on the rolls of free miners.

\_Yet to be found on the rolls\_--Preeste, Smith, Addis, Burt, Hopkine,

Tyler, Roberts, Parsons.

Similar traces of Saxon or Norman influence appear in the words Staunton,

Newnham, Newland, Ayleford, Coleford, &c.; those of a Norman stamp being

apparent in St. Briavel's, Ruerdean (\_i.e.\_ riviere Dean), Lea, Coverham

(Covert), &c., or in the family names of Baldwin, Waldwin, Chivers, &c.

To which may be added the circumstance that in most of the ancient

churches adjoining the Forest there are portions of Early Norman, viz.,

Newnham, Staunton, English Bicknor, Ruerdean, Woolaston, St. Briavel's,

&c.

Assuming that "the customs and franchises" of the miners of the Forest

were first granted to the inhabitants by William I., they certainly show,

for that early period, a highly creditable appreciation of justice,

order, and right feeling. Their skill in the use of the bow, and in

excavating the soil, is proved by the attendance demanded of them at

various sieges during the first half of the 14th century; but their

outrageous interruption of vessels navigating the Severn in the reign of

Henry VI., and in one instance even so late as in that of George III.,

illustrates the common truth that "every field has its tares." Probably

the troubles of the Great Rebellion would have little affected them, had

they been left to themselves, their warmth of feeling being chiefly

manifested when they apprehended danger to their "customs and

franchises:"--hence Dr. Parsons's character of them:--"The inhabitants

are some of them a sort of robustic wild people, that must be civilized

by good discipline and government." Such was no doubt their state and

condition 150 years ago. In 1808 they were described as "not very

orderly;" in 1810 as being in a condition "nearly as wretched as anything

now existing in Ireland," and as "exceedingly excitable," prone to make

unlimited demands in opening and carrying on their works, destroying the

timber for such purposes, so as ultimately to leave hardly a tithe for

the supply of the Royal dockyards, perpetually at strife amongst

themselves, so jealous of any "foreigners" coming into the Forest as to

deter most persons, and highly suspicious of any efforts to improve the

property of the Crown, even when intended for their personal good,

repeatedly destroying the new plantations, and terrifying the adjoining

districts by forming riotous mobs. Yet the Chartists from Newport and

places adjacent, in 1840, met with no sympathy from the Foresters, who

drove their delegates away.

Happily for all parties these evils have almost entirely disappeared,

through the good success which Providence has vouchsafed to the late

judicious laws for regulating the mines, settling the relief of the poor,

and establishing churches and schools in every part of the Forest. The

former state of things was in fact the effect of the exclusive and

protective rights, with corresponding usages, of which the well-meaning

but short-sighted inhabitants thought so much; and hence their Magna

Charta, as they were wont to call their book of "Dennis," was rather a

mischief than a benefit. Their general feelings are characteristically

described in the following lines from the pen of worthy Kitty Drew, the

self-taught Forest poetess, in her poem on the Forest of Dean, dated

1835:--

"In days of old 'twas here and there a cot,

Of architecture they'd little knowledge got;

None but a few free miners then lived here,

Who thought no harm to catch a good fat deer,

Or steal an oak--it was their chief delight.

Old foresters, I'm told, did think 'twas right

To steal an oak, and bear it clean away;

But caught, the jail a twelvemonth and a day

It was their doom, or else must pay a fine,

The which to do they did not much incline.

\* \* \* \* \*

"But noble miners there have been, I ken,

By their old works, stout, able-bodied men;

They'd not the knowledge then that now they've got,

To work by steam--hand-labour was their lot.

But I am told that many ages back

A foreign army did our land invade,

And blood and carnage then was all the trade;

They pitched their tents, and then without delay

They waited anxious for the bloody fray;

But our bold miners underneath did get,

And many a ton of powder there did set;

So up they blew the unsuspecting foe,

Their shattered limbs came rattling down below.

Our land thus cleared, our liberty thus saved,

Our noble miners dug the caitiffs' grave.

The King with honour did them so regard,

Made them free miners as a just reward;

The Forest Charter to them granted was,

And firm and sure were made the Forest laws.

In former times they gloried in the name,

But now the foreigners have got the game.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The Forest now is numerous got of late,

Since moneyed men come here to speculate

Where once a little turfen hut did stand,

You'll see a noble house and piece of land.

Deeper the pits than any here before,

The lowest vein of coal for to explore.

They were but shallow pits in days of old,

They'd not the knowledge then, as I am told;

But though there was not then great learning's store,

It was much better for the labouring poor;

Men loved their masters--masters loved their men,

But those good times we ne'er shall see again."

A mining population is generally found to have peculiar customs and

privileges of its own, and such is more especially the case with the free

miners of the Forest of Dean, who have had hitherto their own Court of

Justice, with the exclusive occupation of the district, and the sole

control of its mineral wealth. Their claims are thus specified by the

Dean Forest Commissioners:--"Every free miner duly qualified by birth

from a free father in the hundred of St. Briavel's and abiding therein,

having worked in the mines a year and a day, claims the right to demand

of the King's gaveller a 'gale,' that is a spot of ground chosen by

himself for sinking a mine, and this, provided it does not interfere with

the works of any other mine, the gaveller considers himself obliged to

give, receiving a fee of five shillings, and inserting the name of the

free miner in the gale-book. The gaveller goes to the spot selected with

the free miner making the application, and gives him possession with the

following ceremonies:--The gaveller cuts a stick, and, asking the party

how many verns or partners he has, cuts a notch for every partner, and

one for the King. A turf is then cut, and the stick forked down by two

other sticks, the turf put over it, and the party galing the work is then

considered to be put in full possession. The free miner, having thus

obtained possession, is compelled to proceed with the work by working one

day in the following year and day, and a day in each subsequent year and

day (forfeiting the gale if he fails so to work), and to pay an annual

sum of two guineas to the gaveller for each vein of coal he intends to

work, till he gets at the coal, after which he agrees with him for the

amount of the composition to be paid to the King in lieu of his fifth,

which, in case of their not agreeing, must be taken in kind by the King's

putting in a fifth man. The right to the gale is considered by the free

miner to carry with it that of timber for the use of the works; this

seems to extend no farther than to the offal and soft wood; and the mode

of obtaining it is for the miner to apply to the keeper of the walk in

which his mine is situated for an order, which he takes to the clerk of

the Swainmote Court, who, on receiving a fee of one shilling, as a matter

of course gives him another order directed to the keeper of the walk in

which there is timber fit for the purpose," in the following form:--

\_Copy of a Warrant or Order for the Delivery of Timber to a Coal

Miner in Dean Forest\_.

"[Forest of Dean.] At the Court of Attachments, holden at the Speech

House, the 25th day of Sep. 1784, came Phil. Hatton, and demanded

Timber for himself and Verns, for the Use of their Coal Works called

Young Colliers, in Ruerdean Walk, within the said Forest.

"JNO. MATTHEWS, Steward.

"To Mr. John Bradley, Keeper of the said Walk.

(by Certificate.)

"Some Timber to be delivered fit for sinking.

Indorsed '4 Oaks.'

"The miner cuts the timber when assigned, and until within about the last

ten years paid a fee of two shillings to the keeper, there being no limit

to the amount of timber if applied for the use of the works. If the

gale-ground was situated within the hundred of St. Briavel's, but

belonged to private parties, the free miner still claimed his right to

open the ground, the proprietor being let in as a partner, making a

sixth, the only exception being churchyards, gardens, orchards, and Crown

plantations."

A jury of twelve, twenty-four, forty-eight, or seventy free miners, under

the auspices of the Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, or his deputy,

enacted such mine laws as the interests of the body seemed to require,

administering them without any appeal, or permission to resort to another

court of law. The witnesses in giving evidence wore their caps to show

that they were free miners, and took the usual oath, touching the Book of

the Four Gospels with a stick of holly, {149a} so as not to soil the

Sacred Volume with their miry hands. These singular usages explain the

observation of the Rev. H. Berkin that "the inhabitants are completely

\_sui generis\_," and "their exact situation can scarcely be understood

except by those on the spot," as likewise the sentiment which the Rev. H.

C. H. Hawkins expresses--"by altering the character of the Foresters, a

curious relic of antiquity might be destroyed, to my regret I must own,

as I feel desirous to preserve so singular a specimen in all its purity."

In the year 1832 the Rev. C. Crawley stated, "I think the moral character

of the inhabitants has been much improved by the building of churches;

heinous offences are very rare in the Forest:" and in 1849 Mr. Machen

said, "A great change has been wrought in them; there is a very great

difference in their habits now, certainly." {149b}

The Forest miners of the present day are well acquainted with the

geological structure of their neighbourhood, more especially with the

out-crop, succession, and dip of the mineral veins. In short, their

natural endowments are fully equal to the general standard, and only

require cultivation, as frequently appears from the quickness with which

they detect the bearings of any pecuniary transaction, and their

proneness to litigation. Many superstitions, however, still linger

amongst them, such as the use of charms and incantations, a belief in

witchcraft and an evil eye, a resort to "wise men," and even to the

minister of the parish as being a "Master of Arts," or for some of the

offertory money, out of which to have a charm-ring made. They are

likewise inclined to give credence to tales of apparitions, and to regard

sickness and accident as fated and inevitable. From their having been

for so many generations an isolated and peculiar people, most of them are

ignorant of the rest of the world, and have of course a correspondingly

exaggerated idea of their own importance. It is pleasing to observe the

sympathy they manifest towards the sick amongst them, or such as have

been accidentally injured; and although most independent in their

notions, and impatient of control, they seem always thankful for real

kindness. What they chiefly lack is more generosity and candour towards

strangers, and a clearer understanding of their duties as protectors of

the national property, in respect of the crops of timber which grow

around them. {151} In most mining districts the moral habits of the

people are more or less in a low state, and they are certainly not worse

here than elsewhere. One source of evil arises from the large ablutions

which their working underground necessitates. The process of washing on

their return from the pit is not performed as privately as it might be,

and the effect of this upon the moral perceptions of the people, huddled

together in their small cottages, is very injurious. It is a pity some

arrangement is not made for having washhouses at the pits, where a supply

of hot water from the boilers might be easily obtained for the purpose.

One half of the Forest population is understood to be employed at the

coal-works, a fourth part at those of iron, whose red dresses make them

easily known, and the remaining portion are employed in the quarries and

woods, &c.

Horses of a bad breed, donkeys, mules, cattle, sheep, pigs, and geese

abound, owing to the free pasture afforded by the open Forest, the three

former having been used for many generations in carrying iron-mine, coal,

charcoal, &c. Farming operations are necessarily very limited. Cider

obtained from the styre apple used to be a common beverage; but that

fruit has long been extinct, and malt-liquor is now mostly preferred.

Gardening is little attended to, the colliers generally feeling

indisposed to further exertion after returning from the pit. In few

instances only are bees kept. Formerly much of the wearing apparel was

made from home-spun wool, woven or knitted in the neighbourhood; but this

is not now the practice.

The turf-covered cabin, resting on four dry walls, without windows, and

pierced only by a low door, with a very rude fireplace and chimney in

"the pine end," and partially paved with rough stones, once the

habitation of the Forest "cabiner," is now almost entirely superseded by

two-floored cottages, often containing not less than four apartments. In

bygone days a few neighbours, taking advantage of a moonlight night,

accomplished the erection of a cabin ere the morning dawned, in which

case it was supposed that the keepers had no power to pull it down. To

show the eagerness with which poor families sought to establish

themselves in the Forest, it may be mentioned that they took possession

of the ancient mine-caves, walling up the back and front, leaving a vent

for the smoke in the former, and in the latter a gap as an entrance.

Their pastimes used to be dancing and foot-ball, to the great delight of

people of all ages: indeed there are several spots yet called from the

above circumstance "the dancing green." Wakes were likewise very

popular, and also the game of fives, so that at Ruerdean one side of the

church tower was whitewashed for the purpose, and resorted to even on

Sundays. Some of the provincialisms of the district occur in the

following words--"yat" (gate), "tump" (hillock), "teart" (sharp),

"spract" (lively), "twich" (touch), "near a anoust" (near the same),

"anunt" (opposite).

Peculiarities also occur in the selection of Christian names, including

these--Benedicta, Abia, Winifred, Kezia, Barzillai, Sibylla, Eve, Saba,

Sabina, Beata, Tryphena, Belinda, Myra, Terzah, Nimrod, River, Milson,

Miles, &c. {152}

On account of the dense woods with which the Forest was anciently

covered, added to the fact that except at Newland, and perhaps at Park

End, no churches were built within it, we may conclude that at an early

period its population was small, the persons engaged in the iron and coal

works then living, as many of the working people do now, in the adjoining

parishes. Our earliest information as to the number of inhabitants

residing within its present limits relates to the time of the

Commonwealth, when "400 cabins of beggarly people living upon the waste,

and destroying the wood and timber, were thrown down." In 1712 Sir R.

Atkins states that "there had been many cottages in it, but that they had

been lately pulled down, leaving only the six keepers' houses." He gives

6,090 as the total population of the outlying parishes, thus

distributed:--

Mitcheldean 600

Little Dean 620

Newnham 400

Blakeney 250

Lydney 700

Newland 800

Clearwell 600

Coleford 600

Bream 300

Le Bailey 200

Staunton 220

Ruerdean 500

Bicknor 300

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Total 6,090

At the close of the century, the Forest, as now bounded, comprised 589

houses, which in 1803 had increased to 696, the number of free miners

being then 662. Since that time the inhabitants of the Forest have gone

on increasing as follows:--

In 1821 they were 5,525

In 1831 ,, 7,014

In 1841 ,, 10,674

In 1851 ,, 13,252

of whom about 1,789 have the right of voting for Members of Parliament.

The annual value of property existing in the Forest, not belonging to the

Crown, was estimated in 1849 at 13,603 pounds 14s. 2d., and in 1856 at

18,492 pounds 17s. 7d.

CHAPTER X.

Churches and schools--Religious provisions before the

Reformation--Rev. P. M. Procter, Vicar of Newland, lectures in Thomas

Morgan's cottage--The erection of a place for worship proposed--Rev.

H. Berkin opens a Sunday-school--Mr. Procter uses his chapel

schoolroom--Mr. Berkin lectures in the Foresters' cottages--Builds

Holy Trinity Church (1817)--His assiduous labours and death in

1847--Christ Church, Berry Hill--Mr. Procter's death--His

successors--Rev. H. Poole builds St. Paul's, Park End, and

schoolrooms--Rev. J. J. Ebsworth--St. John's, Cinderford, consecrated

1844--Lydbrook Church consecrated 1851--Government aid to the

churches and schools.

Previous to the Reformation, care seems to have been taken to provide the

population of the Forest with the means of religious worship. The border

churches of Mitcheldean and Newland were far larger than the people

residing in their immediate neighbourhood required; and there were

others, of which the memorials only remain in the names of "Chapel Hill"

and "Church Hill," the former in the parish of English Bicknor, and the

latter at Park End. This last was connected apparently with Ruerdean, if

we may judge from the "Churchway" which ran in that direction and gave

the name to an adjacent colliery. The "Laws and Customes" of the free

miners, dating as far back certainly as the year 1300, show that the

services of the Church were then generally known--the King's Gaveller

being therein directed to visit the mine "between Mattens and Masse," and

the miner was to "swear by his faith." For 200 years after the

Reformation no further provision was made, indeed none was apparently

required, as the Forest had been more than once nearly depopulated during

that period, and was said to be almost without inhabitants in 1712.

In common with many other mineral districts, especially those in the

West, the Rev. John Wesley established a connection with our Forest

miners. He visited Coleford as early as 1756, and did so again in 1763;

and his Journal thus records these visits:--"Monday, 15th March,

1756.--We reached Coleford before seven, and found a plain loving people,

who received the word of God with all gladness. Tuesday,

16th.--Examining the little society, I found them grievously harassed by

disputations. Anabaptists were on one side, and Quakers on the other;

and hereby five or six persons have been confused. But the rest cleave

so much the closer together. Nor does it appear that there is now one

trifler, much less a disorderly walker, among them." Wednesday, 17th

(August, 1763).--"Hence we rode to Coleford. The wind being high, I

consented to preach in their new room; but large as it was, it would not

contain the people, who appeared to be not a little affected, of which

they gave a sufficient proof by filling the room at five in the morning."

It appears, also, as stated in the interesting MS. of worthy Mr. Horlich,

an Independent Minister, that in the year 1783 "one Mr. Stiff

occasionally, on the Lord's Day, went to some sequestered spot in the

Forest, where himself and some of his family took their station under the

extended branches of one of the trees, for the purpose of reading the

Word of God."

But no sustained effort to impart religious instruction to the

inhabitants of the Forest was made until 1803, when the Rev. P. M.

Procter became Vicar of Newland, to which parish the Foresters were

always considered to belong. "At this time," he says, in his 'Brief and

Authentic Statement,' published in 1819, "I saw nothing of them on the

Sabbath-day. The church was only used by them as a matter of course and

necessity: indeed, a general opinion prevailed that they had no right to

accommodation, and a Forester was seldom seen in the aisle. The first

impression I received respecting the inhabitants was of the most

unfavourable kind. For some months no other intercourse took place than

what the visiting of the sick and the baptizing of the children

occasioned. By these means, however, I came to the knowledge of their

condition, their lives and conversation, of which the latter were the

most deplorable--habitual profanation of the Sabbath-day, drunkenness,

rioting, immodest dancing, revellings, fightings, an improper state of

females on their marriage, and an absence and ignorance of the Holy

Scriptures."

Mr. Procter then goes on to relate how he was brought to attempt their

improvement.--"After a few months' residence I was invited to take the

afternoon duty of the chapel at Coleford. Curiosity brought some of the

colliers to hear, and the report they carried home with them induced

others to come and judge for themselves. We passed on very quietly for a

little time, when a collier, named Thomas Morgan, sent to request that I

would call upon him. I did so. After the accustomed salutations were

passed, he assigned certain impressive reasons for wishing to see me,

and, in stating them, his eyes, his voice, and humble gesture strongly

marked the agitated feelings of his soul. After an interesting

conversation of two hours, I promised, at his request, to call upon him

again the following week. On taking my leave he said, 'I hope your

honour will not be offended, but some of my relations and neighbours are

in the same ignorant state as myself; they would be happy to hear your

conversation, and with permission I will ask one or two to come.' Under

the impression of a private conversation with six or eight people, I went

to the cottage at the time appointed. Upon laying my hand on the latch

of the door, the opening of it was prevented--the resistance proceeded

from the number of people collected within. A profound silence

prevailed. The collier smiled and looked for a pardon. Astonished at

this unexpected scene, not being accustomed and perfectly unprepared to

address such an assemblage, I felt for some moments at a loss how to

proceed. But there was no time for hesitation; taking the Bible, the

61st of Isaiah was the chapter read and commented upon. The attention

with which the poor heard, the very humble manner in which they returned

thanks, and the earnest hope they expressed that I would come again, made

a deep impression in their favour. Under these circumstances I was led,

as it were, unintentionally to the commencement of those lectures which

continue to the present time (1819). The first effects of these lectures

were seen in the observance of the sacred duties of the Sabbath-day; our

congregations at Newland increased, and the aisles of the church became

occupied, in which the Foresters were now seen. Year after year passed

away, the Thursday evening lectures continued to be well attended, the

moral habits of the people improved, and a knowledge of the Scriptures

obtained. Religion had evidently taken root; much was effected, but

infinitely more remained to be done. The means only were wanting--the

opportunity was present. \_Could we raise a building to contain about 200

people\_? Such were our limited views at that time."

In 1807 a memorial was drawn up and signed by some hundreds of miners and

colliers, praying the officers of the Crown to grant a portion of land on

which to erect a lecture-room, and also timber for building it. Dr.

Huntingford, the Bishop of Gloucester, presented the petition to

Government; but the law officers of the Crown, Sir S. Romilly and Sir A.

Piggott, found that it could not be carried into effect without an Act of

the Legislature. Under Mr. Perceval's administration, Mr. Procter

renewed the attempt by a personal interview with that minister, who,

whilst expressing his deep regret that he could not officially assist,

suggested an appeal to the public, to which he would give his name and

support, as well as an application to the National Society about to be

formed. To him, in fact, is due the insertion at this juncture of the

clause in the Act of 52nd George III., chap. 161, sec. 27, to enable the

Commissioners of the Treasury to appropriate small portions of land, not

exceeding five acres, for ecclesiastical purposes, and which has

facilitated the erection of the Forest churches.

Closely resembling the above efforts were those made on the north-east

side of the Forest by the Rev. H. Berkin, which he commenced about the

year 1809, when curate of Mitcheldean. He writes--"Finding the miners

and colliers of the Forest, adjoining that parish, too generally living

in the neglect of moral and religious duties, I considered it a duty to

attempt their improvement." In January, 1812, he opened a school-room in

Mitcheldean, which he had built mainly at his own expense, although he

was afterwards assisted by his private friends, and in particular by a

liberal donation from the Duke of Beaufort, and eventually by a grant of

50 pounds from the National Society, 100 pounds being given at the same

time to Mr. Procter's building-fund--these were the very first donations

to country schools made by that estimable institution. Mr. Berkin's

school was at once attended by 140 scholars, and ultimately 350 came. In

the first Report of the National Society it is stated that "many of the

parents expressed their acknowledgments to Mr. Berkin with the tears in

their eyes, exerting themselves to the utmost to enable their children to

be constant in their attendance, in spite of the numerous difficulties

with which they had to struggle--such as the distance of the schools, the

wretched state of the roads in bad weather, and the extreme poverty of

the people, which makes it a hard matter for them to clothe their

children properly, and to furnish them with a slice of bread for their

dinner."

Returning to Mr. Procter's exertions to erect a building for the two-fold

purpose of divine service and juvenile instruction, he found consolation

for former disappointments in the following pleasing offer of Thomas

Morgan, the poor cottager already mentioned:--"Take my field," said he.

"With that I give you five guineas, to which my neighbours have added 15

pounds. We ask of you only to begin and build until the money is

expended; in another year we will again add our mites; only lay the

foundation and begin." Accordingly, in the month of June, 1812, the

building was commenced, and (aided by the subscriptions which were

received, especially from the Duke of Beaufort, the Lord Bishop of

Gloucester, and his secretary, Mr. Ryder) was so constructed as to admit

of its being hereafter enlarged and consecrated. "On the Epiphany, 6th

January, 1813, the public service of the Established Church was, for the

first time, read within its walls, under the authority of an episcopal

licence; but on the commencement of Sunday duty a painful circumstance

presented itself which had not been anticipated, viz. an astonishing

inattention to the prayers of the Church: all appeared a blank--no

interest, no spiritual concern. The cause was evident in the want of

prayer-books, soon however supplied by the Society for promoting

Christian Knowledge, and one of the bishops of the Church. A

schoolmaster, Mr. Edward Hawkins, previously sent to the National School

in Baldwin's Gardens, immediately commenced the education of the

children--300 being entered the first week. On every Thursday evening

throughout the year the scholars were examined in the presence of a

congregation assembled for public worship--a mode of instruction which

gave a laudable excitement to the children, by means of which they

acquired a firmness of mind, a clear, distinct pronunciation, and an

accuracy in their delivery, which was very gratifying to the hearers,

whilst it gave to the parents and relations an opportunity of observing

their progress by the system of education. Through this medium, also,

many a truth has been taught, many an impression made, where preaching

had not succeeded." "By this time," proceeds the same excellent man,

"the principles and motives of my exertions being made apparent, all the

little prejudices were softened down, if not into approval, at least into

a passive silence, particularly as another clergyman, the Rev. H. Berkin,

was zealously pursuing the same line of conduct on the other side of the

Forest, who began this year (1812) to lecture in the cottages there, as

his next attempt to benefit the parents and children connected with his

school." He says--"Finding that few, by comparison, attended public

worship, I visited them in their cottages to read and explain the Bible;

and I was led to adopt this plan from the particular situation of the

Foresters, destitute of churches or ministers whom they could properly

call their own. In these pastoral visits, made on different evenings in

different places, and in which I have usually spent two hours in reading

and practically explaining the Holy Scriptures, I have sometimes had 200

persons present at one time, and calculate on the whole that 800 at

different times have thus come under instruction. Many instances might

be produced, certainly not less than 20 families, of reformation in both

sexes, which had evinced itself in their desire to possess the Bible and

Common Prayer Book, and by a total change in their moral character."

At the commencement of his career Mr. Berkin was repeatedly remonstrated

with by respectable gentlemen who knew the locality better than himself,

upon his venturing amongst the Foresters alone, assuring him that it was

not safe, since, a very short time before he came to Mitcheldean, two

Wesleyan ministers attempted open-air preaching in the Forest, but were

violently attacked and driven away. He thus proceeds to describe the

circumstances which led to the erection of Holy Trinity Church:--"At one

of the places which I am accustomed to visit, where the heat and crowd

have at times been almost insufferable, the colliers, aided by two or

three neighbouring farmers, offered to build a large room for the better

accommodation of greater numbers. This, for obvious reasons, was

declined; but it led me earnestly to wish that the Foresters might be

more immediately brought within the pale of the Established Church, and,

by regular attendance on a church appropriated to themselves, be made

habitually acquainted with that admirable Liturgy to which too many of

them are now utter strangers." Acting upon these earnest feelings, Mr.

Berkin, with the concurrence of the esteemed Dr. Ryder, the Bishop of

Gloucester, laid a memorial and plan before Government, with an offer, on

his part, that, "if the needful fund for building a church and

parsonage-house could be provided, he would give up his present curacy

and serve the new church without any further emolument than the endowment

necessary for its consecration." In the concluding terms of an admirable

address to the public, dated the 30th April, 1816, which he circulated

with the design of obtaining contributions to the work, he stated--"My

wishes are, that the kind contributors will feel rewarded in the

reflection that thousands yet unborn may have cause to bless them for

thus providing for their spiritual wants, and giving them the knowledge

of those principles which alone can make them worthy members of society

here, or lead them to provide well for their eternal welfare hereafter."

The Crown granted five acres of land for the purpose on Harry Hill, being

a spot situated within a reasonable distance of from 250 to 300 cottages.

To the estimated cost of 2,500 pounds, contributions, amounting in some

cases to 30 pounds each, were given by the Earl of Liverpool, Right Hon.

N. Vansittart, the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, Sir Thomas Baring, Lord

Calthorpe, Joshua Watson, Esq., Rev. H. H. Norris, W. Wilberforce, Esq.,

M.P., Rev. J. Pratt, &c. The building of the church (the design of which

comprised a chancel 15 feet square, a tower about 60 feet high, and a

body or nave 40 feet by 60 feet, calculated to hold from 400 to 500

adults, and a large children's gallery, for whom a school-room 30 feet by

50 feet was also to be built close adjoining) was begun on the 4th of

June, 1816, and was used for the first time upon the 2nd of February

following, on which occasion the sermon was preached by the Rev. Edward

Bickersteth, from St. Matt. iv. 16. It was consecrated, as the Church of

the Holy Trinity, by Bishop Ryder, on the 26th June, 1817, who preached a

sermon, not yet forgotten, upon 1 Kings viii. 30; and the whole property

of the living was vested in the Lord Bishop of Gloucester, Lord

Calthorpe, and the Right Hon. Nicholas Vansittart, Rev. J. Kempthorne and

Rev. Charles Bryan, as trustees.

Although Mr. Berkin had thus accomplished the important object of

providing the inhabitants of the north-east portion of the Forest with "a

church which they could call their own," he felt that it yet remained for

him to make the building really useful to the people by imparting to them

more and more just views of the Christian life. Accordingly he laboured

if possible more abundantly than ever amongst them, visiting their houses

at short intervals, collecting neighbours together, and expounding the

Holy Scripture to them under their own roofs, or else opening the church

so as to draw them off from the corrupting pastimes which were common at

certain times of the year, and bestowing much pains on his Sunday school.

[Picture: Holy Trinity Church and Schools, Harry Hill]

Sometimes, when necessitated to take relaxation, and to go from home for

a few weeks, he improved the time by acting as a deputation for the

Church Missionary or Bible Societies, and even now his name is remembered

in distant parishes. The Missionary Association for which he acted as

secretary, and which was called the North-east Forest of Dean Branch,

sometimes contributed 220 pounds a year to the cause, or a total of 3,300

pounds. The appliances, now so generally known, for interesting the

young were even then in actual operation in his own school, and effected

their purpose well. His monitors and sub-teachers were carefully guided

by him; and no doubt with the design of duly impressing its importance

upon his scholars, holy baptism in accordance with the rubric was always

administered during divine service, after the second lesson, and this

took place most Sundays, as the register shows.

Few clergymen took more pains than Mr. Berkin with the communicants of

the church, who were always visited before the communion day, and who

generally presented themselves to the number of about seventy. On two

occasions valuable livings were offered to him; but, said he, "since my

ministerial work began in this neighbourhood, here it shall end," as it

accordingly did, after forty years of labour, on the 11th October, 1847.

He was buried in his own churchyard, being followed to the grave by his

sorrowing people, and worthily committed to the tomb by the Rev. James

Davies, of Abbenhall. His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. H.

Poole, who took for his text 2 Tim. iv. 6-8. {163}

A rapidly increasing population, and unfortunately not a concentrating

one, compelled Mr. Berkin's successor (the writer of this work) to meet

its wants by erecting chapel school-rooms, for the accommodation of sixty

scholars each, in the hamlets of Woodside and the Hawthorns, the former

having been in use since 15th September, 1850, and the latter since 31st

December, 1851, to the lasting benefit, he trusts, of many of the rising

generation through the Divine blessing on the conscientious efforts of

their respective teachers. It was by such a method that Mr. Berkin

acted, when, in the year 1822, he caused a chapel school-room to be built

at Lydbrook, judging that place to be sufficiently populous and distant

from the nearest church to justify such an erection, not as being a full

provision for it, but hoping that eventually a church might be built

there, which has now been satisfactorily accomplished.

The following clergymen have successively officiated in the district of

Holy Trinity:--

\_Incumbents\_.--H. Berkin, 1817; H. G. Nicholls, 1847.

\_Curates\_.--J. Morse, 1820; J. Bridgeman, 1821; J. Herbert, 1822; W.

Marshall, 1822; W. Burkitt, 1824; J. Chell, 1827; R. T. Budd, 1840;

W. C. Badger, 1844; J. G. Croker, 1846; G. Tatam, 1848; H. Algar,

1851; W. Nickisson; W. Duckett; J. Ashton; H. W. Thornton; W. A.

Whitestone. Most of these gentlemen served at Lydbrook, although

occasionally at Holy Trinity Church; they likewise attended the

Chapel Schoolroom on Little Dean Hill.

The annual number of christenings at Holy Trinity Church is 80; of

weddings, 15; and of funerals, 40. The morning congregation on Sunday

comprises about 100; that in the afternoon, 350; and the two evening

school-room services, 120. About 250 scholars attend school weekdays and

Sundays.

Having thus related the progressive efforts made for the welfare of the

people occupying the north-east portion of the Forest, it is necessary

that we return to the date of 1813, being the year in which the Rev. Mr.

Procter opened his chapel school-room on the west. He tells us that "in

the course of this year the Bishop of Gloucester was pleased to call my

attention to the clause introduced by Mr. Perceval into the Act of 52

George III., cap. 161. I went up to town, and had the honour of an

interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Right Honourable N.

Vansittart, who was pleased to advise with the Earl of Liverpool on the

subject, which resulted in a grant of five acres of land, a donation of

100 pounds to the building fund, and an endowment of 20 pounds per annum

to the school." He proceeds to remark that "the crowded state of the

chapel became a matter of astonishment to the Foresters themselves, and

painfully inconvenient to the congregation, as well as dangerous to the

health of the officiating minister, from the intense heat, besides

excluding the children, all showing the necessity of an enlargement; so

that, after a probationary period of three years, another appeal for aid

came before the public, whereby the building was increased to twice the

size, provided with a children's gallery, and, excepting two pews, kept

perfectly free and open to all. It now became my duty," observes Mr.

Procter, "to secure to the Foresters in perpetuity these extraordinary

blessings which Divine Providence was progressively granting to them.

This could only be done by consecration, and to authorize such an act, an

endowment being considered necessary, another public appeal was made in

June, 1813, for assistance to place amongst these poor people a clergyman

who would not only publicly preach, but reside, privately visit their

cottages, disseminate the Scriptures, and assist the master of the

National School in impressing upon the minds of the children the

principles of the Christian religion," as, "without a resident clergyman,

an experience of fourteen years convinced him that all efforts would

prove abortive. It had likewise become necessary to discontinue using

the chapel as a school-room, since the doing so had been found to lessen

the reverence due to the sanctuary in the minds both of the parents and

children. A new schoolroom was therefore immediately built of the best

stone, with two fireplaces, and a partition in the middle; over the door

is the following inscription,--'The Forest Day School, for Boys and

Girls, on the National plan, established 1812, supported by voluntary

subscriptions.'" The cost of erection was almost 300 pounds, and the

expenses of conducting the school averaged about 70 pounds per annum, for

two-thirds of which Mr. Procter was himself answerable, and only

dependent on annual donations.

With the view of forming such an endowment for the church as would make

it eligible for consecration, a freehold estate near at hand was

purchased in the month of November, 1816, although the price of it

exceeded the sum subscribed by 200 pounds, but which amount it was

expected the Parliamentary Commissioners would repay. Thomas Morgan's

house, garden, buildings, and lands adjoining the chapel were also

purchased for nearly 400 pounds, the former being partly preserved in the

back part of the present parsonage-house. Thus the property appropriated

to the new church consisted at this time of the five acres of Crown land,

the purchased freehold, and Thomas Morgan's property, on which, as an

ecclesiastical endowment, the consecration of the church, under the name

of Christ Church, took place, on Wednesday, 7th July, 1816, by Bishop

Ryder, and was duly conveyed to the following gentlemen as trustees,

viz., the Right Honourable N. Vansittart, Lord Calthorpe, James Jenkins,

George Baring, T. T. Biddulph, Esqrs.; Reverends J. Hensman and E.

Mansfield.

[Picture: Christ Church, Berry Hill]

The body of the building forms a parallelogram 50 feet by 42 feet; the

tower, upwards of 60 feet high, was built some years afterwards, at a

cost of 1,000 pounds. Unfortunately, serious inconvenience ensued to Mr.

Procter by his having caused the whole of the above-named endowment

property to be conveyed to the church previous to its consecration,

since, on presenting the memorial to the Board for the payment of the

accustomed Parliamentary grant, the case was pronounced "irregular,"

rendering Mr. Procter liable to a debt of 950 pounds, although 500 pounds

of the amount was eventually paid by Pyncombe's Charity and Queen Anne's

Board. The sum of 2,000 pounds was granted, however, by the

Parliamentary Board to be laid out in the purchase of land, yielding in

the mean time an interest of 4 pounds per cent., and raising the total

income of the living to 118 pounds 10s. 6d., or thereabouts. Mr. Procter

died on the 8th May, 1822, aged 52, worn out by excessive devotion to his

pastoral duties, and was succeeded by the Rev. T. R. Garnsey, who, after

a life of similar usefulness, expired in March, 1847. His funeral sermon

was preached on Sunday, the 14th of March, by the Rev. H. Poole, from

Hebrews xii. 2. The church was densely crowded, many could not obtain an

entrance, and all appeared deeply to feel the loss they had sustained.

In the mean time, under the Act of 1842, an addition of 31 pounds 9s. 6d.

was made to the salary of the incumbent, by the purchase of an equivalent

amount of 3 per cent. Reduced Bank Annuities, raising its annual income

to 150 pounds, the nomination to the incumbency being transferred to the

Queen and her successors. The Rev. J. Banks succeeded to the living in

1847, who, previous to his relinquishing it in 1852, effected several

improvements in the interior of the church. The Rev. W. H. Taylor

followed him, and still remains the minister. The adjoining school

premises have been made much more complete and capacious by him, so as

amply to accommodate 150 children, and a teacher's house has been

erected. A permanent redemption of the land-tax charged on the living,

at the cost of 150 pounds, has also been presented by Thomas Graham, Esq.

There are three tablets on the north side or oldest part of the church,

to the memories of Edward Hawkins, the first teacher in the school, the

Rev. P. M. Procter, and the Rev. T. R. Garnsey, and a flat paved stone

records the grave of Thomas Morgan. About ten marriages, forty-three

baptisms, and thirty-five funerals take place yearly. The church is well

attended on Sunday, especially in the afternoon, when 300 or 400 persons

are usually present.

Whilst the Rev. P. M. Procter and the Rev. H. Berkin were engaged in

effecting the improvements described on the west and north-east sides of

the Forest, the Rev. H. Poole was labouring to accomplish similar results

on the south-east. The appeal for public aid towards "the erection of a

church and school-house," which he issued on the 6th July, 1819, thus

forcibly describes the necessities of the case:--"The Forest is an

extensive tract of land, having a circumference of about twenty-five

miles, and containing at present nearly 5,000 souls. This population,

with some exceptions, may be considered as divided into three

settlements, detached from each other by a space of several miles, of

which settlements two are now provided with churches; but the other

colony, situated on the south-east side, is still destitute of the means

of religious knowledge. It is therefore proposed, under the sanction of

the Lord Bishop of the diocese, to erect a third church and school-house

in this still neglected spot. From a recent accurate survey, it appears

that within little more than two miles of the site of the proposed church

there are at least 400 inhabitants, distant from the other Forest

churches about six miles, and from any parish church nearly three miles.

The chapel of Bream, the nearest episcopal place of worship, is too small

to accommodate even one-third of the population of its own tithing.

Being thus unprovided with a place of worship and the means of public

instruction, and following the corrupt dictates of their untutored minds,

the natural consequences are gross ignorance of the Scriptures, a

shameful profanation of the Sabbath, and a total neglect of all the

duties of religion, accompanied with a general prevalence of disorderly

and immoral conduct." This application met with a generous response from

Bishop Ryder, Edward Protheroe, Esq., the Earl of Liverpool, the Right

Hon. N. Vansittart, Edward Machen, Esq., Lord Calthorpe, Lady Olivia

Sparrow, Mrs. H. More, &c.

The site chosen for the new church, as being most convenient of access

for the largest number of persons, was "Mason's Tump," situated

immediately to the east of Whitemead, Park End. In the two previous

instances of church-building at Berry Hill and Holy Trinity, little had

been attempted in the way of appropriate design; but in this case Mr.

Poole's practical knowledge and good taste enabled more to be

accomplished. At a total cost of 2,731 pounds, including the churchyard

boundary wall and gates, a cruciform edifice, enlarged into an octagon

forty-six feet in diameter at the intersection, having a total length of

sixty-six feet, so as to accommodate 500 people, was erected in the

Decorated style of architecture; attached to which there was also raised

a well-proportioned tower, eighty feet in height, and intended to contain

a small peal of eight bells, Edward Machen, Esq., presenting the treble,

as well as a good clock with three dials.

[Picture: St. Paul's Church, Park End]

The church now possesses a good finger organ, removed from Ross church,

and said to have been used originally in Salisbury Cathedral. There is

also a rich reredos under the east window. At eleven o'clock on the

morning of the 2nd of May, 1822, Dr. Ryder, the Lord Bishop of

Gloucester, attended by thirteen clergymen and many of the magistrates

and gentry of the neighbourhood, proceeded to the spot for the purpose of

dedicating the fabric to the service of God as the Church of St. Paul.

The Bishop entered the edifice by the west door, followed by his clergy,

repeating alternately the 24th Psalm. Every seat was immediately filled,

and soon no spot was left unoccupied. Many could not gain admission, and

were seen clinging to the bars of the windows on the outside. A large

company of professional and amateur singers attended, so that the whole

musical part of the service was well executed. His Lordship delivered an

impressive discourse from the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of the 132nd

Psalm. The congregation was very attentive, and, after contributing at

the door nearly 30 pounds towards the completion of the work, dispersed,

fully 1,000 persons being observed to leave the church. The perpetual

advowson of the living was assigned to the Bishop of the diocese, and

endowed with 75 pounds 6s. 6d. per annum, together with the remainder of

the five acres of land granted by the Crown as glebe, on which a

picturesque parsonage, and also commodious schools for a population

supposed to number 1,500, were erected. By the Act of 1842 the income of

the incumbency was augmented to 150 pounds a year, and the presentation

confirmed to the Bishop of the diocese, with an ecclesiastical district

annexed to it of 7,741 acres, with 3,681 inhabitants. This population

has since increased to 6,500, to meet which growth pleasing and

substantial schools have been built, at a total outlay of 750 pounds, on

the Viney Hill and in the Blakeney Valley, the former opened in 1850, and

the latter in 1851. Divine service is held in each of them under

episcopal licence. The three schools are attended by 200 children daily.

The Sunday congregations comprise 150 people in the morning, and 400 in

the afternoon. About fifty come to the Lord's Table. The yearly average

of christenings is forty-six, of weddings twenty-six, and of funerals

forty-five. The following is a list of

\_Incumbents\_.--Henry Poole; J. J. Ebsworth, M.A.

\_Curates\_.--David Jones, M.A., Oxon.; --- Dixon, B.A., Oxon.; ---

Revel, M.A., Camb.; --- Stewart, M.A., Camb.; --- Mountfort, M.A.,

Oxon.; --- Malpas, M.A.; --- Cardew, B.A.; --- Ponton, B.A.

[Picture: St. John's Church and Schools, Cinderford]

The next effort made to meet the spiritual wants of the increasing

population of the Forest was commenced by Edward Protheroe, Esq., M.P.,

who erected and opened, July 1, 1840, "on Cinderford Tump, where the old

holly grew," large and substantial school-buildings, for the benefit of

the families connected with his adjacent collieries, and consigned them

to the care of Mr. Zachariah Jolly as their master, an office which he

ably filled for several years. The attendance was large, sometimes

exceeding 280 children of both sexes. In the first seventeen years, to

July, 1857, nearly 1,400 young persons were admitted into the schools, at

ages ranging from four to twenty-two years. There was also an evening

school for adults, some winters numbering ninety, patronized by the South

Wales Railway Company, who subscribed liberally to it. By the Act of

July, 1842, dividing the Forest into ecclesiastical districts, its

south-east section was constituted one of them, and a stipend of 150

pounds per annum provided for the minister, so soon as the church

intended for it should be built and consecrated. Aided by large

donations from the Crown, Charles Bathurst, Esq., the Rev. Dr. Warneford,

and others, the new church, erected on the hill above Cinderford Bridge,

at a cost of 3,109 pounds, in the Early Pointed style of Gothic

architecture, on the plan of a Latin cross, with a belfry turret, and

capable of seating 800 persons, was consecrated under the name of St.

John the Apostle, by Bishop Monk, on the 22nd of October, 1844. There

was a large attendance of clergy, and upwards of 1,100 persons were

present, many others being unable to obtain admission into the church.

The Rev. R. Davies preached from St. Matt. xii. 34. The Rev. T. G.

Smythies, who had been residing for some time in the district, became the

first incumbent. This appointment he continues to hold, and by the aid

of the Crown, the late Bishop Monk, Dr. Warneford, and the Gally Knight

Fund, has built an excellent parsonage conveniently adjoining the church.

Following the course of ecclesiastical and educational progress in the

Forest, it only remains to record the most recent step taken, namely,

that at Lydbrook. The erection of a church there, although contemplated

for several years previously, was deferred for some time, until the

assiduous exertions of the Rev. J. Burdon, and the munificent donation of

2,000 pounds from Mr. Machen and his relatives, secured its

accomplishment. {172} The cost of the building, including the site,

which lies on the north-east slope of the Lydbrook Valley, close to the

original school-room, was 3,500 pounds, to which the following public

bodies thus contributed:

Her Majesty's Commissioners of 250 pounds

Woods, &c.

,, Church Building 100

Commissioners

Incorporated Society 230

Diocesan ditto 200

----

780 pounds

The rest was given by private persons, the principal being Messrs.

Allaway and Partridge, who contributed 250 pounds.

[Picture: Lydbrook Church and Schools]

The church was designed by H. Woodyer, Esq., in the Geometrical style of

Decorated architecture, and comprises a nave and aisles 60 feet long and

50 feet in width, a handsome chancel, a south porch, and tower 80 feet

high. It is built in the ornamented parts and internally of Bath stone,

the exterior being the gritstone of the neighbourhood. The foundation

stone was laid on Monday, the 12th of August, 1850, and the church,

called that of "The Holy Jesus," was consecrated on the 4th December,

1851, by Dr. Ollivant, Bishop of Llandaff, the Bishop of the diocese

being too unwell to attend. Considering the season of the year, the day

was very fine, nearly fifty clergymen were present, and upwards of one

thousand people crowded into the edifice. The Rev. E. Machen, Rector of

Mitcheldean, preached the sermon on Isaiah lvi. 7. A stipend of about

120 pounds was secured to the incumbent of the church by annexing to it

30 pounds from the tithes of English Bicknor, with an additional 90

pounds from the Crown, which consequently presents to the living,

alternately with Queen's College, Oxford. The first incumbent was the

Rev. W. Deering, who was succeeded in 1853 by the Rev. T. H. Chase, by

whom it is still held, and who has been enabled to erect a suitable

parsonage house. About thirty baptisms, fifteen funerals, with a

proportionate number of weddings, take place at this church annually.

Nearly 150 persons attend on the Sunday morning, and 250 in the

afternoon, amongst whom there are forty communicants, the total

population of the parish being 2,500.

In addition to the five churches named above, my knowledge of the

district enables me to state that the rapid increase of population calls

for the erection of at least three more, on the east, south, and west

sides of the Forest, all of which should, if possible, be provided

without delay.

Besides the efforts of the Church, directed as now described, for the

benefit of the population of the Forest, its inhabitants have of late

years become an object of religious regard to the different bodies of

Congregationalists, most of whom are represented amongst the Foresters.

The wealthier coal and iron masters manifest a benevolent interest in the

welfare of their workmen, and in one instance have established a large

day-school, and built a place of worship for their use. The

Commissioners of the Crown have always attended to applications for help

in furtherance of these objects, and have at different times granted sums

to the amount of 10,347 pounds towards endowing the Forest churches, and

in some years have devoted as much as 800 pounds to the maintenance of

schools, which they annually aid by the following donations:

pounds \_s.\_ \_d.\_

St. Paul's 70 0 0

District (Park

End, 30 pounds,

Oldcroft 20

pounds, and

Blakeney

Woodside 20

pounds)

Christ Church 30 0 0

District

Holy Trinity 70 0 0

District

(Trinity 30

pounds,

Ruardean

Woodside 20

pounds,

Hawthorns 20

pounds)

Cinderford 30 0 0

Lydbrook 30 0 0

Bream 15 0 0

St. Briavel's 5 5 0

Mitcheldean 5 5 0

Blakeney 15 0 0

Staunton 10 0 0

Dixton 5 0 0

Coleford 5 0 0

English Bicknor 2 2 0

Whitchurch 5 0 0

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297 12 0

To the above must be added the handsome donation of 500 pounds from

Thomas Graham, Esq., formerly clerk to the Dean Forest Commissioners.

CHAPTER XI.

The history of the Abbey of Flaxley, or St. Mary de Dene--Its foundation

by Roger Earl of Hereford in 1140--Confirmed and enriched by Henry II.

and III., and Richard II.--Suppressed in 1541--Existing remains--St.

Anthony's Well--The Abbey, &c., granted to Sir W. Kingston--His

descendants--Mrs. C. Riches (Boevey), supposed to be Sir R. de Coverley's

"perverse widow;" her benevolent life, and death in 1726--Nature and

cessation of the Flaxley iron-works--Erection of the present church in

1856.

The link which connects the Abbey of Flaxley with the Forest of Dean is

chiefly of an antiquarian nature; for instead of being included as

formerly within the limits of the Forest, it is merely approached on one

side by a promontory of Crown land, called "Pope's Hill." The incident

which led to the foundation of the abbey, as related by Leland, who

visited it a short time before it was suppressed, shows the Forest

character of its precincts. He tells us--"ther was a brother of Rogerus

Earl of Hereforde that was kylled wythe an arowe in huntinge in the very

place where the abbay syns was made. There was a table of the matter

hanggid up in the abbay church." The date of its institution is assigned

to the year 1140, or the reign of Stephen, its chief founder being the

aforesaid Roger, aided by a Bishop of Hereford "that holped much to the

buildinge," and who was probably Robert de Betune, by whom the north-west

transept of that cathedral is said to have been erected. They designated

it "the Abbey of St. Mary de Dene, or Dene Abbey," and devoted it to the

use of the White Monks of the Cistertian order. Tintern, the other abbey

of that order, established near the western border of the Forest, was

founded nine years before. The dress of the monks was a white cassock,

with a narrow scapulary; and from this doubtless comes the name of "St.

White's," on Little Dean Hill, in the parish of Flaxley, as well as of

another spot called Whitecross.

The institution of the abbey was confirmed, and its endowment augmented,

by two charters, granted by Henry II., to the following purport:--"Know

ye that I have granted and confirmed to God and St. Mary, and to the

monks of the Cistertian order, a certain place in the valley of Castiard

called Flaxley, to build an abbey there; and all that land called

Wastdean, and one iron forge free and quit, and with as free liberty to

work as any of my forges in demesne; and all the land under the Old

Castle of Dene, with liberty to plough it up, to wit 100 acres, which

remains to be assarted, and that which is already assarted; and a certain

fishery at Redley called Newerre, and a meadow of Reidley called

Pulmeade, containing four acres; and all easements in the Forest of Dean,

to wit, common of pasture for their young cattle and hogs and for all

other beasts, and wood and timber to repair their houses and buildings,

and for other necessaries, without committing waste in the Forest; and I

have given them tithes of chesnuts out of the same Forest, and all my

demesnes at Dymmock; and five yard lands and a half, besides the demesnes

and half my wood at Dymmock, and half my nets which I have in my hands,

for the conveniences of my men, because I would have my monks enjoy that

part of the wood peaceably and quietly, without any interfering with any

other persons; and I straightly command that no person offer to disturb

them upon this account; and the lands belonging to Walfric; but so that

if Uhred the clerk continues in the abbey with the lands he exchanged, to

wit, two yard lands, that then he shall give no account of it to any body

but the abbot; and all the land of Jeoffry, son of the aforesaid Walfric,

which the Earl of Hereford did release, and all the land which Leffric de

Staura gave to them in alms, and the farm which I gave them at Wallemere,

out of my new ploughed ground containing 200 acres with the meadows and

pastures, and all other easements; and four acres of Northwood. I

further give to them my new ploughed grounds under Castiard, called

Vincent Lands;" added to which, there was a grant of two oaks out of the

Forest every seven days, for supplying their iron-forge with fuel.

Few of the properties here named can now be traced. Castiard is unknown,

but perhaps the "old Castle of Dene" is identical with a circular ditch

and bank, about fifty yards in diameter, on Camp Hill, between Flaxley

and Little Dean. It may also be observed that the present Chesnuts

Enclosure is probably the site of the chesnut groves referred to in the

above grants. A century later (42 Henry III.) the two oaks weekly were

commuted for a tract of woodland in the Forest, containing 872 acres,

reserving, however, the herbage for the King's deer and wild beasts, and

all mines and quarries, and a power to the grantee to enclose one-tenth

part thereof, and to hold the same enclosed against all animals except

the King's deer and wild beasts, leaving nine tenth parts always open;

all which peculiarities of tenure are connected with a tract of land yet

identified by the name of "the Abbot's Woods." Between the years 1206

and 1215 King John paid several visits to Flaxley. In the terms of a

Papal taxation levied in 1291 by Pope Nicholas, the property of this

abbey was thus valued:--

pounds \_s.\_ \_d.\_

In the diocese 14 0 1

of Hereford, at

,, Bath and 11 0 0

Wells

,, Worcester 7 5 0

-- - -

Total 32 5 1

Ere long it acquired the dignity of a mitred abbey, though never of a

peeral one, its abbot being summoned to Parliament 21st Edward III.

During the reign of Richard II. these additional grants were made to

it:--"Certain tenements in Leye, Bosteley, and Rodley; the manor and

impropriate church of Flaxley; the manors of Blaisdon, Newnham, and

Ruerdean; distinct manors in the parishes of Dean Parva, Dymock, and

Arlingham, with a house in Abbenhall." A document in the Chapter-house

at Westminster, dated 10th Edward II., has the abbot's seal attached,

representing an abbot standing erect with his crosier under a canopy

slightly ornamented, with the legend S . ABBATIS . DE . FLAXLE. The

counter seal is a hand with a crosier, and other ornaments, viz., a

fleur-de-lis, &c., surrounded by the words CONTRA SIGILLUM ABBATIS DE

FLAXLE. The names and dates of the following abbots have been

preserved:--

Elected.

1288 Nicholas.

1314 William de Rya.

1372 Richard Peyta.

1509 John ---.

1528 William Beawdley.

1532 Thomas Ware.

The last of these, Thomas Ware, survived the suppression of the house and

the dispersion of its brethren, of whom there were nine at that time, the

abbey being delivered up to the King's Commissioners in 1541, valued at

112 pounds 13s. 1d., according to Dugdale. Tintern Abbey was suppressed

four years previously. Ware retired to Aston Rowant, near Thame, in

Oxfordshire, where he spent the rest of his life in seclusion, and was

there buried in 1546.

The vicissitudes of 300 years have left little of the original structure

remaining: only in 1788 the pavement of the Chapter-house was discovered

at a small depth, on the east side of the refectory, extending about 45

feet, and 24 wide. At the upper end a circular stone bench was exposed,

and in the centre the carved base of a pillar. Several coffin-lids of

stone were likewise found, sculptured with ornamented crosses, and upon

one a hand and arm holding a crosier, under which probably one of the

abbots was interred. The view of the abbey as it appeared about the year

1712, according to Sir R. Atkyns's print, exhibits traces of the ancient

residence of the abbot and monks, respecting which the Rev. T. Rudge

remarks--"It was low, but long in front, being 60 feet in length, 25 feet

wide, and only 14 high; the whole arched with stone, and the vault

intersected with plain and massy ribs, and seems to have formed the

refectory. The first floor contained a long gallery, and at the south

end one very spacious apartment which was supposed to have been the

abbot's chief room. The dormitories or cells were connected with the

great gallery."

[Picture: Stone coffin lids at Flaxley Abbey]

[Picture: The Refectory of Flaxley Abbey]

[Picture: Open Timber Roof of the Abbot's Room at Flaxley Abbey]

A further trace of the same period is also to be found at the head of one

of the brooks feeding the stream which descends the Flaxley valley,

called "St. Anthony's Well," and which, from its supposed medicinal

properties, was until late years widely famed for curing cutaneous

disorders, although under circumstances somewhat connected with the

marvellous, its peculiar efficacy being combined with the rising of the

sun, the month of May, and the visits to it being repeated nine times in

succession. However, after due allowance for some exaggeration, there

remains ample proof of the utility of its waters in removing diseases of

the skin. The square basin or reservoir of stone immediately adjoining

the head of the spring was made at the commencement of this century for

the convenience of bathers, and occupies a very secluded position,

overshadowed by a large beech-tree, and closed round with mossy banks.

The water is abundant in quantity, and contains iron and lime, derived

from the strata through which it percolates. The general temperature is

50 degrees.

[Picture: St. Anthony's Well]

On the suppression of the Abbey in 1541, Henry VIII. granted it to Sir

William Kingston, the Constable of the Tower of London, memorable as

being the person to whom the dying Wolsey confessed--"If I had served God

as diligently as I have done the King, he would not have given me over in

my gray hayres." Sir William dying in 1545, letters patent regranted to

Anthony his son (who in consideration of his father's services was

knighted on the occasion) "the site of the late Abbey, and all the

church, bellhouse, and churchyard of the same, and all the houses,

granges, &c., as well within as without the said site, and also all other

the manors and granges of Flaxley, Howle, Goderith, Climperwell, Wolmore,

Blaisdon, Aclingham, Le Rouhen, Ruardene, Newland, Dene Parva, Newnham,

Pulton, and Dymock, with their rights in the county of Gloucester, and

the house and manor of Rochilburgh in the county of Somerset, belonging

to the same; and all advocations, presentations, &c., of the said

parishes at any time appurtenant to the said monastery," subject to the

yearly payment of 1 pound 8s. 2d. In the third year of Edward VI. he

accompanied Lord Russell as Provost Marshal of the army sent against the

Western rebels, in which capacity his great severity obtained for him the

epithet from Fuller of "the terrible Provost Marshal." His name occurs

on the roll of High Sheriffs for the county in the year 1549. In 1555

Queen Mary appointed him one of the commissioners to see execution done

upon that excellent prelate and martyr Bishop Hooper, by whom he had been

formerly admonished for gross immorality, and forced to submit and do

penance, as well as pay a fine of 500 pounds.

It is not surprising to find him a vigorous opponent in parliament of the

Queen's effort for restoring to the religious establishments the property

of which they had been deprived. So strongly was he opposed to this,

that on one occasion he seized the keys of the House from the serjeant,

for which he was committed to the Tower, although upon his humble

submission he was afterwards discharged. The next year he was supposed,

and not without reason, to be involved in a plot to rob the Exchequer of

50,000 pounds, and therewith to raise a rebellion; but it was discovered,

and all the conspirators were executed except Sir A. Kingston, who

perhaps only escaped by dying on his road to London, whither he was

summoned to appear before the Council. By his will, dated 27th of April,

1 Edw. VI., he entailed his several manors and estates on his sons,

Anthony and Edmund. Anthony died without issue, having in 1591 leased

the Grange estate to one William Brain and others of Little Dean, for 370

years, of which an annual acknowledgment of 6 pounds continues to be paid

by its present holders, and Edmund succeeded to all the Kingston

property. He left two sons, Anthony and George, the former of whom died

in 1594, leaving by his will his sons Edmund and George joint executors

and heirs. George died in the year 1647, intestate, seized of the

Collect (Gawlet?) woods, in the parish of Flaxley, and was father of

Anthony.

It is said by Sir R. Atkyns that there was a monument to George Kingston

in the chancel of the original church of the parish, inscribed as

follows:--

"Mar. 4, 1644.

"Vixi dum vellem, moriebar tempore grato

Et sic vita mihi mors quoque grata fuit."

"Kings have stones on them when they die,

And here Kingstone under a stone doth lie;

Nor Prince, nor Peer, nor any mortal wight,

Can shun Death's dart--Death still will have his right.

O then bethink to what you all must trust,

At last to die, and come to judgment just."

There are no traces of any such monument now, and it was therefore

probably destroyed when the church was rebuilt about 1730.

The Kingstons took no part apparently in the contests which occurred in

the neighbourhood between the Royalists and Parliamentarians, but

confined their attention to their own affairs and the management of their

iron-works. The only member of the family who suffered was a Sir Francis

Crawley, who, about the year 1642-3, was deposed for a judgment in favour

of the King on the question of ship-money, or something of a similar

kind. The family possess one of King Charles's rings as a memento of

such a decision. Edmund died in 1621, and was father of William, who,

pursuant to his father Edmund's will, made a settlement between himself,

William, and James Boevey on one part, and William Jones, of Nass, on the

other. He left an only son, Anthony, who, having no issue, disposed of

the estate to Abraham Clarke, Esq., who died here in 1683, as also his

wife Joana, from whose son Abraham, dying in 1682, it passed, in virtue

of certain complex devises, to a near relative, William Boevey, Esq. Mr.

Boevey married Catharina (in her sixteenth year), daughter of John

Riches, Esq., an affluent London merchant. She was left at the age of

twenty-two a widow, which she inexorably remained until her death, on the

3rd January, 1726, in her fifty-seventh year, leaving a name for

benevolence and ability which the neighbourhood venerates to this day.

Dr. Geo. Hickes calls her, in the preface to his 'Thesaurus,' published

in 1702-3, "praestantissima et honestissima matrona Catharine Bovey," and

was most probably one of her personal friends, agreeably to a

traditionary account in the family, that "she was very friendly to the

nonjuring clergy, and that she had frequently received and protected

them."

There are several pictures of clergymen at Flaxley, which have always

been believed to be portraits of Mrs. Boevey's nonjuring friends.

Amongst these are two in episcopal habits, one of which is ascertained to

be the portrait of the deprived Dr. Frampton, Bishop of Gloucester, since

an exactly similar painting exists in the Palace at Gloucester. Flaxley

is mentioned as her residence by Sir R. Atkyns in 1712, where, he tells

us, "she hath an handsome house and pleasant gardens, and a great estate,

a furnace for casting of iron, and three forges," as also appears by

Kip's view of it. In 1714 Steele dedicated to her the second volume of

'The Ladies' Library,' the frontispiece to which Mr. Kerslake describes

as "representing a young lady, dressed in widow's weeds, opening a book

upon a table, on which also lies a skull; her admirers, in long wigs and

swords, are thronging round the door." In one of his letters to Lady

Steele, dated the 17th January, 1717, he writes--"I have yours in a leaf

of the widow's." Such incidents seem to prove that this highly-gifted

lady was the original of the character so graphically delineated by

Steele in his description of "the perverse widow." The numbers of the

'Spectator' in which she is introduced generally bear his name, and she

probably was more intimate with him than with Addison (although both are

said to have visited the Abbey), since he would naturally pass near

Flaxley whenever he travelled between London and his house at Llangunnor,

near Caermarthen. Nothing less than such a familiar acquaintance could

have enabled him to give so exact and real a description of her as occurs

in No. 113.

In Ballard's 'Ladies,' first printed in 1752, and on her monument in

Westminster Abbey and in Flaxley Church, her more public virtues are

displayed; but the value of her home life, which many of the poor

Foresters had experienced in her bounties, is best related in the words

of her faithful attendant, Mrs. Rachel Vergo, "who always waited

particularly on her mistress, and was the only servant who sat up, as she

spent an hour or two every night in her closet. She did the same in the

morning, and was a very early riser. Mrs. Vergo had the care of the

family under Mrs. Mary Pope, a relation of Mrs. Bovey, who came for a

visit of a month, and stayed nearly forty years. The regularity and

economy in the family was great. The maids were kept to work till eight

o'clock at night, and the rest was their own time. Mrs. Bovey frequently

called for her charity account book to see if it kept pace with her

expenses in dress, which was always very handsome. Mrs. Vergo was often

sent to Ross and Mitcheldean to buy materials to make garments for the

poor. The old table-linen and sheets were made into childbed linen,

which, together with shirts and shifts of all sizes, were kept in a

closet. It was Mrs. Vergo's business to give them out as her lady

ordered. Two ladies came to visit Mrs. Pope at the time the epidemic

fever raged in Gloucestershire in 1719. One of them, Mrs. Cowling, died

of it at the Abbey. The other, Mrs. Grace Butler, agreed with Mrs. Bovey

and Mrs. Pope all to lie in the same vault with the deceased. The vault

was built accordingly in Flaxley churchyard. Mrs. Bovey died first at

the Abbey, and was laid by her friend. Mrs. Pope was brought from

Twickenham in Surrey, and Mrs. Grace Butler twenty years afterwards from

Worminghurst in Sussex. Every afternoon during her lady's life Mrs.

Vergo was ordered to wear a silk gown. Six of the poor children who were

kept at school at Flaxley dined by turns regularly every Sunday at the

Abbey, when Mrs. Bovey heard them say their Catechism. She was very

often in the habit of lending money to poor clergymen, which was

frequently repaid to her in small sums, but more often given to them.

She did the same, too, by other distressed people whom she believed to be

honest and industrious. During the Christmas holidays before Mrs. Bovey

died she had the thirty children who were taught at her expense, to dine

at the Abbey upon beef and pudding. Mrs. Vergo sat at the head of the

table, and two of the housemaids waited upon them. After dinner Mrs.

Bovey had them all into the parlour, where she was sitting dressed in

white and silver. She showed them her clothes and her jewels, talked

pleasantly and with great good nature to them, and having given to each

of them sixpence she dismissed them. When they left her they had a harp

and fiddle playing in the great hall, where they danced two hours and

went away in good time. When Mrs. Bovey was dressing before dinner she

said to Mrs. Vergo, 'Rachel, you will be surprised that I put such fine

clothes on to-day; but I think that these poor children will remember me

the longer for it.' She was then to all appearance very well, but she

died that very day month of a bowel complaint."--"Upon Wednesday

morning," wrote Mr. MacBarrow, "she was as well at breakfast as usual;

between eleven and twelve she was seized with a most violent colic. We

sent to Gloucester for Greville, as the nearest at hand; that night for

Lane, but he was not to be met with. The extremity of pain continued,

and, notwithstanding all means that could be used, nothing would pass.

She apprehended death approaching the first day, and said what her

illness was: we sent to Oxford and Hereford, but no physician until it

was too late. Upon Friday morning she had a little ease, which gave us

great hopes; but very soon the exquisite pain returned, and never left

her until death had performed its great office, betwixt eleven and twelve

on Saturday morning. She was sensible all along, and expressed great

satisfaction in being here, where she said she always wished to die. She

was buried in the same vault with Mrs. Cowling on 23rd January,

1726."--"Of her personal beauty," observes the Rev. C. Crawley, "although

highly extolled, it really appears that very little can be said or seen,

if we may form our opinions from the three portraits of her at Flaxley

Abbey. They all represent a broad surface of a benevolent and

good-natured countenance; and though they were evidently painted at

different periods of her life, yet they bear so great a resemblance to

each other that we may reasonably infer they were all good likenesses--in

each of them the mole on the cheek has been defined with all due

minuteness."

Mrs. Boevey bequeathed 1200 pounds to augment the living of Flaxley, the

interest of 400 pounds to apprentice poor children, and a similar sum

towards putting them out. Lastly she designed the rebuilding of the

church, "which pious design was speedily executed by Mrs. Mary Pope."

This work was effected about the year 1730, but report says \_not\_

"speedily," as the parishioners found it necessary to institute a suit in

Chancery to secure its accomplishment. The site of the old chapel was

retained, only the size was increased, if we may judge from the view that

Sir R. Atkyns gives of the former building, which he says was "very

small, and had a low wooden tower at the west end." Most of the old

monuments were transferred to it, and the new church, although rather

plain, was "peculiarly neat" and substantial. Upon Mrs. Boevey's death

the estate passed by will to Thomas Crawley, Esq., of London, merchant,

in tail male, upon the condition of adding the name of Boevey to Crawley.

Thomas, a lineal descendant, succeeded to the baronetage on the death of

Sir Charles Barrow in January, 1789, by limitation of the patent. {189}

Part of the mansion having been destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt by him

in 1777, with extensive additions. This house yet remains, and is a

capacious structure.

[Picture: The original Chapel at Flaxley, as it appeared in 1712]

"The iron manufactory," writes Rev. T. Rudge, at the beginning of this

century, "is still carried on, and the metal is esteemed peculiarly good;

but its goodness does not arise from any extraordinary qualities in the

ore, but from the practice of working the furnace and forges with

charcoal wood, without any mixture of pit coal. The quantity of charcoal

required is so considerable, that the furnace cannot be kept in blow or

working more than nine months successively, the wheels which work the

bellows and hammers being turned by a powerful stream of water. At this

time (Oct. 28, 1802) a cessation has taken place for nearly a year.

Lancashire ore, which is brought to Newnham by sea, furnishes the

principal supply; the mine found in the Forest being either too scanty to

answer the expense of raising it, or when raised too difficult of fusion,

and consequently too consumptive of fuel, to allow the common use of it."

Since then so great a change has been effected in the mode of reducing

the ore, that several tons of the Lancashire mine yet remain unused near

the spot where the Flaxley furnace stood, the Forest ore readily yielding

to the treatment it now receives in the blast furnaces of the district.

"When the furnace is at work, about twenty tons a week are reduced to pig

iron; in this state it is carried to the forges, where about eight tons a

week are hammered out into bars, ploughshares, &c., ready for the smith."

The aged people of the neighbourhood well remember when the Flaxley

furnaces were in blast, and tell of the ancient cinders and pickings of

the old mine-holes being taken down to them. With their disuse the

former mode of manufacturing iron ceased in the district. The furnace

buildings have been long removed, and the pools drained in which the

water accumulated for driving the machinery.

[Picture: Flaxley Church, and Abbey in the distance]

Thus the "Castiard Vale" is once more devoted wholly to the picturesque,

with the most pleasing effect, its beauty being yet further enhanced by a

well-placed and exquisitely designed church, erected a few yards to the

west of the one built by Mrs. Pope, after the designs of G. G. Scott,

Esq., in the Early Decorated style of pointed architecture. {191} It

comprises a richly ornamented chancel, nave, and north aisle, and a tower

surmounted with a broach spire. There is churchroom for about 300 of the

poor Foresters dwelling on Pope's Hill, as well as for the inhabitants of

the parish. It was consecrated on the 18th of September, 1856, by Dr.

Baring, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, who preached on the occasion

from Eccl. v. 1, most of the surrounding gentry attending, and fifty of

the clergy. The present school-room was built in 1840, and accommodates

sixty scholars.

CHAPTER XII.

The Forest roads and railways--Vestiges of some very ancient roads,

apparently Roman--The old "crooked, winding, and cross ways," when no

wheeled vehicles were allowed in the Forest--The original road across the

Forest from Gloucester to Monmouth--Roads, first improvement in

1761--Road Act of 1795 carried into effect--Mitcheldean a post

town--Roads further improved in 1828 and 1841--their present state and

extent--The tramroads and railways of the Forest.

Unusually perfect remains of very ancient roads still exist in various

parts of the Forest, resembling those made by the Romans, being slightly

raised above the general level of the ground, and carefully pitched with

large block stones, not unfrequently a foot square. The most remarkable

of these is found along the vale below Puttern Edge, and called "Dean's

Road," where the pitching remains in many places, being about eight feet

in width. Although no coins have been found near it, yet its direction,

indicating a connexion between the old iron-works above Sowdley, and the

neighbourhood of Lydney, suggests that it was used in ancient times when

the minerals of the district were carried from place to place on

packhorses. Another road, yet traceable, gives the name of "Kymin"

(Chemin) to a hill opposite Monmouth, the slopes of which it ascends in

the direction of the Forest; and a third is partially preserved in a lane

leading amongst the cottages at Little Dean's Woodside: it is called by

the inhabitants "the Causeway," being yet partly paved, and uniting with

another road, which is still in places formed of large stones.

The "crooked, winding, and cross-ways," which are said by Camden to have

existed in the Forest, and to have rendered it a place of refuge for

noble fugitives, were those paths which penetrated its depths, having

their direction turned and rendered perplexing through the frequent

interposition of streams, bogs, and thickets. Such were the means of

communication which for many generations served the purposes of the

Foresters, who permitted no wheeled vehicles to enter their domain, and

possessed few if any themselves.

One high road, nearly identical with the present line between Monmouth

and Mitcheldean, seems to have sufficed for the neighbourhood during at

least 200 years. It was in use in the age of Elizabeth, a silver penny

of that reign having been found on it, between Nailbridge and Harrow

Hill. By this road Lord Herbert must have marched his army of 500 horse

and 1500 foot towards Gloucester in 1643, as likewise Sir W. Waller a

month later when pursued by Prince Maurice, and most probably Colonel

Massey took the same route more than once. It seems also to be alluded

to in the following suggestion made to Sir R. Atkyns, as Lord Chief Baron

of the Exchequer, by a committee appointed in 1692 to inquire into the

state of the Forest, with the view of securing its better government and

preservation. They proposed that "a Justice-seat should be held once a

year, for six or seven years, during the long vacation, within the said

Forest, or not very remote from it, which might be done by deputation

from the Lord Chief Justice in Eyre to some of their Majesties' Justices

of Assize going in their \_ordinary circuits from Gloucester to

Monmouth\_." Their journey was of course made on horseback, the usage

being still continued, which the father of the Lord Chancellor Clarendon

permitted him to adopt, when he gave him "leave to ride the circuit in

the summer with his uncle the Chief Justice." An old house at the foot

of the Plump Hill, near Mitcheldean, called "the Judges' Lodgings,"

because they made it their resting-place as they passed that way, seems

confirmatory of the above suggestion.

The first mention of any sum being spent on the improvement of the Forest

roads, occurs about the time that the trees planted in 1668 would be

growing into timber fit for the Royal dockyards, and requiring therefore

facilities for removal to the water-side. Hence, between 1761 and 1786,

upwards of 11,305 pounds 1s. 10d. was laid out on them. Mr. Thomas

Blunt, the Deputy Surveyor of the Forest, stated in 1788, in explanation

of such an outlay, "That there are two great roads leading across the

Forest, which have been made and kept in repair by the produce of timber

felled and sold for that purpose, and on which by far the greater part of

the expense for roads has been bestowed; the one enters the Forest at

Mitcheldean, and proceeds quite across the Forest to Coleford, the other

leads from Little Dean to Coleford. These two roads have been made

chiefly with a view to the convenience of the public, being the principal

roads from Gloucester to South Wales; neither of which roads, nor others

which have been made and amended at a considerable expense to the Crown,

are any way conducive to the preservation of the Forest, as they are but

of little use in the conveyance of timber felled for the use of the Navy,

the Navy timber in general being carried by a distinct road leading from

the Forest towards Blakeney, which induces him to believe that the roads

lately made are disadvantageous to the Forest, more carts and waggons

having been used since the making of the roads in the fetching and

carrying away of coal, greater quantities of timber being used in the

coalworks, and much more timber secretly conveyed away under the coal

than heretofore; which practice he believes might in a great measure be

prevented by the erecting of turnpike gates on the roads, the tolls

whereof would be fully sufficient to keep the roads in necessary repair."

But the Forest roads were still in so execrable a condition, being

impassable in the winter, and at other times perilous to the heavily

laden coal waggons and horses, always requiring large teams, according to

the unanimous testimony of the oldest residents, that a further outlay on

them, to the amount of 10,645 pounds, took place in carrying out the

provisions of the Act passed in 1795 "for amending, widening, improving,

and keeping in repair several roads in and through His Majesty's Forest

of Dean, and the waste lands thereto belonging, in the county of

Gloucester, and for turning, altering, and changing the course of the

said roads, and for making several new roads in the said Forest to lead

to certain places in and near the same; and also for amending, widening,

and keeping in repair certain roads leading from the said Forest to and

through several parts of the parish of Newland adjoining the Forest, in

the said county of Gloucester." Mr. Surveyor Brimner states, that at a

meeting of the Verderers of the Forest, and the Roads Trustees, held at

Newnham, 22nd April, 1796, the following roads were appointed to be put

in repair:--

From Mitcheldean to Coleford Lane End.

,, St. White's ,, ,,

,, Coleford ,, Viney Hill.

,, Viney Hill ,, Purton Passage.

,, Miry Stock ,, Lydbrook.

,, Perry Grove ,, Clearwell.

,, The Bearse ,, Bream.

At this time, therefore, so much of the ancient road as lay between

Mitcheldean and Nail Bridge was discarded for the present one, which

ascends the Stenders Hill by a more even slope, and avoids the abrupt

rise of Harrow Hill. The old line may yet be traced, and Nail Bridge

remains; in allusion to which improvements the following advertisement

appeared in \_The Gloucester Journal\_, Monday, Sept. 5, 1796:--"James

Graham, at the George Inn, Mitcheldean, has great pleasure in returning

his respectful thanks for the liberal support he has received, and

announces to the public that the new road through His Majesty's Forest of

Dean, leading from Mitcheldean to Coleford and Monmouth, which is the

high road from Gloucester to South Wales, is already greatly improved,

and in a short time will be equal to any in this part of the country. It

is allowed that travellers will save a mile at least by taking this way

from Gloucester to Monmouth; and when accurately measured, it is imagined

that the saving will be found to be still greater. Graham has laid in a

stock of admirable port and other wines, and every exertion will be made

for public accommodation. Post chaises at 1s. per mile, and sober

drivers."

Nor was this advertisement a mere puff, as Mr. Budge, writing in the year

1803, states--"The great travelling road to Monmouth from Gloucester now

leads through Mitcheldean, which, with the good accommodation afforded to

travellers, will in process of time be probably the occasion of raising

it to a considerable rank among towns of this description." Besides

which, there are sufficient intimations in the double approach to the

George Inn and large yard adjoining it, as well as in the capacious

stable-yards belonging to the other inns of the town, which is beset with

six toll-bars, that its character must have been such as is here given;

to which may also be added the numerous farmers' teams which were

constantly passing through the town to and from the collieries in the

Forest, in droves of ten or fifteen together, the bells on the horses

merrily jingling as they moved along. Connected with which circumstance

it may be observed that the old roads of the district abound in

horsepools, or watering-places, wherever a spring could be made available

for their supply. At this time the two Mitcheldean toll-bars, situated

on the Gloucester and Monmouth line of road, were let at 250 pounds per

annum. The only link connecting in these respects the past with recent

times was supplied until the last five years by our old friend Mr.

Yearsley's coach, running three times a week between Coleford and

Gloucester.

For the next thirty years the Crown does not seem to have laid out any

money upon the Forest roads, although their condition was so bad that it

was urged as a reason for building churches and schools in the Forest,

those of the surrounding parishes not being readily accessible to the

inhabitants. But in 1828 and the two following years the Roads Trustees

borrowed 5,000 pounds, with which they made the road

Leading from Park End to Bream 1.5 miles.

,, Nail Bridge to Little Dean 3 ,,

,, the White Oak to Lydbrook 1 ,,

besides widening and improving the road through Lydbrook for Bishopswood.

They likewise formed the road

Leading from Berry Hill to 1 mile.

Shortstanding

,, Christ Church to Symmonds 2 ,,

Rock

,, White Oak to Eastbatch Lane .5 ,,

End

when other parts of the roads were also improved.

In 1841 the large sum of 5,000 pounds was expended by the Commissioners

in constructing roads

From Park End to Blakeney 5 miles.

,, Nail Bridge to Mitcheldean 2 ,,

,, Drybrook to the Bailey Lane 1.5 ,,

End

,, Bishop's Wood to Nail 3.5 ,,

Bridge

,, Long Stone, Berry Hill, and 2 ,,

Fetch Pit

To which may be added a short length of road made from the Hawthorns to

the top of the Stenders, by a grant from the Operatives' Relief Fund.

{197}

The total length of the roads comprised within the present limits of the

Forest is 41 miles 3 furlongs 31 yards. The tolls are not let, but

collected in the name of the Commissioners, and yielded, in 1856, as

follows, at their respective gates:--

pounds. \_s.\_ \_d.\_

Moseley 26 18 7

Nibley 97 16 6

Yorkley 67 7 9

Lydbrook 227 2 1.5

Slope Pit 17 8 7.5

Nail Bridge 19 18 1

Drybrook 205 1 1

The Stenders 58 15 11.5

Plump Hill 144 16 7.5

Little Lane End 34 13 10

St. White's 81 19 8

Little Dean 99 0 7

Woodside

Reden Horne 16 7 8.5

Howler's Slade 14 19 8.5

Bream 73 12 6

Park End 145 5 2.5

--- -- --

Total 1,331 4 7.5

All these roads are now in excellent repair, but they have been,

nevertheless, compelled to yield to the superior advantages of the

railway system, here grafted, as is the case in some other places, upon

the useful but less perfect tramway. {198}

In the years 1809 and 1810 a local Act authorised the construction of an

extensive system of tramways throughout the Forest, under the auspices of

"the Severn and Wye" and "Bullo Pill" Companies, traversing respectively

the western and eastern sides of the district. The latter of these, the

tramway which descends the eastern valley through Cinderford and Sowdley

to the Severn, passed into the hands of the South Wales Railway Company,

who purchased it in 1849, with the view of forming it into a locomotive

road; and this they effected after great difficulty, in consequence of

being obliged to carry on the trade upon the tramway at the same time,

and opened it on the 14th July, 1854. Its present length, extending from

Bullo Pill to the Churchway Colliery, is nearly seven miles. There is a

branch from it of three-quarters of a mile to the Whimsey, another of one

mile and a half to the Lightmoor Colliery, one of three-quarters of a

mile to the Crump Meadow Colliery, one of a quarter of a mile to the

Nelson Colliery, and a shorter one to the Regulator Pits. It is a single

line, constructed throughout on the broad-gauge principle, and for the

present only conveys minerals. A central line, in addition to the above,

is in course of formation. The tramway of "the Severn and Wye Company,"

on the west side of the Forest, has not been materially altered.

CHAPTER XIII.

The deer of the Forest, and its timber, plants, birds, ferns, and early

allusions to the Forest deer--The Court of Swainmote, by which they were

preserved--Act of 1668 regarding them--Reports of the Chief Forester in

Fee and Bowbearer, and Verderers, in 1788, respecting the deer--Mr.

Machen's memoranda on the same subject--Their removal in 1849--The birds

of the Forest--Unforestlike aspect of the Forest, now, compared with its

former condition--Successive reductions of its timber--Its oldest

existing trees described--Present appearance of the young woods--Table of

the Timber Stock, from time to time, during the last 200 years--An

account of the rarer plants and ferns.

The earliest allusion to deer in the Forest is, as might be expected,

coeval with its being constituted a royal domain. William the Conqueror

is said to have been hunting here when he first heard of the taking of

York by the Danes in August, 1069. In Henry I.'s reign the deer were so

numerous as to make the tithes of them worthy of being given as a royal

present by that king to the Abbey of Gloucester, which city, says

Geraldus, was supplied with venison from the Forest of Dean; and the

frequent visits of King John to Flaxley Abbey and to the Castle of St.

Briavel's during the latter years of his reign, arose probably from the

abundant sport the neighbourhood afforded him.

The deer of the King's forests were preserved in ancient times with the

greatest care by the execution of certain laws, administered by a

Swainmote Court, which was regulated by officers called Verderers,

Foresters, and Agisters, who disposed of all cases in which deer were

killed without warrant: not that any man was to lose either life or limb,

as formerly, for so doing; but he was to be heavily fined if he had

property, or, if not, to be imprisoned a year and a day, and be then

released, if he could find sufficient securities, or be abjured the

realm. A curious exception existed, however, in the case of any

archbishop, bishop, earl, or baron summoned to the King, and by the way

passing through a royal forest, when it was lawful for him to "take and

kill one or two deer, by the view of the Forester, if he be present, or

else shall cause one to blow an horne for him that he seem not to steal

the deer." At the fawning season, or "fence-month," as it was called,

commencing fifteen days before and ending fifteen days after

Midsummer-day, the Forest officers attended within their own walks, and

required all manner of dogs to be kept in at the peril of the owner,

bringing before the verderers any persons found hunting or out of the

highway with a bow or gun, or gathering rushes or bents, or driving swine

or cattle, to the hurt or disquiet of the deer. They were also charged

at all times with the preservation of the vert or underwood, on account

of the shelter and food it afforded the deer.

[Picture: The Tomb of John de Yrall, Forester in Fee, in Newland

Churchyard. Round the sides of the Tomb is this inscription, in old

characters--"Here : lythe : Ion : Wyrall : Forster : of : Fee : the :

whych : dysesyd : on : the : VIII : day : of : September : in : ye :

yeare of oure Lorde : m.cccc.lviii. on : hys : Soule : God : have : Mercy

: Amen."]

By the Act of 1668 it is provided, that, "should His Majesty think fit to

restore the game of deer within the said Forrest, the same shall not

exceed the number of 800 deer of all sorts at any one time;" intimating

that during the Civil War, and the period of the Commonwealth, that

kingly pastime had been discontinued. The same Act directs that "the

owners, tenants, &c., of any of the several lands lying within the bounds

of the Forest may keep any sort of dogs inexpediated to hunt and kill any

beast of chase or other game," except during "the fence month," and "the

time of the winter heyning, viz. from the 11th of November to the 23rd of

April," when all rights of common were to be in abeyance.

Charles Edwin, Esq., "Chief Forester in Fee and Bowbearer," in 1787,

stated to the Commissioners that he claimed by virtue of his office to be

entitled to the right shoulder of all bucks and does killed within the

Forest, and also to ten fee bucks and ten fee does, annually to be there

killed and taken at his own free will and pleasure, with licence to hawk,

hunt, fish, and fowl within the Forest." As bowbearer, it was his duty

"to attend His Majesty with a bow and arrow, and six men clothed in

green, whenever His Majesty shall be pleased to hunt within the said

Forest." Edmund Probyn, Esq., one of the Verderers of the Forest, stated

at the same time, that the number of bucks and does which it contained

could not be ascertained; but it was much understocked, so that the

warrants were sometimes sent back unexecuted." Until the deer were

removed, each of the four verderers was entitled to a buck and a doe

every year.

[Picture: The King's Bowbearer]

"When I first remember the Forest," Mr. Machen remarks, in his private

papers, "now 65 years since, the deer were very numerous. I recollect my

father taking me up to the Buckholt in an evening for the purpose of

showing them to me, and we never failed of seeing several:" this was

about 1790. "From that time for 20 years, in consequence of the decrease

of the covert and the increase of poachers, they rapidly diminished,

until in 1810, when I do not believe there were ten in the whole Forest.

At this period the enclosures were made for the preservation of timber,

and woodmen appointed to the care of them; the few deer that were left

were protected, and as the young trees grew up so as to afford them

shelter, they rapidly increased, and in thirty years, viz. in 1840, I

should think there were not less than 800 or 1000 deer in the Forest."

"The red deer were introduced in 1842 by Mr. Herring, who brought down on

24th February, from Woburn, two stags and four hinds. They were in fine

condition, and were turned loose in Russell's Enclosure, one mile from

the Speech-house." Mr. Machen further notes as follows:

"October, 1842.--Two of the hinds have calves with them."

"October 20th.--One of the stags was hunted from Trippenkennet, in

Herefordshire, and swam the Wye three times: the hounds brought him into

Nag's Head Enclosure."

"July, 1844.--Two stags, three hinds, and a calf are now in Park Hill

Enclosure, and are frequently seen in the meadow in front of Whitemead.

One old stag is at Edge Hills. A hind is sometimes seen in the

Highmeadow Woods, and it is known that one was killed there."

"October.--A young hind was sent down, and turned out in Haywood

Enclosure."

"October, 1845.--The two old stags are wandering about, and seldom in the

Forest."

"October 4.--Hunted the stag near Park End; ran four hours, but lost him,

night coming on."

"September 20th, 1846.--The stag that was about Staunton and Newland was

killed this day, after a run of three hours. He was found on the old

hills near Newland, and killed in Coleford. This was a four years old

deer, calved in the Forest; the hind and calf went to Staunton, and never

returned: the hind was killed by poachers. The venison of the stag was

excellent: the haunches were 45 lbs. each."

"October, 1847.--Another stag was killed after a good run. Two were

found, and ran some time together before the hounds in Park Hill."

"October 6, 1848.--The last stag returned to the Forest, after having

been in the woods, &c., near Chepstow almost a year. He was found in

Oaken Hill, and killed, after a run of three hours, in Sallow Vallets.

His haunches weighed 51 lbs., and the whole weight 307 lbs."

"The fallow deer of the Forest were reduced in number after the year 1850

by killing a large number of does. They were all fine animals, and when

the enclosures protected them they got very fat, and the venison of fine

flavour. They were generally hunted."

At the time of Lord Duncan's Committee in 1849 a general feeling

prevailed against the deer, on the ground of their demoralising influence

as an inducement to poaching, and all were ordered to be destroyed, there

being at that time perhaps 150 bucks and 300 does.

The remarks "Going after the deer," or "You don't, may be, want to buy

some meat?" are no doubt fresh in the recollection of many. Going about

with guns, in numbers too formidable for the keepers to interfere,

shooting the deer by day, and carrying them off at night, were by no

means uncommon. Poachers of a poorer and more primitive stamp are said

to have resorted to the expedient of dropping a heavy iron bar from where

they had secreted themselves, on the projecting branch of an oak, so that

it might fall across the neck of the deer which had come to browse

beneath. Or they baited a large hook with an apple, and suspended it at

a proper height by a stout cord over a path which the deer were observed

to frequent. They also were known to set a number of nooses of iron wire

in a row, skilfully fastened to a rope secured to a couple of trees, into

which, aided by dogs, they drove the deer. With such kind of sport at

command, we may be well assured of the truth of Mr. Nicholson's statement

before Lord Duncan's Committee--"if once men begin to poach, we can never

reckon upon their working afterwards." Ornamental to a forest as deer

undoubtedly are, and disappointing as it may be to the stranger to find

none in the Forest of Dean, we cannot regret that, in 1855, Mr. Machen

records, "there is not now a deer left in the Forest, and only a few

stragglers in the Highmeadow Woods."'

Besides deer inhabiting the Forest from the earliest times, no doubt it

was also frequented by all such animals as used to be accounted "beasts

of the forest," viz. the hare, boar, and wolf, in addition to the hart

and hind.

Adverting to the feathered tribes which have been observed in this

neighbourhood, Mr. Machen remarks--"The birds in the Forest do not differ

much from those met with in other parts of the west of England. I have

been struck with the contrast in the smaller number of large birds,

mostly of the falcon kind, which are now seen, in comparison with those I

remember fifty years ago. At that time you might often observe fifteen

or twenty kites and hawks hovering over Church Hill and the Bicknor

walks; but now it is not frequently the case that you see one. It

appears to me also that there is a great diminution in the number of all

kinds of birds, small as well as large, so that in some parts of the

Forest and woods the stillness and absence of animals of every kind is

surprising. Ravens too have become very scarce. A pair had a nest by

Simmon's Rock this year (1857), but they are said to drive their young to

a distance as soon as they can provide for themselves. The only kind of

plover in the Forest is the green plover or lapwing, which were very

numerous at one time in the wet greens. Woodcocks used to be thought

never to breed in this country, but they certainly do so now. In this

Forest and in other places I have frequently seen them during the summer,

and have observed their nests, made on the ground, of slight

construction. One above Whitemead had only two eggs. When the

plantations were first made, they became, even in the centre of them,

well stocked with partridges; but as the woods grew up they all

disappeared. Pheasants were turned out by me at Whitemead, and soon

spread over the whole Forest. At one time there was a good stock, but

lately they are much reduced. There are a great variety of woodpeckers,

which do not, I think, hurt sound trees, but rather those which they find

already decaying. Fieldfares and redwings come in great numbers.

Nightingales are not numerous in the Forest, although they abound in the

neighbourhood. They do not like its depths, or large trees hollow below;

but prefer a thick close cover, and the vicinity of a road or path where

the bushes are low and thick: but I never heard one in the middle of the

Forest. Although a country like this seems unsuited to the wheatear, as

preferring the Downs of Sussex, &c., still they come here in the spring,

and are generally seen by the roads, or on stone walls in which they

build their nests, and even in the heaps of stones, as also in the rails

of bark. I remember that beautiful bird, the kingfisher, by the Forest

brooks, but now you never see one. Flocks of rooks sometimes come into

the neighbourhood when the oaks are much blighted, to feed on the grubs,

and in such quantities that the trees are quite black with them. They

come from a distance, as they are not seen at other times, and never

breed in the Forest."

Mr. Gee, speaking of the birds which he has observed on the north-east

side of the Forest, states--"The raven is seen more frequently in the

neighbourhood than in most parts of England: his croak over head is not

at all an uncommon sound. A pair of buzzards will occasionally circle

aloft for a considerable time. The snipe is found very early on the

Forest, so much so that I have known in the month of July six killed in a

day. The jack snipe particularly abounds about 'the Dam Pool.' The

bittern has been twice shot near the same spot within the last twenty

years. The seagull skims over occasionally from the Severn side. The

water-ousel is frequently met with on the Forest brooks. The cross-bill

comes sometimes into the neighbourhood. The turtle-dove particularly

abounds, so that in early summer our woods are in a charm with their soft

purring. The fern owls are very numerous. I once came on a considerable

flock of the rare bird, the siskin. The titmouse tribe are abundant; but

we never see the rarer species, the bearded or the crested tit. The

chats and the wheatear are of course common. The woodpeckers are very

common: even the two pied species might be obtained here with very little

trouble. We are all over willow wrens in the spring. On the whole, I

should say that it is a neighbourhood unfavourable for the observation of

birds; and yet, were an observant naturalist to come among us, he would

soon astonish us by what he would discover."

THE TIMBER.

Most strangers visiting the Forest do so in the expectation of seeing

groves of stately timber covering the ground in every direction, and are

much disappointed when they find the greater part to consist of oaks,

barely fifty years old, comprised in enclosures, and the remainder of the

surface disfigured by furnaces, collieries, and groups of inferior

buildings. The Forest as it existed in the days of the Norman and

Plantagenet kings, William I. and John, who resorted to it for the

pleasures of the chase, when its dark recesses often concealed noble

fugitives, or disposed its population to habits of violence and plunder,

or at a still later period, when its stately trees had become objects of

apprehension or jealousy to the Spaniards, was widely different from what

it is at present. Few of the trees of those days have survived the

fellings, spoliations, and storms of succeeding ages. According to Mr.

Pepys, "a great fall" in Edward III.'s reign left only those which in his

time were called "forbid trees," to be further reduced by the

requirements of seventy-two iron forges, which then lit up the district,

or the yet more voracious furnaces by which they were succeeded. One

storm alone, viz. that of the 18th of February, 1662, prostrated in one

night 1,000 oaks, and as many beech, whilst only 200 were, it is said,

left standing after the wholesale fellings perpetrated by Sir John

Winter. Of these select few, the venerable "Jack of the Yat," near the

Coleford and Mitcheldean Road on the top of "The Long Hill," appears to

be one.

[Picture: "Jack of the Yat"]

Mr. Machen thinks it the most ancient tree in the Forest, and probably

four or five hundred years old. It is of the Quercus robur kind, or old

English oak, the stalks of its acorns being long, with rarely more than

one acorn on a stalk, and the stalks of its leaves short. A few years

back it was struck by lightning, which has left a deep groove on its

trunk. In 1830 it measured, at 6 feet from the ground, 17 feet 8.75

inches; and in 1846 upwards of 18 feet 3.5 inches: but it has long since

passed its prime. {208} Two other oaks, similar in form, and fully as

large in girth, yet exist, but in a decaying state, on Shapridge.

[Picture: The "Newland Oak."]

There are other trees approaching in age to the above, viz. an oak in

Sallow Vallets Enclosure near the Drive, of the Quercus sessiliflora

kind, its leaves growing on long stalks, and the acorns clustering

together on short stalks, and perhaps 200 years old, being 13 feet round

at 6 feet from the ground, and still in a very flourishing condition.

Another oak-tree, near York Lodge, measuring 21 feet round, formed

apparently of two trees which grew together for ages, but not long since

threatened to fall asunder, necessitating their being cramped up across

the head by a transverse iron bar. At the Brookhall Ditches also there

is an oak entirely variegated, containing 100 feet of timber; besides

several other fine trees near. There are five very large beech-trees

growing about two miles from Coleford on the road to Mitcheldean, and

others likewise, almost as large, on the Blaize Bailey, besides several

more near Danby Lodge; but the finest of all the beeches in the Forest is

near the entrance to Whitemead Park, near York Lodge, measuring 17 feet

at 6 feet from the ground. Most of the lesser oaks which have become

timber, and have not been removed by the recent "falls," are probably the

remains of the plantations made in 1670, such as the various flourishing

oaks which may be noticed near the Speech House, on the Lea Bailey, the

Lining Wood, and in a few other places. Many of the old hollies seem to

belong to the same date, being either indigenous, or planted about this

time to serve as food for the deer. One of the largest of those growing

near the Speech House measures 9 feet in girth at 4 feet from the ground.

[Picture: An Oak, near York Lodge]

During the earlier half of the last century the devastations were so

rapid as to necessitate re-enclosing and re-planting various parts, about

the year 1760; but the effort to restock the whole of the Forest as it

now appears was reserved to 1810 and the thirty subsequent years. Its

present aspect, with very few exceptions, is such as to afford the best

hopes that by the close of the present century a large proportion of the

woods will be yielding profitable timber, provided the crops be duly

protected from injury, which otherwise the rapidly increasing population

of the neighbourhood will too surely occasion. Nine-tenths of the

present stock are oaks; the rest are Spanish chesnuts, Scotch fir, larch,

spruce, beech, and a few elms, sycamores, and horse-chesnuts; birch grows

spontaneously in most parts of the Forest.

The following Table exhibits the quantity of timber growing at different

times in the Forest within the last two hundred years.

A.D. Tons. Cords. Loads fit

for the

Navy.

1635 61,928 153,209 14,350 The trees

generally

decayed;

about 500

past their

full growth.

1662 25,929 Oak 121,500 11,335

4,204 Beech

-------

30,133 (30,000 old

trees.)

1764 27,302

1783 90,382 Oak 95,043

17,982 Beech

-------

108,364

1788 48,000

1808 22,882

1857 10,000 About 5,000

trees, 7,500

having been

felled since

1845.

With respect to the rarer plants found in the neighbourhood, it may be

observed that the walk by the side of the Wye from Ross to Chepstow is

said to be the most productive in objects of botanical interest of any

part of England. The following list, kindly furnished by Mr. Gee,

applies chiefly to the north-east section of the Forest and its

vicinity:--

\_Toothwort\_ (Lathraea squamaria), at the Scowles above the Lining

Wood.

\_Bog Asphodel\_ (Narthecium ossifragum), in the Mitcheldean Meand

Enclosure.

\_Gentian\_ (Gentiana amarella), Limestone Quarry near Silverstone, at

the Hawthorns.

\_Winter Green\_ (Payrola media), Hare Church Hill.

\_Bog Pimpernel\_ (Anagallis tenella), Purlieu Road.

\_Sundews\_ (Drosera rotundifolia and longifolia), Mitcheldean Meand.

\_Little Sallow\_ (Salix repens), Mitcheldean Meand.

\_Viola lactea\_, Mitcheldean Meand.

\_Cotton Grass\_ (Eriophorum angustifolium), Mitcheldean Meand.

\_Petty Whin\_ (Genista Anglica), the waste between the Dampool and the

Speech House.

\_Gromwell\_ (Lithospermum officinale), throughout the Forest.

\_Bee Orchis\_ (Ophrys apifera), road to Bishopswood.

\_Services\_ (Pyrus pinnatifida and aria), Bicknor Rocks.

\_Barberry\_ (Berberis vulgaris), Bicknor Rocks.

\_Cotyledon umbilicus\_, Purlieu Road.

\_Narcissus biflorus\_, Hope Mansel.

\_Mentha piperita\_, Bishopswood.

Mr. Bird has been so good as to supply the accompanying list of

Forest Ferns:--

Scolopendrium ceterach, and S. vulgare.

Polypodium vulgare. Blechnum boreale.

,, phegopteris. Pteris aquilina.

,, dryopteris.

Aspidium lobatum, and Filix mas and spinulosum, dilatatum, Ruta

muraria, Trichomanes, Adiantum nigrum, Filix foemina.

To which may be added the Polypodium calcareum, noticed by Mr. Anderson,

of the Bailey Lodge, who further states that the Daphne Mezereon shrub,

as well as the wood laurel, are indigenous in the Forest, especially in

the coppices on the limestone.

CHAPTER XIV.

\_The Iron Mines and Iron Works in the Forest\_--Mr. Wyrrall's description

of the ancient excavations for iron--Their remote antiquity proved, and

character described--Historical allusions to them--The quality,

abundance, and situation of the old iron cinders--The early forges

described--Portrait of an original free miner of iron ore--His

tools--Introduction of the blast furnace into the Forest--Various Crown

leases respecting them--A minute inventory of them--Mr. Wyrrall's

glossary of terms found therein--Mr. Mushet's remarks on the remains of

the above works--First attempts to use prepared coal in the

furnaces--Iron-works suppressed--Value of iron ore at that time--Dr.

Parsons's account of the manner of making iron--State of the adjoining

iron-works during the seventeenth century--Revival of them at its

close--Their rise and prosperity since--At Cinderford, Park End, Sowdley,

Lydbrook, and Lydney--Character of the iron-mines at the present time.

"There are," writes Mr. Wyrrall, in his valuable MS. on the ancient

iron-works of the Forest, dated in the year 1780, "deep in the earth vast

caverns scooped out by men's hands, and large as the aisles of churches;

and on its surface are extensive labyrinths, worked among the rocks, and

now long since overgrown with woods; which whosoever traces them must see

with astonishment, and incline to think them to have been the work of

armies rather than of private labourers. They certainly were the toil of

many centuries, and this perhaps before they thought of searching in the

bowels of the earth for their ore--whither, however, they at length

naturally pursued the veins, as they found them to be exhausted near the

surface." Such were the remains, as they existed in his day, of the

original iron-mines of this locality; and except where modern operations

have obliterated them, such they continue to the present time. Beyond

the inference of remote antiquity, which we naturally draw from the fact

of their presenting no trace of the use of any kind of machinery, or of

gunpowder, or the display of any mining skill, we may cite the unanimous

opinion of the neighbourhood, that they owe their origin to the

predecessors of that peculiar order of operatives known as "the free

miners of the Forest of Dean;" a view which is confirmed by the authentic

history of the district. But the numerous Roman relics found deeply

buried in the prodigious accumulations of iron cinders, once so abundant

here as to have formed an important part of the materials supplied to the

furnaces of the Forest, afford proof that the iron-mines were in

existence as early as the commencement of the Christian era; so that the

openings we now see are the results of many centuries of mining

operations, with which their extent, number, and size perfectly accord.

[Picture: The Devil's Chapel]

These mines present the appearance either of spacious caves, as on the

Doward Hill, or at the Scowles near Bream, or they consist of precipitous

and irregularly shaped passages, left by the removal of the ore or

mineral earth wherever it was found, and which was followed in some

instances for many hundreds of yards, openings being made to the surface

wherever the course of the mine permitted, thus securing an efficient

ventilation, so that although they have been so long deserted the air in

them is perfectly good. They are also quite dry, owing probably to their

being drained by the new workings adjacent to them, and descending to a

far greater depth. In the first instance they were no doubt excavated as

deep as the water permitted, that is, to about 100 feet, or in dry

seasons even lower, as is in fact proved by the water-marks left in some

of them. Occasionally they are found adorned with beautiful

incrustations of the purest white, formed by springs of carbonate of

lime, originating in the rocky walls of limestone around. Sometimes,

after proceeding a considerable distance, they suddenly open out into

spacious vaults fifteen feet in width, the site probably of some valuable

"pocket" or "churn" of ore; and then again, where the supply was less

abundant, narrowing into a width hardly sufficient to admit the human

body. Occasionally the passage divides and unites again, or abruptly

stops, turning off at a sharp angle, or changing its level, where rude

steps cut in the rock show the mode by which the old miners ascended or

descended; whilst sometimes the rounds of ladders have been found,

semi-carbonized by age. These excavations abound on every side of the

Forest, wherever the iron makes its appearance, giving the name of

"Meand" or mine to such places. Of the deeper workings, one of the most

extensive occurs on the Lining Wood Hill above Mitcheldean, and is well

worth exploring.

The earliest historical allusion to these underground works is made by

Camden, who records that a gigantic skeleton was found in a cave on the

Great Doward Hill, now called "King Arthur's Hall," being evidently the

entrance to an ancient iron-mine. The next refers to the period of the

Great Rebellion, when the terrified inhabitants of the district are said

to have fled to them for safety when pursued by the hostile soldiery of

either party.

[Picture: "King Arthur's Hall"]

Adverting, in the next place, to the heaps of cinders left where the

ancient iron-manufacturers of the district worked, their \_quality\_,

\_abundance\_, and \_situation\_ suggest several interesting points of

observation. Thus, their \_quality\_ proves that charcoal was the fuel

invariably employed, and the large percentage of metal left in them shows

that the process then in use of extracting the iron was very imperfect.

They are said to vary in richness according as they belong to an earlier

or later period--so much so, that some persons have ventured on this data

to specify their relative ages; but other causes may have produced this

difference. As to their \_quantity\_, it was once so great, that, although

they have formed a large part of the mineral supply to the different

furnaces of the district for the last 200 years, they still abound for

miles round the Forest, wherever human habitations appear to have

clustered, sometimes giving the names to places, as "Cinderford" and

"Cinder Hill," or forming a valuable consideration in the purchase of

land containing them.

Equally remarkable with the two former characteristics of these cinders

is their \_position\_, not unfrequently on elevated spots and far removed

from any watercourse. Under such circumstances, the high temperature

necessary for acting upon the ore must have been obtained by constructing

the fireplace so as to create a powerful draft of air, the fuel and

mineral being placed alternately in layers within a circular structure of

stone, resembling the rude furnaces said to be used amongst the natives

of central Africa.

The "\_forgioe errantes\_," or itinerant forges, {216} mentioned in the

records of the Justice Seat held at Gloucester Castle in 1282, were no

doubt improvements on the structures just mentioned, being at the same

time so formed as to admit of being removed and set at work elsewhere, as

is in fact intimated by the name given to them, as well as by the more

frequent occurrence and smaller size of those cinder-heaps which are

found nearer to the centre of the Forest; and consequently of more modern

date, presenting a striking contrast to the larger and more ancient

mounds existing in places more remote, the refuse of the earlier forges

kept at work for many years in one spot.

The moderate capacity of the \_forgioe errantes\_ may be inferred from the

circumstance that in the reign of Edward I. there were seventy-two of

them in the Forest alone, supplied with ore by at least fifty-nine

iron-mines, by which Gloucester, Monmouth, Caerleon, Newport, Berkeley,

Trelleck, &c., are stated in the Book of the Laws and Customs of the Mine

to have been furnished with that metal. We also know that the two forges

at Flaxley consumed two oaks every week, and that in that age 46 pounds

was paid to the King by such persons as farmed any of them, or 7s. if

they held a year's licence.

In the year 1841, when that part of the old road leading up to the

Hawthorns from Hownal was altered, near the brook below Rudge Farm, the

hearths of five small forges, cut out of the sandstone rock, and

curiously pitched all round the bottom with small pebbles, were laid

open, and an iron tube seven or eight inches long, and one inch and a

half bore, apparently the nozzle of a pair of bellows, was found, as well

as scores of old tobacco pipes, bits of iron much rusted, and broken

earthenware, besides a piece of silver coin; but unfortunately none of

these relics have been preserved.

[Picture: Effigy of a Forest Free Miner]

The heraldic crest here copied from a mutilated brass of the 15th

century, within the Clearwell Chapel of Newland Church, gives a curious

representation of the iron-miner of that period equipped for his work.

It represents him as wearing a cap, holding a candlestick between his

teeth, handling a small mattock with which to loosen, as occasion

required, the fine mineral earth lodged in the cavity within which he

worked, or else to detach the metallic incrustations lining its sides,

bearing a light wooden mine-hod on his back, suspended by a

shoulderstrap, and clothed in a thick flannel jacket, and short leathern

breeches, tied with thongs below the knee. Although in this

representation the lower extremities are concealed, the numerous

shoe-footed marks yet visible on the moist beds of some of the old

excavations prove that the feet were well protected from injury by the

rough rocks of the workings. Several mattock-heads exactly resembling

the one which this miner is holding have also been discovered; and to

enable us, as it were, to supply every particular, small oak shovels for

collecting the ore, and putting it into the hod, have in some places been

found.

[Picture: Leather sole of a Shoe]

[Picture: Iron Mattock head]

The mining and making of iron continued to be carried on in the Forest in

the manner indicated by the foregoing particulars, until the improved

methods of manufacture established in other parts of the kingdom,

particularly in Sussex, had been adopted here. As early probably as the

commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, these improvements came into use

in this locality, and superseded the old "make." It was for its

iron-mines, even more than for its timber, that this Forest excited the

jealousy of the Spaniards, who designed to suppress the former by

destroying the charcoal fuel with which they were worked.

[Picture: Oak Shovel]

The earliest intimation of any such change in the mode of manufacture

occurs in the terms of a "bargayne," made by the Crown, and preserved in

the Lansdowne MSS. "wth Giles Brudges and others," on 14th June, 1611,

demising "libertye to erect all manner of workes, iron or other, by lande

or water, excepting Wyer workes, and the same to pull downe, remove, and

alter att pleasure," with "libertye to take myne oare and synders, either

to be used att the workes or otherwise," &c. By "synders" is meant the

refuse of the old forges, but which by the new process could be made to

yield a profitable percentage of metal which the former method had failed

to extract. In the year following a similar "bargayne" was made with

William Earl of Pembroke, at the enormous rental of 2,433 pounds 6s. 3d.,

but with leave to take "tymbr for buildinges & workes as they were," with

"allowance of reasonable fireboote for the workmen out of the dead & dry

wood, &c., to inclose a garden not exceedinge halfe an acre to every

house, and likewise to inclose for the necessity of the worke; the houses

and inclosures to bee pulled downe & layd open as the workes shall cease

or remove." A third and corresponding "bargayne" was agreed to, on the

3rd of May, 1615, with Sir Basil Brook, there being reserved in rent

"iron 320 tonns p. annum, wch att xiill xs the tone cometh to 4,000 per

an.: the rent reserved to be payd in iron by 40 tonns p. month, wch

cometh to 500ll every month; so in toto yearelye 4,000ll;" and a proviso

that "The workes already buylt onlye granted, wth no power to remove

them, but bound to mayntayne and leave them in good case and repayre, wth

all stock of hammers, anvil's, and other necessarys received att the

pattentees' entrye," as also that "libertye for myne and synders for

supplying of the workes onlye, to be taken by delivery of the miners att

the price agreed uppon."

In 1621 Messrs. Chaloner and Harris appear to have succeeded to the works

under a rent of 2,000 pounds, and who, we may presume, cast the 610 guns

ordered by the Crown on behalf of the States General of Holland in 1629.

The spot where they were made was, it would seem, ever after called "Guns

Mills." It certainly was so called as early as the year 1680, an

explanation of the term which is confirmed by the discovery there of an

ancient piece of ordnance. "Guns Pill" was the place where they were

afterwards shipped.

A curious inventory, dated 1635, of the buildings and machinery referred

to in the forenamed "bargaynes," has been preserved amongst the Wyrrall

Papers, and is inserted in the Appendix No. IV.

As to the length of time the works specified in Appendix No. IV.

continued in operation, the late Mr. Mushet, who knew the neighbourhood

intimately, in his valuable "Papers on Iron," &c., considers that they

were finally abandoned shortly after that date (1635), since, "with the

exception of the slags, traces of the water mounds, and the faint lines

of the watercourses, not a vestige of any of them remains." He adds,

"About fourteen years ago I first saw the ruins of one of these furnaces,

situated below York Lodge, and surrounded by a large heap of slag or

scoria that is produced in making pig iron. As the situation of this

furnace was remote from roads, and must at one time have been deemed

nearly inaccessible, it had all the appearance at the time of my survey

of having remained in the same state for nearly two centuries. The

quantity of slags I computed at from 8,000 to 10,000 tons. If it is

assumed that this furnace made upon an average annually 200 tons of pig

iron, and that the quantity of slag run from the furnace was equal to one

half the quantity of iron made, we shall have 100 tons of cinders

annually, for a period of from 80 to 100 years. If the abandonment of

this furnace took place about the year 1640, the commencement of its

smeltings must be assigned to a period between the years 1540 and 1560."

The oldest piece of cast iron which Mr. Mushet states he ever saw,

exhibited the arms of England, with the initials E. R., and bore date

1555, but he found no specimen in the Forest earlier than 1620. He also

observes, that, "although he had carefully examined every spot and relic

in Dean Forest likely to denote the site of Dud Dudley's enterprising but

unfortunate experiment of making iron with pit coal," it had been without

success, and the same with the like operations of Cromwell, who was

partner with Major Wildman, Captain Birch, and other of his officers,

Doctors of Physic and Merchants, by whom works and furnaces had been set

up in the Forest, at a vast charge.

In 1650 a Committee of the House of Commons ordered that all the

iron-works in the Forest, formerly let on lease by the Crown, should be

suppressed and demolished, partly perhaps with the view of checking the

consumption of wood, and also to put a stop to the making of cannon and

shot, lest when the occasion invited they should be seized by the adverse

party and turned against them. The Royalists had already found here a

valuable store of such things at the time they were defending Bristol

against Fairfax.

How far the above mandate was obeyed does not appear, but ere the year

1674 a general decay seems to have fallen on the Forest works, as in that

year the expediency of repairing them, and building an additional furnace

and two forges, at the cost of 1,000 pounds, was suggested. The opposite

course was, however, recommended, that is, of demolishing them all, lest

they should ultimately cause the destruction of the wood and timber, a

course which it seems was followed, since in the 4th order of the Mine

Law Court, dated 27th April, 1680, they are stated to have been lately

demolished. The same "Order" fixes the following prices as those at

which twelve Winchester bushels of iron mine should be delivered at the

following places:--St. Wonnarth's furnace 10s., Whitchurch 7s., Linton

9s., Bishopswood 9s., Longhope 9s., Flaxley 8s., Gunsmills (if rebuilt)

7s., Blakeney 6s., Lydney 6s.; at those in the Forest, if rebuilt, the

same as in 1668--Redbrooke 4s. 6d., The Abbey (Tintern) 9s., Brockweare

6s. 6d., Redbrooke Passage 5s. 6d., Gunpill 7s., or ore (intended for

Ireland) shipped on the Severn 6s. 6d.

Most of these localities exhibit traces of former iron manufacture having

been carried on at them up to the commencement of that century, as at

Flaxley, Bishopswood, &c., charcoal being the fuel invariably used, and

their situation such that water power was at command. The prices

severally affixed to the places above named indicate a discontinuance of

the mines on the north-east side of the Forest, those adjoining Newland

and in Noxon Park being at this date the chief sources of supply,

agreeably with the allusions to iron-pits existing there which occur in

the proceedings of the Mine Law Court about that time. The mode then in

use of operating upon the iron ore, as described in MS. by Dr. Parsons,

will be found in Appendix No. V.

Andrew Yarranton, in his book of novel suggestions for the "Improvement

of England by Sea and Land," printed in 1677, remarks as follows:--"And

first, I will begin in Monmouthshire, and go through the Forest of Dean,

and there take notice what infinite quantities of raw iron is there made,

with bar iron and wire; and consider the infinite number of men, horses,

and carriages which are to supply these works, and also digging of

ironstone, providing of cinders, carrying to the works, making it into

sows and bars, cutting of wood and converting into charcoal. Consider

also, in all these parts, the woods are not worth the cutting and

bringing home by the owners to burn in their houses; and it is because in

all these places there are pit coal very cheap . . . If these advantages

were not there, it would be little less than a howling wilderness. I

believe, if this comes to the hands of Sir Baynom Frogmorton and Sir

Duncomb Colchester, they will be on my side. Moreover, there is yet a

most great benefit to the kingdom in general by the sow iron made of the

ironstone and Roman cinders in the Forest of Dean, for that metal is of a

most gentle, pliable, soft nature, easily and quickly to be wrought into

manufacture, over what any other iron is, and it is the best in the known

world: and the greatest part of this sow iron is sent up Severne to the

forges into Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and

Cheshire, and there it's made into bar iron: and because of its kind and

gentle nature to work, it is now at Sturbridge, Dudley, Wolverhampton,

Sedgley, Wasall, and Burmingham, and there bent, wrought, and

manufactured into all small commodities, and diffused all England over,

and thereby a great trade made of it; and when manufactured, into most

parts of the world. And I can very easily make it appear, that in the

Forest of Dean and thereabouts, and about the material that comes from

thence, there are employed and have their subsistence therefrom no less

than 60,000 persons. And certainly, if this be true, then it is certain

it is better these iron-works were up and in being than that there were

none. And it were well if there were an Act of Parliament for enclosing

all common fit or any way likely to bear wood in the Forest of Dean and

six miles round the Forest; and that great quantities of timber might by

the same law be there preserved, for to supply in future ages timber for

shipping and building. And I dare say the Forest of Dean is, as to the

iron, to be compared to the sheep's back as to the woollen; nothing being

of more advantage to England than these two are . . .

"In the Forest of Dean and thereabouts the iron is made at this day of

cinders, being the rough and offal thrown by in the Romans' time; they

then having only foot blasts to melt the ironstone, but now, by the force

of a great wheel that drives a pair of bellows twenty feet long, all that

iron is extracted out of the cinders, which could not be forced from it

by the Roman foot blast. And in the Forest of Dean and thereabouts, and

as high as Worcester, there are great and infinite quantities of these

cinders; some in vast mounts above ground, some under ground, which will

supply the iron-works some hundreds of years, and these cinders are they

which make the prime and best iron, and with much less charcoal than doth

the ironstone . . . Let there be one ton of this bar-iron made of Forest

ironstone, and 20 pounds will be given for it."

According to a paper examined by Mr. Mushet, and referring probably to

the year 1720 or 1730, the iron-making district of the Forest of Dean

contained ten blast furnaces, viz. six in Gloucestershire, three in

Herefordshire, and one at Tintern, making their total number just equal

to that of the then iron-making district of Sussex. In Mr. Taylor's map

of Gloucestershire, published in 1777, iron furnaces, forges, or engines

are indicated at Bishopswood, Lydbrook, The New Wear, Upper Red Brook,

Park End, Bradley, and Flaxley. Yet only a small portion of the mineral

used at these works was obtained from the Dean Forest mines, if we may

judge from the statement made by Mr. Hopkinson, in 1788, before the

Parliamentary Commissioners, to the effect that "there is no regular

iron-mine work now carried on in the said Forest, but there were about

twenty-two poor men who, at times when they had no other work to do,

employed themselves in searching for and getting iron mine or ore in the

old holes and pits in the said Forest, which have been worked out many

years." Such a practice is well remembered by the aged miners, the chief

part of the ore used coming by sea from Whitehaven. Thus Mr. Mushet

represents, "at Tintern the furnace charge for forge pig iron was

generally composed of a mixture of seven-eighths of Lancashire iron ore,

and one-eighth part of a lean calcareous sparry iron ore from the Forest

of Dean, called flux, the average yield of which mixture was fifty per

cent of iron. When in full work, Tintern Abbey charcoal furnace made

weekly from twenty-eight to thirty tons of charcoal forge pig iron, and

consumed forty dozen sacks of charcoal; so that sixteen sacks of charcoal

were consumed in making one ton of pigs." This furnace was, he believes,

"the first charcoal furnace which in this country was blown with air

compressed in iron cylinders."

The year 1795 marks the period when the manufacture of iron was resumed

in the Forest by means of pit coal cokes at Cinderford, the above date

being preserved on an inscription stone in No. 1 furnace. "The

conductors of the work succeeded," in the words of Mr. Bishop,

communicated to the Author, "as to fact, and made pig iron of good

quality; but from the rude and insufficient character of their

arrangements, they failed commercially as a speculation, the quantity

produced not reaching twenty tons per week. The cokes were brought from

Broadmoor in boats, by a small canal, the embankment of which may be seen

at the present day. The ore was carried down to the furnaces on mules'

backs, from Edge Hill and other mines. The rising tide of iron

manufacture in Wales and Staffordshire could not fail to swamp such

ineffectual arrangements, and as a natural consequence Cinderford sank."

"Attempts still continued to be made from time to time in the locality,

but the want of success, and the loss of large capital, placed the whole

neighbourhood under a ban. It was during this interval that the name of

David Mushet appears in connexion with the Forest. He made his first

essay at White Cliff, near Coleford, in partnership with a Mr. Alford.

The result was the loss of the entire investment, and the dismantling of

the works, except the shell of the building, as a monument over the grave

of departed thousands. A large quantity of the castings were brought to

Cinderford in 1827, and were connected with the blast apparatus attached

to those works. The names of Birt and Teague now occasionally appeared,

combined with attempts to retrieve the character of the locality for iron

making; but all failed: and Mr. Mushet's famous declaration that physical

difficulties would for ever prevent its success, in connexion with such

repeated failures, seemed for several years to have sealed up the

prospects of the Forest; but at length a glimmer of light broke through

the darkness, and it was reserved for an individual of Forest birth to

prove that the greatest theorists may arrive at wrong practical

conclusions.

"Moses Teague was the day-star who ushered in a bright morning after a

dark and gloomy night. Great natural genius, combined with a rare

devotion to the interests of the Forest, led him to attempt a solution of

the difficulty. In this he so far succeeded at Dark Hill, in the cupola

formerly used by Mr. Mushet, that he formed a company, consisting of

Messrs. Whitehouse, James, and Montague, who took a lease of Park End

Furnace about the year 1825, erected a large water-wheel to blow the

furnace, and got to work in 1826. Having started this concern, Mr.

Teague, who from constitutional tendencies was always seeking something

new, and considered nothing done while aught remained to do, cast his eye

on Cinderford, which he thought presented the best prospects in the

locality; and after making arrangments with Messrs. Montague, Church, and

Fraser, those gentlemen with himself formed the first 'Cinderford Iron

Company,' the writer joining the undertaking when the foundations of the

buildings were being laid. The scheme comprehended two blast furnaces, a

powerful blast engine still at work, finery, forge, and rolling-mill,

designed to furnish about forty tons of tinplate per week with collieries

and mine work. Before the completion of the undertaking it was found

that the outlay so far exceeded their expectations and means, that the

concern became embarrassed almost before it was finished, which, with the

then great depression of the iron trade during the years 1829 to 1832

inclusive, led to the stoppage of the works, which had continued in

operation from November 1829 till the close of 1832, in which state they

continued to 1835, when Mr. Teague again came to the rescue, and induced

Mr. William Allaway, a gentleman in the tinplate trade, of Lydbrook, to

form, in connexion with Messrs. Crawshay, another company. Mr. Teague

having retired from the management of the furnaces, that important post

was filled by Mr. James Broad, a man of great practical knowledge, who

for twenty years succeeded in making iron at Cinderford furnaces of

quality and in quantities which had never been anticipated. There are

now four blast furnaces, three of which are always in blast, and a new

blast engine of considerable power is in course of erection, in addition

to the old engine which has been puffing away for twenty-eight years."

Adverting, in the next place, to the iron-works at Park End, the Reverend

H. Poole kindly supplies the following facts, courteously communicated by

the proprietors:--

"The year 1799 gives the date of the oldest iron furnace here,

situated about half a mile below the original works, and carried on

by a Mr. Perkins. They were afterwards sold to Mr. John Protheroe,

who disposed of the same to his nephew, Edward Protheroe, Esq.,

formerly M.P. for Bristol, who had extensive grants of coal in the

immediate neighbourhood. In 1824 Mr. Protheroe granted a lease of

the furnace and premises, and also sundry iron-mines, to 'the Forest

of Dean Iron Company,' then consisting of Messrs. Montague, James,

&c., until in 1826 Messrs. William Montague of Gloucester, and John

James, Esq., of Lydney, became the sole lessees. These parties, in

1827, erected another furnace, and also an immense waterwheel of 51

feet diameter and 6 feet wide, said to be nearly the largest in the

kingdom, and formed extensive and suitable ponds and canals for the

supply of water. This water-wheel was but little used, in

consequence of the general introduction and superior advantages of

steam power, which was obtained by erecting an engine for creating

the blast. It was considered insufficient, however, for supplying

two furnaces on the blast principle, each of which was 45 feet high,

8 feet diameter at the top, 14 feet diameter at the boshes, and 4

feet 6 inches diameter at the hearth; hence another steam-engine of

80 horse power was erected in 1849, but in consequence of a

depression in the iron trade, and other causes, the two furnaces were

not then worked together. A few years after the decease of Mr.

Montague, in 1847, Mr. James purchased all his interest in the works,

and became the sole lessee until the year 1854, when he purchased of

Mr. Protheroe the fee of the property, together with all the

liabilities of the lease. Since that time the two furnaces have been

constantly worked together, under the superintendence of Mr.

Greenham, one of the proprietors, the firm still continuing as 'the

Forest of Dean Iron Company.'"

"In the year 1851 extensive tinplate works were commenced at Park

End, and 24 houses were built for the workmen, by Messrs. James and

Greenham, at a considerable outlay. These works when completed were

afterwards sold to Messrs. T. and W. Allaway, who enlarged and

improved the same, and are now carried on with much spirit and

success."

The tinworks at Lydney are also in the hands of the above-named firm, and

comprise three forges, mills, and tin-house, producing 1200 boxes of tin

plates a week, with the consumption of from 70 to 80 tons of Cinderford

iron. The Lydney iron-works belonged in early times to the Talbot

family.

At Lydbrook there are the "Upper" and "Lower" works. The latter, or

those nearest the Wye, are said to have belonged originally to the

Foleys, one of whom was elected a free miner in 1754. Mr. Partridge

carried them on for many years in connexion with the furnaces at

Bishopswood, but leased them in 1817 to Mr. Allaway, at which time they

comprised three forges, rolling and bar mills, and tin-house complete,

capable of producing 100 to 150 boxes of tin plates per week. Under the

able management of Mr. Allaway's sons, the works now yield 600 boxes,

sent off by the Wye, the iron used being that from Cinderford, as best

suited for the purpose. The "Upper" works were once farmed for Lord

Gage, but they now belong to Messrs. Russell, who make large quantities

of wire for the electrical telegraph, as well as iron for smith's use.

The iron-works at Sowdley are all that remain to be noticed. Here, as

early as 1565, iron wire is said to have been made, being drawn by

strength of hand. In 1661 Mr. Paysted states that the factory passed

from Roynon Jones, Esq., of Hay Hill, into the hands of a party named

Parnell and Co., who carried on the works until the year 1784, from which

date to 1804 Dobbs and Taylor had them. From 1824 on to 1828 they were

held by Browning, Heaven, and Tryer; but in the latter year Todd,

Jeffries, and Spirrin undertook the business, converting a part of the

premises into paint and brass works, which lasted for about four years.

Two blast furnaces were built on the spot in 1837 by Edward Protheroe,

Esq., who worked them for four years. In 1857 they were purchased by

Messrs. Gibbon, and are now in blast.

Eight blast furnaces were at work in the Forest in the year 1856, and

produced upwards of 24,132 tons of iron of the best quality.

It only remains to state that twenty iron-mines were awarded by the

Mining Commissioners in 1841, and these are since increased to upwards of

fifty, several of them comprising very extensive workings, and are

furnished with very powerful pumping engines; that at Shakemantle raises

198.25 gallons per stroke, and the one at Westbury Brook 24 gallons, from

a depth of 186 yards.

The annual yield of iron mine from the four principal pits is:--

Buckshaft 14,574 Tons.

Old Sling Pit 13,263 ,,

Westbury Brook 11,725 ,,

Easter Iron Mine 10,782 ,,

The total yield from all the iron-mines in the Forest for 1856 was

109,268 tons.

CHAPTER XV.

\_The Forest Coal Works\_--The earliest allusion to them--The original

method of mining for coal--Grants to the Earl of Pembroke in 1610,

&c.--First attempt to char coal for the furnace--Prices for which coal

was to be sold, as fixed by the "Orders" of the Court of Mine

Law--Contents of the existing documents belonging to that Court

described--State of the coal-works at the end of the last

century--Gradual improvements in the mode of working for coal--Mr.

Protheroe's collieries--The superior character of the most recent

coal-works--Amount raised in 1856 from the ten largest collieries.

There is a difficulty in determining which is to be considered the

earliest allusion to the working of coal in the Forest, since charcoal as

well as sea or pit coal was thus indifferently designated: not that the

latter was carried by sea, but only that it agreed in character with the

coal usually so conveyed. The first notice seems, however, to be that

supplied by the records of the Justice Seat held at Gloucester in 1282,

where it is stated that sea coal was claimed by six of the ten bailiffs

of the Forest of Dean.

The appellation of "Sea Coal Mine" as distinguished from "the Oare Mine,"

mentioned in the 29th section of "The Laws and Customs of the Miners in

the Forest of Dean," compiled about the year 1300, likewise proves that

sea-coal was known by name, and that a description of fuel closely

resembling it was then dug in this neighbourhood, to an extent entitling

it to be noticed "as free in all points" with the long celebrated iron

ore; that is, constituting the collier a free miner.

The original methods of getting coal in the locality probably conformed

to the modes then used for obtaining the iron mine, the veins of both

minerals showing themselves on the surface much in the same manner. So

that it is probable the old coal-workings, like those for iron, descended

only to a moderate depth, and for the same reason were frequently carried

on by driving levels, for which the position of several of the coal-seams

was highly favourable.

In the year 1610 "liberty to dig for and take, within any part of the

Forest or the precincts thereof, such and so much sea-coal as should be

necessary for carrying on the iron-works," was granted to William, Earl

of Pembroke, by James I. This is the earliest mention of coal being so

used, agreeably to the efforts then making by Simon Sturtevant and John

Ravenzon, Esqrs., to adapt it by baking for such a purpose. The same

grant, in omitting to mention coal amongst certain other productions

which "no person or persons were to take or carry out of the said

Forest," leads to the supposition that coal was then exported or carried

into the adjacent country, and that it was found desirable for this to

continue. Coal was included in Charles I.'s sale of the Forest timber,

iron, stone, &c., to Sir John Winter, who some years afterwards is

described by Evelyn as interested in a project for "charring sea-coal,"

so as to render it fit for the iron furnace. A scheme somewhat similar

was now tried in the Forest, Mr. Mushet tells us, by Captain Birch, Major

Wildman, and others, "where they erected large air furnaces, into which

they introduced large clay pots, resembling those used at glasshouses,

filled with various proportions of the necessary mixture of ores and

charcoal. The furnaces were heated by the flame of pit-coal, and it was

expected that, by tapping the pots below, the separated materials would

flow out. This rude process was found entirely impracticable; the heat

was inadequate to perfect separation, the pots cracked, and in a short

time the process was abandoned altogether."

The important Act of 1668 confirmed to persons digging for coal in the

Forest their lawful rights and privileges, as also to the Crown the

liberty to lease the coal-mines for a period not exceeding thirty-one

years. This latter provision was immediately acted upon, the coal-mines

and quarries of grindstones being granted to Francis Tyrringham, Esq.,

for thirty-one years, at a rental of 30 pounds per annum, a price which,

if it were fairly agreed upon, affords some intimation of the extent and

value of the Forest coal-works at that time.

By the first "Order" of the Court of Mine Law, dated March 18th of the

year last named (1668), it was fixed that a dozen bushels of lime-coal

should be disposed of for 3s. at the Lime Slad; for 5s. 6d. at the top of

the Little Doward; for 5s. 4d. at any other kilns thereon; for 5s. at the

Buckstones; for 5s. 6d. at Monmouth; for 4s. at the Weare over Wye; for

4s. if on this side; for 3s. 6d. at Coldwall; for 3s. at Lydbrook; and

for 4s. 4d. at Redbrook.

The second "Order" of the same Court, agreed to on the 9th of March,

1674, provides that "the servants of the Deputy Constable shall always be

first served at the pitts." In the same year a petition was presented to

the Crown by several gentlemen and freeholders of the parish of Newland

for leave to drain some coal-pits at Milkwall, stating that "the

inhabitants of the adjacent country were supplied from the collieries of

the Forest with coal for firing, and also for lime coal, without which

there would be little tillage."

The next Mine Law Court, held on the 8th of September, 1678, determined

that a barrel or three Winchester bushels should be the constant measure

for coal, four-pence being the smallest price allowed to be taken for "a

barrel" of fire coal. "And whereas the myners within this Forest are at

a very great charge to make surffes for the dreyning of their pitts to

get cole, wch when they have finished others sincke pitts so near them

that they are deprived of the benefit of their labour and charge, to

their very great loss and damage: To remedie whereof, it is now ordered

that after a surffe is made, noe myner shall come to work within 100

yards of that surffe to the prejudice of the undertakers without their

consents, and without being contributory to the making of the said

surffe, upon payne of forfeiting 100 dozen of good fire coale, the one

moiety to the King's Matie, and the other to the myner that shall sue for

the same." The fourth "Order" of the same Court, issued on the 27th

April, 1680, directs "that no fire cole, smith's cole, or lyme cole shall

be delivered upon the bankes of the Wye between Monmouth Bridge and

Huntsame Ferry for less than 8s. a dozen bushels for the two former

sorts, and 4s. 6d. for lyme cole, or if between Huntsame Ferry and Wilton

Bridge for less than 3s. 6d. a dozen."

On the 19th September, 1682, a fifth "Order" forbade "the transport of

lime coal to Hereford and Monmouthshire at lower rates than heretofore

have been set and agreed upon," and ordained that "whensoever any

collyers have fully wrought out a cole pitt through wch the gout water

must necessarily run for drayning of the worke, in such case the said

collyers shall secure the said pitt, upon payne to forfeite 100 dozen of

good fire cole." In the ensuing "Order," dated 1st December, 1685, the

jury agreed that, in raising money for any public purpose, "one half of

those who served should be cole myners, and the other half myners at iron

oare," both classes of operatives having at length become equally

numerous, in consequence of the rapid increase of the coal-works. The

next Court of the Mine, held on 5th April, 1687, decided that "all cole

pitts and dangerous mine pitts which are not in working, or wch

thereafter shall not be wrought in for one whole month together, shall be

sufficiently secured by a wall of stone, or by railing the same with

posts and railes placed above two feet distant from the mouth of such

pitt by the proprietor thereof, and likewise all pitts left open for a

grout way, upon paine of 10s. to be forfeited for every omission and

neglect."

According to the eighth verdict of the miners' jury, declared on the 13th

of January, 1692, the former space of 100 yards, within which all

colliers were prohibited from coming to work another pit, was now

extended to 300 yards. The next "Order," being that of the 25th of

April, 1694, directs that "the price of fire cole to the copper works

(Redbrook) shal bee henceforth 8s. per dozen, and smith cole 6s. per

dozen." That of the 10th of March, 1701, enacted that "every miner shall

keepe a paire of scales at their severall colepitts to weigh theire cole

wthall," that none should be sent away unweighed, and that the price of

it should not exceed 5s. a ton to the inhabitants of the hundred of St.

Briavel's, or less than 6s. a ton to foreigners. The next "Order," that

of the 1st of July, 1707, renewed the direction to fill or sufficiently

secure any dangerous coal-pits, within some reasonable time, under a

penalty of 20s. The "Order" dated 12th November, 1728, directs that the

distance of 300 yards between any adjoining works be "augmented to 500

yards in all levels." The "Order" bearing date 2nd March, 1741,

particularizes certain coal-works near Lydbrook called "Wyrrall Hill,"

another called "Dowler's Chambers," and likewise the coal-works called

"Speedwell," at Serridge, besides "the Hill Works" near Ruerdean. It

also forbade any coal to be sold in the city of Hereford under 13s. the

ton, fixing a horse-load at 2.25 cwt., for 6d. a bushel at the pit, one

cwt. of fire coal for 4d. a bushel, three bushels of smith's coal for

5d., and lime coal for 1d. a bushel, or 21 cwt. of fire coal for 7s. 6d.

"waid and delivered" at Lydney Pill or at Pyrton Pill, or at Gatcombe.

The same "Order" further directs that "the yearns belonging to the levels

which are between Drybrooke and Cannop's Bridge, and between Seridge and

Reuardean Town, shall get coal out of no more than two pitts at one time,

belonging to one level, till the said two pitts are worked quite out, and

those who keep two pitts in work on one level shall not sinke any other

new pitt till the old ones are quite worked out."

The last of the "Orders" of the Miners' Court, dated October 22nd, 1754,

provides that "none shall sink any water pit and get coal out of it

within the limits or bounds of 1,000 yards of any level, and that the

waterwheel ingine at the Oiling Green near Broadmore be taken to be a

level to all intents and purposes, as all other levels brought up from

the Grassmoore;" meaning probably, that they also were to enjoy the

protective distance of 1,000 yards in common with all "levels," otherwise

that distance would be no more than twelve yards radius, according to the

received custom. "The water-wheel engine," for working the pumps

belonging to the work at Oiling Green, is considered to have been the

first of the kind, and therefore marks the earliest of the successive

steps made within the last 100 years in improving the methods of raising

coal in this locality, by showing greater ingenuity in removing the water

from the pits, which were now evidently sunk much deeper than formerly.

A minute examination {235} of the numerous papers recording the then

ordinary proceedings of the Free Miners' Court, supplies the accompanying

dates to the following coal-works:--

1706. "Stay and Drink," under Serridge; "Dark Pitt," in Coverham.

1718. "Hopewell," at Park End; "Speedwell," Ruerdean Hill.

1720. "Sally Pitt," Coleford.

1721. "Broad Moore Grout;" "The Holly Pitt."

1722. "New Charity;" "The 9 Wells;" "Stand Fast;" "The Dry Tump."

1723. "Go on and Prosper;" "Monmouth Hill Work."

1724. "The Old Colliery," near Coleford.

1725. "Shute Castle Pitt;" "The Oiling Quab," in Bromley.

1726. "The Staple Pitt;" "Short Standing."

1735. "Gentlemen Colliers," or "Harbourne Oake."

1736. "The Little Suff," Serridge.

1737. "Major Wade's Suff," near Aywood; "The Broomy Knowle;" "Pluck

Penny," Nail Bridge; "Dowler's Chambers."

1739. "Bushes Pitt," at Berry Hill; "The Society."

1740. "Church way," or "Turn brook."

1741. "Cartway Pitt;" "Harrow Hill Pitt."

1743. "Mendall," at Yorkley; "True Blue," Ruerdean; "Littleworth;" "the

Windmill," near Ruerdean.

1744. "Rain Proof."

1745. "Church Hill," Coal Work, Park End.

1747. "The Golden Pippin;" "Little Scare Pitt."

1749. "Long looked for," near Yorkley.

1753. "Prosper."

1755. "The bold Defiance;" "The Ginn."

1757. "Now found out;" "Standfast."

1758. "Pigg Pitt."

Several of the above names closely resemble those by which many of the

existing coal-works are designated; as for instance--"Strip-and-at-it,"

"Winners," "Spero," "Prosper," "Never Fear," &c. One other interesting

fact preserved in these records is that the coal seams were called then

as now by the names of "Upper" and "Lower Rocky," the "Lower" and "Upper

High Delf," the "Starkey Delf," and the "Lowery Delf."

The Appendix to the Fourth Report of the Dean Forest Commissioners

relative to the mines, incidentally mentions the old coalwork called "the

Oiling Gin" as originally galed in 1766, and transferred by agreement,

dated 15th April, 1776, to a company, in consideration of 2,100 pounds,

at whose cost the first "fire-engine," constructed, probably, on Watt's

principle, patented in the previous year, is understood to have been put

up in this neighbourhood. It also specifies the "Brown's Green Colliery"

near Lydbrook, opened in 1772; the "Moorwood Coal Works" in 1773;

"Arthur's Folly" in 1774, begun in the "Thirty Acres," and brought up

into "Little Cross Hill;" and also the undertaking called "The Gentlemen

Colliers."

On the 26th August, 1777, the Court of Mine Law, by which the coal-works

in the Forest had been ever regulated, sat, as it proved, for the last

time, having been held according as business required three or four times

a year, with some few exceptions, since 1668. A memorandum with which

its last minute is endorsed is thus expressed:--"Mine Law Court, 26

August, 1777. There has been no Court holden for the miners since this

day, which is a great loss to the gaveller, and causes various disputes

amongst the colliers, which is owing to the neglect of the

Deputy-Constables."

A careful perusal of the papers in which the proceedings of the Court of

Mine Law are recorded from 30th April, 1706, supplies the following

particulars illustrative of the manner in which the miners of the first

half of the 18th century conducted their works, together with the usages

of the Court then in vogue. Nearly all the sittings were held at the

Speech-house, under the supervision of the deputies for the time being of

the Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, attended by the clerk of the

court, and the gaveller or his deputy. Rarely more than twelve, but

sometimes twenty-four miners constituted the jury; the suits they had to

try being mostly for debts and trespasses between miner and miner, such

as for leaving open dangerous pits, breaking "forbids," refusing to pay

tax for defending the rights of the mine, loading "foreigners'" teams at

the pits, for perjury, for keeping more than four horses in carrying

coal, or for removing pit lamps, scores or cowls, &c. Copies of two such

entries, with other proceedings of the Court as specimens, are given in

the Appendix No. VI.

As early as the year 1718 the proceedings of the Court were occasionally

disturbed by the persons attending it. Thus, on the 13th of May, the

following amercements were made and recorded:--

John Davis, for talking in Court 2\_s.\_

John Kear, for talking in Court 2\_s.\_

Wm. Budge, for disturbing ye 2\_s.\_

Court

Nich. Whitstone, for the like 2\_s.\_

Thomas Rudge, for the same 2\_s.\_

John Griffiths, for disturbing 2\_s.\_

the Court

Thomas Rudge, for the same 2\_s.\_

offence

John Trigg, for the same offence 2\_s.\_

Griffith Cooper, for talking in 2\_s.\_

Court

Writing upon the subject of the Forest collieries, about the year 1779,

Mr. Rudder remarks in his History of the county,--"The pits are not deep,

for when the miners find themselves much incommoded with water, they sink

a new one, rather than erect a fire engine, which might answer the

expense very well, yet there is not one of them in all this division.

They have indeed two or three pumps worked by cranks, that in some

measure answer the intention."

In the year 1788 we are informed by the evidence of the Gaveller, that,

according to an account made out in the previous August, "there were then

within the Forest 121 coal-pits (thirty-one of which were not actually in

work), which pits produced 1,816 tons of coal per week; that there were

662 free miners concerned and employed therein; and that the annual

compositions paid by them amounted to 215 pounds 8s. or thereabouts,

although many of them were so poor that no money could be collected from

them." "At this time," says the same officer, "house-fire coal, on the

Mitcheldean side the Forest, is sold at the pit's mouth for 4s. 6d. per

ton of 20 cwt., smith's coal 3s. 3d., lime coal 2s. per ton. When sold

by the waggonload at the pit's mouth, and the purchaser brings victuals

and drink for the colliers, the price of a waggonload was 10s. of

house-fire coal, smith coal 6s. 6d., lime coal 4s. On the Coleford side

the Forest, house-fire coal was sold at the pit's mouth for 3s. 9d. per

ton of 20 cwt., smith coal 2s. 9d., lime coal 1s. 3d. By the waggonload

at the pit's mouth, house-fire coal 8s. 6d., smith coal 5s. 6d., lime

coal 2s. 6d."

In addition to the above, the Assistant Deputy Surveyor of the same

period reported,--"the parts of the Forest in which the principal

collieries are situate are these:--The Level of the Fire Engine Colliery,

which is one of the principal works, is in the bottom between Nail Bridge

and Cinderford Bridge, and there are pits all along the Bottom. There

are several Levels in the Bottom from Beechenhurst Hill along the Delves

quite up to Nail Bridge. Another large field of coal from Whitecroft

Bridge, at the back of White Mead Park along the Delves to Great Moseley

Green, and from thence through Old Vallet Tuft and Aures Glow, almost up

to Little Stapleage. These are the works which do the greatest mischief

to the Forest. There are some others on the Coleford side, from which a

great deal of coal is raised. Very little timber is growing in any of

these Delves; and enclosures might be made in the Forest, so as to

exclude all the principal coal-works. The coal-works in the Forest

supply with fuel the lower parts of Gloucestershire beyond Severn, and

some parts across the Severn about Berkeley, the greatest part of

Herefordshire, the town of Monmouth, and part of the county of Monmouth."

The existing remains of the coal-works of this period, combined with the

traditions of the oldest surviving colliers, enable us to form an

accurate idea of the way in which the workings were carried on.

"Levels," or slightly ascending passages, driven into the hill sides till

they struck the coal seam, appear to have been general. This was no

doubt owing to the facility with which they effected the getting of the

coal where it tended upwards into the higher lands forming the edge of

the Forest Coal Basin, since they required no winding apparatus, and

provided a discharge for the water which drained from the coal-beds. The

usages observed at the works entitled the proprietors of their respective

levels to so much of the corresponding seam of coal as they could drain,

extending right and left to the limits awarded by the gaveller. So far

this mode of procedure was satisfactory enough, and would no doubt have

long continued to go on amicably, had not the principle, highly judicious

in itself, that no workings were ever to intersect one another, but

always to stop when the mattocks met, been abused by driving "narrow

headings" up into different workings, whereby the rightful owner of the

coal was stopped, and the other party enabled to come in and take it from

him. Timber of considerable strength was required throughout the

underground excavations to support the roof, hence proving a serious

source of spoliation to the woods. Large slabs of it were also needed

for the flooring, in order that the small coal-trams might be the more

readily pushed forward over it, a space being left beneath for air to

circulate, and for the water to run out.

If the vein of coal proposed to be worked did not admit of being reached

by a level, then a pit was sunk to it, although rarely to a greater depth

than 25 yards, the water being raised in buckets, or by a water-wheel

engine, or else by a drain having its outlet in some distant but lower

spot, such as is found to have led from the Broad Moor Collieries to

Cinderford, a mile and upwards in length. The shaft of the pit was made

of a square form, in order that its otherwise insecure sides might be the

better supported by suitable woodwork, which being constructed in

successive stages was occasionally used as a ladder, the chief difficulty

being found in keeping the workings free from water, which in wet seasons

not unfrequently gained the mastery and drowned the men out. The skips

appear to have been always rectangular in shape, similar to the shafts.

Intermediately between the date of the above coal-works and the present

most approved collieries, Mr. Protheroe, in his evidence before the Dean

Forest Commissioners, in 1832, relative to his thirty-two coal-pits,

stated that "the depth of my principal pits at Park End and Bilson varies

from about 150 to 200 yards; that of my new gales, for which I have

engine licences, is estimated at from 250 to 300 yards. I have 12 steam

engines varying from 12 to 140 horse power, 9 or 10 of which are at work,

the whole amounting to 500 horse power; and I have licences for four more

engines, two of which must be of very great power. The amount of wages

paid by me, in the last twelve years, to colliers, hauliers, and

labourers, is upwards of 150,000 pounds, giving constant employment on

the average to from 400 to 500 individuals."

The coal-pits were now lined throughout with stone walling, leaving a

clear diameter of from 7 to 9 feet; greater regard was paid to their

drainage and ventilation, both of which required particular attention,

owing to the watery nature of the coal measures, and the abundance of

"choke-damp," although happily "fire damp" never appears. Horses were

now used underground for bringing the coal-trams to the foot of the pit,

and all the workings were accurately surveyed and recorded, agreeably to

the regulations instituted by the Dean Forest Mining Commissioners, under

the judicious Act of 27th July, 1838, to the effect that "the quantity of

coals sent daily from each colliery should be duly entered, and plans

made of the workings, for the information of the Gaveller, who might also

inspect any underground operations at all reasonable times," the whole

undertaking being required to be carried on according to the best and

most improved system.

[Picture: Light Moor Colliery]

In accordance with which excellent rules, each of the 105 re-awards of

coal seams applied for during the years 1838-41 were so ably set out by

Messrs. Sopwith, Buddle, and Probyn, as effectually to check the numerous

disputes which formerly arose, and ere long so to develop the coal-works

of the Forest of Dean as to render them worthy to be compared with some

of the finest collieries in the kingdom. As an instance of their present

excellence, Messrs. Crawshay's colliery at Light Moor may be mentioned,

for its great extent, completeness, powerful machinery, and size of its

pits. These last, four in number, are 291 feet deep, one of which,

measuring 9 feet 6 inches by 14 feet, contains pumps raising 88 gallons

of water per minute.

The number of coal-works in the Forest at the close of 1856 was 221,

yielding in that year to the public use upwards of 460,432 tons; the ten

largest collieries each producing as follows:--

Tons.

Park End Colliery 86,973

Light Moor ,, 86,508

Crump Meadow 41,507

Bix Slade 26,792

The Nelson 24,539

Hopewell in Whimberry 18,858

Valletts Level 17,918

Bilson 17,395

Arthur and Edward 12,857

New Strip and at it 11,502

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344,849

Probably a twentieth part of the above total should he added to the

amount charged, in consideration of the quantity consumed by the colliery

engines, thus making the gross annual produce a third of a million of

tons.

CHAPTER XVI.

\_The Geology of the Forest, and its Minerals\_--Their character in

general--Description of the beds of conglomerate, mountain limestone,

iron veins, millstone grit, and lower coal measures--"The Coleford High

Delf"--Elevation of the Forest range of hills--The middle coal veins--The

upper veins--Mr. Mushet's analysis of the Forest coal--Their fossils--The

stone-quarries of the district.

The geological conditions of the Forest of Dean merit careful

observation, not only as regards the mineral wealth comprised within its

limits, but as explanatory of its undulations, and the means of

maintenance for its inhabitants.

The strata of the Forest repose in a basin-like form, the greatest

depression being near the centre; the longer axis extending from N. to S.

about eleven miles, and the transverse axis, in the widest part, ranging

from E. to W. about seven miles. The general observer, if he takes his

stand on the edge of hills by which this basin is bounded, will see the

enclosing character of the ridge, as well as the less conspicuous circle

of somewhat elevated land occupying the central portion of the field, and

which is separated by a valley or plain from the surrounding ridge.

This outlying ridge marks in most places the outcrop of the Conglomerate,

Mountain Limestone, Iron Veins, Millstone Grit, and Lower Coal-measures.

Mr. Maclauchlan's geological map of the district exhibits the course of

the conglomerate bed, and the consequent disappearance of the old red

sandstone formation under the Dean Forest basin. Occasionally this

conglomerate, or hard grit, forms two distinct beds, very distant from

one another, near Lydney for instance, and on the Kimin Hill and

Buckstone, although it is sometimes cut off altogether by a "fault," as

opposite Blackney. It varies in hardness as well as in the number of the

pebbles, and not unfrequently presents an abrupt fall at its termination,

as at "the Harkening Rock" in the Highmeadow Woods.

[Picture: General view of the centre of the Forest]

[Picture: Geological Map of the Forest]

The upper portion of the bed is soft, and acquires the character of the

limestone clay, often throwing out springs, such as St. Anthony's Well,

which have accumulated in the limestone rocks above. A very micaceous

stone sometimes occurs in the upper parts, having the appearance of

silver: hence the name of "Silver Stone" given to a spot near the

Hawthorns, where it is found. The surface which the carboniferous

limestone exposes is also represented in the map. The Forest coal-field

is surrounded by this formation, with the exception of the line of fault

between Lydney Park and Danby Lodge, a distance of four miles.

The principal iron-mine train of the district divides into a lower or

more crystalline, and an upper or more argillaceous and sandy stratum.

Mr. Mushet thus describes this important metallic vein:--"The iron ores

of the Forest of Dean, which have become intimately known to me, are

found, like the ores of Cumberland and Lancashire, in churns or caverns

formed in the upper beds of the mountain or carboniferous limestone. The

leaner ores contain a great deal of calcareous matter in the shape of

common limestone or spar, which reduces the percentage in the ore as low

as between 15 and 25 per cent., and it seldom exceeds 25, except when

mixed with fragments of what is called brush ore, which, when in

quantity, raises the percentage to 40 or 45. Brush ore is a hydrate with

protoxide of iron, and frequently, if not much mixed with calcareous

earth, contains from 60 to 65 per cent. of iron. These ores are found in

chambers, the walls of which are exceedingly hard limestone, crystallized

in rhombs. This limestone is called the 'crease,' and is frequently

found enveloped and covered with the iron ore. The miner has to cut his

way through this crystallized limestone from chamber to chamber, a

distance of from 20 to 100 yards, before he reaches the next of these

deposits, which are sometimes found to contain 3,000 or 4,000 tons of

ore. The principal part of the ore is then dug easily, somewhat like

gravel; but the sides of the chambers are often covered with the stony

ore before described, which requires gunpowder to detach it from the

rock." These various ores were found by the same excellent authority to

yield iron in the following proportions:--

Hydrates of Iron 57.5 per cent.

"Brush" Ore 64.5 ,,

Red Calcareous Ore 9.7 per cent.

"Blake Ore" 22 ,,

The inhabitants of the Forest consider the ores obtained on the east side

superior to those on the west. They likewise suppose, but probably

without foundation, that the ore will be found to deteriorate in

proportion as the workings descend. Red and yellow ochre of superior

quality occur in the iron veins, and have at various times been in

considerable request. They are now used in the neighbourhood for marking

sheep, and tinting whitewash.

Reverting to the limestone beds of the district, the lower veins are

locally called "blue stone," the middle "red stone," and the top vein the

"white head," which is largely used as a flux in the smelting furnaces.

The researches of Mr. R. Gibbs, of Mitcheldean, have enabled him to

furnish me with the following list of fossils discovered by himself in

the Forest limestone formation:--

\_Zoophyta\_ Syringopora reticulata, Turbinolia

fungites, Lithostrotion irregulare.

\_Echinodermata\_ Actinoerinus aculeatus, et

,, laevissimus, Platyerinus laevis et

,, rugosus.

,, Poteriocrinus crassus, et pentagonus.

Rhodocrinus costatus, et granulatus.

\_Mollusca Dimyaria\_. Pallastra complanata.

\_Brachiopoda\_. \_Terebratula\_ hastata.

,, Spirifer glaber, et rhomboideus.

,, Chonetes cornoides, et papilionacea.

,, \_Leptoena\_ analoga.

,, \_Productus\_ cora, et longispinus, et

martini, et pustulosus et cornoides.

\_Lamellibranchiata\_. Monomyaria.

Aviculopecten fallax.

Dimyaria.

Psammobia complanata.

Pisces.

Ctenacanthus tenuistriatus.

Cladodus conicus.

Psammodus porosus, et rugosus.

[Picture: Vertical section of the Plump Hill]

The millstone grit beds immediately succeed those of the carboniferous

limestone just described, forming a similar belt round the Forest, and

disappearing with it on the Blakeney side of the basin. Its chief

interest consists in the circumstance that it has been employed from very

early times as a material for building; for though it contains a vein of

iron ore, little has been done in mining it. Most of the old buildings

adjoining the parts where this grit crops out are formed of it, as

several of the ancient neighbouring churches show, and likewise the

oldest lodges in the Forest; now, however, this kind of stone is seldom

used except for boundary walls, and such kind of rough work.

The rest of the outer circle of high land, on whose summit the observer

has been supposed to be standing, and which so definitely marks the

Forest coal-field, comprises the \_lower\_ coal measures, containing the

lower and upper Trenchard veins, the Coleford High Delf, with the

Whittington and Nag's Head seams, which together give about eleven feet

of coal. Of these the Coleford High Delf, averaging a thickness of

upwards of five feet, and extending over an area of 16,000 acres, is

undoubtedly the chief, although in some places it has suffered from

various disturbances, the principal of which occur in the neighbourhood

of Coleford, extending in a line from Worcester Lodge to Berry Hill, and

is marked on the surface by a succession of pools, named Howler's Well,

Leech Pool, Crabtree Pool, Hooper's Pool, and Hall's Pool. Mr. Buddle

describes the width as varying from 170 to 340 yards in the most defined

part, called by the colliers the "Horse," and the dislocations adjoining,

the "Lows." "It is not," he remarks, "what geologists term a \_fault\_, as

there is no accompanying dislocation of the adjoining strata. In its

underground character it is similar to those \_washes\_ or aqueous deposits

in many coal districts, but it differs from them in not being under the

bed of any river, nor in the bottom of a valley, nor does it show itself

at the surface." And he adds, "On considering the various phaenomena

presented by this fault, and the seam of coal on each side of it, we may

infer that it occupies the site of a lake which existed at the period of

the deposition of the High Delf seam, and that the carbonaceous matter

which formed the seam was accumulated while the water was deep and

tranquil. On the water being discharged from the lake, the 'Horse'

itself occupied the bed of the river, by which the complete drainage of

the lake was effected, and which washed the coal entirely out."

The same scientific observer records an extraordinary depression about

half a mile to the south-east, in the direction of the "Horse," and in

the same seam of coal, amounting to about twenty feet in depth, and of an

oval shape. Various other defects and disturbances in the Coleford High

Delf are detected from time to time by the new workings, especially in

those places where the surface is most uneven. Thus its outcrop at

Lydney is very imperfectly defined, and at Oakwood Mill the vein is

rendered worthless by a fault, whilst on each side of the Lydbrook valley

there is a contortion, by which it is thrown down in one instance seventy

yards, and in two others thirty yards each.

Such is the geological character of the conspicuous range of hills by

which the Dean Forest coal-field is bounded, especially on its north and

east sides. The following table gives their height in feet at certain

places above the sea:--

Feet.

Symmond's Rock 540

Buck Stone 954

Knockholt 760

Clearwell Meand 727

Ruerdean Hill 991

High Beech 891

Coleford Meand 760

Berry Hill 750

Lea Bailey Hill 580

Mitcheldean Meand 870

Edge Hill 908

Stapledge 749

Putten Edge 664

Blaize Bailey 684

Blackney Hill 507

Nearly all these spots afford magnificent views of the surrounding

country, reaching as far as the Coteswold, Sedgebarrow, Malvern,

Herefordshire, Welsh, and Monmouthshire heights, relieved intermediately

by the windings of the Severn, cultivated plains, and woodland. Several

very striking ravines intersect this Forest range, particularly at

Lydbrook, Blackpool Brook, and Ruspedge, such as would afford the artist

many beautiful and interesting subjects for delineation. One of the

hills, viz. that on which Mr. Colchester's house, called "the

Wilderness," is situated, affords a prospect rarely equalled. The

present residence dates from the year 1824, but it occupies a site which

was built upon as early as 1710, if not before, for the accommodation of

sporting parties in the days of Sir Duncombe Colchester, when its fine

sycamores and trees of "the Beech Walk" were most likely planted.

Descending from the side of the hilly range on which the reader has been

supposed to stand towards the middle of the Forest, a plain is reached

varying in width from half a mile to little more than 100 yards, and

forming a band round the somewhat elevated centre of the district. This

circular valley or plain marks the outcrop of the middle series of coal

seams, not less than ten in number, the principal ones being the Smith

Coal, Lowery or Park End High Delf, Starkey, Rocky, and Upper and Lower

Churchway. The combined thickness of these beds may be said to average

20 feet, and they are more argillaceous in character than the lower beds,

which in general are harder in their nature, and hence they afford the

larger portion of the fossiliferous remains observed and tabulated by Mr.

R. Gibbs, who has kindly furnished the writer with the following--

PLANTAE.

\_Asterophyllites\_ equisetiformis, et foliosus.

\_Bothrodendron\_ punctatum.

\_Calamites\_ approximatus, nodosus.

\_Caulopteris\_ primaeva.

\_Lepidodendron\_ dichotomum, et elegans, et Serlii, et Sternbergii, et

majus.

\_Neuropteris\_ acutifolia, et angustifolia, et flexuosa, et macrophylla,

et oblongata.

\_Pecopteris\_ abbreviata, et arborescens, et cristata, et dentata, et

Serlii.

\_Sigillaria\_ contracta, et elongata, et mammillaris, et ornata, et

reniformis.

\_Sphenophyllum\_ fimbriatum, et Schlotheimii, et truncatum.

\_Sphenopteris\_ Hibbertii, et macilenta.

\_Stigmaria\_ ficoides.

\_Ulodendron\_ Lindleyanum, et Lucasii.

The same variations in thickness as well as "faults" which have been

detected in the lower coal seams, occur in the middle measures, although

they do not in any case assume the same magnitude as the "Horse" in the

Coleford High Delf.

The heart of the Forest basin is well defined by its forming a slightly

varied plateau, containing the inferior and comparatively unimportant

seams of Woor Green coal, situated of course nearer to the surface than

the other veins, but as yet only sparingly worked, and not accurately

defined in its outcrop. The highest elevations in this portion of the

district are:--Surridge, 658 feet; Speech-house, 581 feet; St. Paul's,

Park End, 270 feet. The combined vertical thickness of the entire

formation, descending from the top surface to the old red sandstone, is

calculated by Mr. D. Williams at 2,765 feet, an opinion which is

corroborated by Mr. Atkinson's highly interesting sections based on his

practical acquaintance with the mining operations of the Forest.

Mr. Mushet obtained by analysis the following percentage of carbon in the

various descriptions of coal, viz.:--

Lowery Delf 62.

Coleford High Delf 63.72, 63.61, and 60.96.

Churchway 60.33 and 64.135.

Rockey 61.735.

Starkey 61.53.

Park End Little Delf 58.15.

Smith Coal 63.36.

None of these sorts of coal emit "fire-damp" in their natural

condition--a fact which adds so much to the safety of the pits; but

"choke-damp" is very prevalent.

The sandstone matrix of these coal-beds constitutes the grey and

buff-coloured rock so well known in the neighbourhood of the Forest as a

valuable building material, as well as for ornamental stonework.

Although for many years past it has been generally preferred to the

gritstone of the district, and is commonly met with in the better

specimens of stonework on this side the Severn, of which Mr. Telford's

Over Bridge and Lord Somers's mansion at Eastnor are examples, yet

originally such was not the case, since the earliest example of its being

used for any considerable pieces of masonry occurs in the steeple of

Ruerdean Church, a work of the 15th century. Now, however, almost all

the 320 stone quarries worked in the Forest are of this stone, which is

very pleasing in tint, and, if judiciously selected, very durable.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Papers preserved in the Lansdowne Collection at the British Museum.

"Right Honourable,

"Acoording unto your Lordship's warrant, Wee repaired unto and have

veiwed and duelie considered the severall woodes, known by the names of

Great Bradley, Little Bradley, Stonegrove, Pigstade, Buckholde Moore, and

the Copps; all lying together and conteyning by the measure of 16.5 foote

the pole, 520 acres. In wch grounds we thinke (the woodes being muche

differing in qualitie, by an equall proportion) there maie be raised for

everie acre 30 coard of woode; reserving sufficient staddells according

to the state, wch, according to the measure of the said grounds, amounted

unto the number of 15,600 cordes of woode. Uppon conference with divers

in the contrie, wee finde that such a quantitie of woode is not suddainly

to be vented in anie other sorte then to the iron workes, wch causeth

either the cheapnes or dearnes of the same; the contrie not vallewing the

said woodes uppon the stem above XIIIID the coard, although to the iron

workes it may be vallued at IIs VId the coard. So that according to the

rate of the contrie, the said proportion of woode is worthe CCCCCV li.

And according to the compictacon for the iron works, the same maie be

vallued at MIXCLX li. We imagine that the charge of ffensing the said

woodes, circuting 4 miles, will cost, to be done and kept according to

the state, aboute CC markes. The rent is 20 li. per ann.

"ROBERT TRESWELL. J. NORDEN. THO. MORGAN."

The wood standing in the 6 copses above named, Sir Edward Winter proposed

to buy for 800 lib., cutting and carrying away the same, one copse after

another, in 5 years' time. But this proposal was so impugned as to

elicit the ensuing defence from Sir E. Winter:--"A true Answere to the

objections made against my late bargaine for some of his Mties coppices

or colletts adioyning to the fforest of Deane.

"'1. Ffirst, that contrarie to the intention of this bargaine, I have

alredie cut downe a great number of tymber-trees, whereas to this howre

not any one is felled of that kynde or any other.

"'2. That a follower of my Ld of Worcester's should survey those woodes

is a wilful mistakinge, synce by the particules it appeares that one Mr

Hervye made this survey by warrant from the late L. Trer.

"'3. That I should gaine a 1000 li. per ann. by this bargaine is soe

vayre and ympossible a thing as deserves noe Aunswere.

"'Yet that your Lpp maye see howe much Th' informer hath exceeded

therein, himselfe or any man els \_shall purchase my interest for a tenth

parte of his valuation\_. Which I write not in any sorte to capitulate

with your Lpp; for wthout any consideration at all, I am redie to yealde

upp this bargaine, rather then by reteyning thereof to harbour in your

noblest thoughts the least ill conceipt of mee or my proceedinges. But

nowe, Sr, howe profitable a bargaine you have made for the Kinge, these

considerations followinge will easely demonstrate--ffor whereas in former

tyme a greater proffit was never raised out of these wooddes than XXVS

per ann. vntill my Ld your ffather and Sr Walter Myldemaye did let them

by lease, and soe made VIILI rent, wthout any ffyne, your Lpp hath now

made 500li ffyne, and 20li rent, wch is noe smale improvement,

consideringe that \_these 25 yeares last past not one pennye rent or

proffitt otherwise hath bene made out of them, but left as a thing

forgotten\_. That the coppice woodd or vnderwoodd through the abuse of

the last ffarmer, who never inclosed these wooddes, and the contynuall

spoyle and havocke of the country thereabouts, \_is utterly destroyed\_.

That there is nothinge nowe eft in 4 of those 6 coppices for wch I have

bargained but old beaches, heretofore topt and lopt, whereof many of them

nowe are scarce worth the cuttinge out to any man but myselfe, in respect

of my iron workes beinge soe nere to them. That the other twoe coppices

which are well stored have nothinge in them but younge beaches, and some

other woodd of XX or XXX yeares growth. That in dyvers of those coppices

there are many acres wch have noe manner of woodd standing vpon them at

all. Lastly, that the enclosinge of these coppices wth a sufficient

mound will cost me 200 markes the least, beside the great quantitie of

woodd that must necessarilye be spent therein, for wch no manner of

allowance is made mee, &c. &c. &c.'"

The next MS. in Sir J. Caesar's collection seems designed to promote the

extension of the iron-works, and relates several interesting particulars.

It is headed "Reasons to move his Mtie to make vse and profitt of the

woodes within the fforest of Deane." The Forest woods are said to

"containe of great standing woodes, though of severall and different

sortes, 15,000 acres, parte beinge tymber, and parte other, the most

parte well sett, the lawndes not accompted. The same fforest is a forest

for waste, and of soe ill condicon for hunting, as that the preservinge

the woodes thereof will nether yield pleasure to the hunter nor profitt

to the owner; and the woodes thereupon soe subject to waste, will dayly

grow worse and worse. The fforest is for II. or III. myles vpon the

skirts soe exceedingly wasted, as well by the inhabitants as other the

borderers adiacent, that yt is grief to see soe many goodly trees to be

spoiled, the vse whereof hath bene such as yt hath converted the tymber

trees to Dotards, and that almost generally vpon the borders of the same

fforest. The liberty of makinge sale of the wood hath bred in the same

such a multitude of poore creatures, as it is lamentable to thinke soe

many inhabitants shall lyve vpon soe bare provision as vpon spoile of the

fforest woodes, wch yf in tyme yt be not forseene, will consume all his

Mties woodes without accompte. It appeareth by Recorde, that in the

raigne of Henry III., Edward I., II., and III., and longe sithence, there

were divers forges within the fforest, and noe other but the Kinge's

only; and of these there were VIII. at one tyme, as appeareth by the

accompt of Maurice de Scto Amando, and the rest were \_Forgium Itinerans

ad siccum in bosco de\_, \_&c\_. All lyberty beinge prohibited for cuttinge

of greene wood but to his Mates owne forge. And whosoever cutt greene

wood was by the officer of the Bayliwycke attached for the same. Also by

negligence of former officers the inhabitantes of the said forest have

much insulted by cuttinge of trees in the said forest, whereas by Recorde

it appeareth the Kynge's Warrant was in former tymes obtayned for

cuttinge of deade trees, and who soe cutt, shredd, or lopped great wood

wthout good warrant, was from tyme to tyme attached, presented, and made

to paye for ye same. There are, to keepe and preserve the woodes of the

said forest, tenn woodwardes, or Baylyfes of ffee, who hould Landes by

that service, viz. Per servitum custodiendi boscum Domini Regis infra

Ballinam, &c. Yet late experience proveth that they, their Tenauntes and

Servantes, are as great spoilers as any others. And the antient Recordes

make mencon, that some of these woodwardes have forfeyted their

Bayliwyckes, and have compounded wth the Kinge to have them againe

regranted. It appeareth alsoe by Recordes, that the King hath bene

answered of Browsewood wthin the Forest of Deane, and therein is sett

downe what ffees were from tyme to tyme allowed to the keeper and what

not. The profitt to be made of the said woodes is either by convertinge

the same to coles, and soe for makinge iron or otherwise by sellinge of

the tymber by the tonne. In wch disposition of the woodes there wil be

lytle or noe difference in advantage. But of the two the makinge of

coles will be lykely to yield most profitt."

These succeeding papers, preserved with those already given, have also

their interest:--

"Certain lands and tenemts holden by the face, and called new sett

landes, wch the tenantes doe passe from partie to partie in the Kinge's

Court at St Breuills, being all the Kinge's lands liing in the fforest of

Deane in com' Glouc., every tenante there payeing a certein yerely rent

to his Mts Bailiff. Imprimis, the parke of Thomas Baynham, Esqr, called

Noxon, is parcell therof, except from the gutter to the pale towards his

house, holden by the tenure aforesaid, 50li per ann.

"Item, the house and land of Richard Allowaye, gent., is so holden, 30li

per ann.

"George Wirrelle's land at Bicknor, from the same towne to one Sipprian's

howse, and so downe to Skidmore's house, and likewise to the fforest

side, is of the like tenure, together wth other lands beyond his house,

50li per ann.

"Richard Carpenter's land, called 5 acres, and his corne leasowes, wth

all his other landes abutting vpon Mr Thornburie's Myll, and so vp to the

same forrest, is so holden, 15li pr ann.

"Mr Thornburie's Myll, wth all the landes thereunto belonginge, is so

holden, 20li.

"Richard Wirgan's land, nere to a place called the Meine, wthin the said

forrest, adioyning to the woodside, is of that same tenure, 10li.

"Christofer Bunn holdeth parcell of the same landes wch I have not

viewed, 10li.

"The Earle of Pembrooke holdeth by lease for 5 yeres yet to come,

Whitemayde Parke, wch was taken out of the forrest, of the like tenure,

20li.

"Sir Edward Winter's parke from the woodeside to the launde is of the

like tenure, together wth the 2 highwaies wch have bene inclosed out of

the forrest wthin this 20 yeres, 30li.

"Widowe Earwoode's ground from Mr Carpenter's to the forrest side is of

the same tenure, 15li.

"Thomas Dininge's Myll, called Breame, wth all the landes and tenements

thereto belonging, is so holden, as allso his house and land upon the

hill, and all other his landes towardes Breame likewise.

"Item, all the lands from Conyers bridge, being a great quantity, to the

forrest, are belonging to the same landes, but lately aliened & sould by

deed, & now holden by demise, are of like tenure, being parcell of the

forrest, 40li.

"Mr. Jeames, of Bristoll, holdeth 100li per ann. of the same tenure wthin

the forrest.

"Md these are not halfe the landes on that side the forrest, but towards

Michell Deane & little Deane there is muche more.

"Item, Willm. Hall hath land there wch a Dyer holdeth vnder him, & was

taken out of the Kinge's comon, together wth other lands not yet

throughly viewed.

"Item, all Wrurdyne is much more land, wch shall be viewed & sett downe

hereafter.

"Item, Stanton's myne, wth much other land vnviewed, is so holden.

"All wch particulars doe but conteine but the least parte of the landes

holden by the foresaid tenure."

Further particulars, of the same character as the above, and forming a

part of the series now given, occur in the records of another survey, as

follows:--

"Rent reserved for the farme of two Messuages and one Watermill, of which

two Messuages one is called Sulley, the other Redmore; And of 5 cotages,

with gardens and orchards to the same belonginge; and of one 30 Acres of

Land, Meadow, Pasture, Arrable, and Woodland; Some whereof are called

Salley fields, Gumspitt, Le Harper, Diwardens, Broadfeild, Radmore,

Coppier, Kew-grove, Martin's Wall, and Ediland, conteyninge together

CCCXLVII acres, one rood, and one perch, late in the occupacon of Edward

James, lying in the fforest of Deane, in the County of Gloucester, of the

yearely value of VIS and VIIID and IVS penny halfepenny.

"And of six Messuages, six Barnes, gardens, and orchards to the same

belongings, And of XVI. several Closes of Land, Meadowe, Pasture, Arrable

Land, and Woodland; Two whereof are called Cownedge, ten called Digges,

one called Bradley, one Beggars' Thorne mead, one called Marshall's

grove, and the other called ffernefeilde, and one other called Bradley,

conteyninge in the whole Threescore and ten acres and three roods, lying

in the fforest aforesaid, late in the occupation of Robert Pearke, of the

yearly value of IIS and VID, &c. &c. &c.

"The names of the officers belonging to his Mties fforrest of Deane in

Com' Glouc., viz., the Earle of Pembrooke is now High Cunstable of the

same fforest. William Winter and Roger Myners, Esqrs, or one of them, is

deputie Cunstable to the said Earle, & they keepe Courtes every 3 weeks

at St Breuilles, and allso every 6 weekes at the Speach House, or Court

of Attachment wthin the same fforrest. William Carpenter is Steward of

St Breuills Courtes & the said Speach Court or Attachementes courtes.

Robert Bridgeman is Bailiff for all the said Courtes, and allso in all

the liberties in the said fforrest, and James Yennys is his deputie

Bayliff. Md every tenantes & the borderers doe take tymber for their

buildings as allso hedge woods to inclose their own groundes, & take

fyring at their pleasure wthin the fforrest, & sell their owne woodes and

the woodes of the landes wthin mentioned, to the great spoile of the

Kinge's woodes wthin the said fforrest."

No. II.

One of the Dean Forest Claims, put in at the Justice Seat, held in

Gloucester Castle, 10 Chas. I.

Clamea posita in Itinere Forestae de Deane tento apud Castrum Glouc. in

com. Glouc. die Iovis decimo die Iulij anno Regni Domini Caroli nunc

Regis Angliae decimo coram Henrico Comite de Holland praenobilis Ordinis

Garterii Milite Capitali Justitiario ac Justitiariis Itinerantibus omnium

Forestarum Chacearum parcorum et warrennarum Domini Regis citra Trentam.

(18) Foresta de Deane in Comitatu Glouc.Et modo ad hanc curiam venit

Willielmus Skynne, per Edwardum Offley attornatum suum, et dicit quod

ipse est seisitus de antiquo mesuagio in Plattwell in parochia de Newland

et de viginti acris terrae prati et pasturae et de diversis horreis

stabulis, Anglice barnes Stables, et aliis necessariis edificiis super

terram praedictam ab antiquo edificatis in parochia de Newland infra

Forestam de Deane praedictam in dominico suo ut de feodo, et pro se et

haeredibus suis clamat has libertates privilegia et franchesias sequentia

tanquam ad mesuagium terram pratum et pasturam et caetera edificia

praedicta pertinentia et spectantia, videlicet pro necessaria

reedificatione et reparatione dicti mesuagii sui et aliorum antiquorum

edificiorum suorum super terram et tenementa sua praedicta existentium,

quod ipse per visum et allocationem forestariorum et viridariorum

Forestae praedictae de bosco et maeremio domini Regis super vasta et

communia Forestae praedictae crescentibus de tempore in tempus capere et

percipere potest. Et quod forestarii et viridarii Forestae praedictae

post requisitionem per ipsum Willielmum Skynne eisdem factam apud Curiam

domini Regis infra Forestam praedictam tentam vocatam Le Speech Court,

debent ire videre et appunctuare boscum et maeremium in vastis et

communibus Forestae praedictae sic ut praefertur crescentia praedictis

necessariis reedificationibus et reparationibus suis dicti mesuagii et

aliorum edificiorum suorum supradictorum et eidem Willielmo Skynne inde

allocationem facere. Clamat etiam pro necessariis estoveriis suis in

dicto antiquo mesuagio comburendis et expendendis ad libitum suum capere

de mortuis et siccis arboribus dicti domini Regis in vastis et communibus

locis Forestae praedictae existentibus. Clamat etiam communiam pasturae

in omnibus locis apertis et communicalibus Forestae praedictae pro

omnibus averiis suis communicalibus super terras et tenementa sua

praedicta levantibus et cubantibus omnibus anni temporibus (mense vetito

solummodo excepto). Clamat etiam habere pawnagium pro omnibus porcis

suis super terras et tenementa sua praedicta levantibus et cubantibus in

omnibus vastis Forestae praedictae tempore pawnagii, Reddendo domino Regi

annuatim summam unius denarii pro pawnagio praedicto per nomen de

Swinesilver et non amplius. Et pro titulo ad has libertates privilegia

et franchesias sic ut praefertur superius per ipsum clamata, idem

Willielmus Skynne ulterius dicit quod ipse et omnes antecessores sui et

omnes illi quorum statum ipse nunc habet in mesuagio terra et tenementis

supradictis a tempore cujus contrarii memoria hominum non existit in

contrarium usi fuerunt et consueverunt de tempore in tempus facere sectam

ad Curiam dicti domini Regis et praedecessorum suorum Regum et Reginarum

Angliae apud Castrum suum Sancti Briavelli de tribus septimanis in tres

septimanas, ac etiam annuatim solvere feodo firmario domini Regis

Forestae praedictae pro tempore existenti vel ejus ballivo redditum octo

solidorum et octo denariorum ad usum dicti domini Regis. Ac etiam

annuatim solvere dicto feodo firmario vel ejus ballivo summam unius

denarii in nomine de Swinesilver ad usum dicti domini Regis. Et quod

ipse praefatus Willielmus Skynne et omnes antecessores et omnes ili

quorum statum ipse nunc habet in mesuagio terris et tenementis

supradictis ratione soctae ad Curiam dicti domini Regis et redditus octo

solidorum et octo denariorum praedictorum ac summae unius denarii in

nomine de Swinesilver sic ut praefertur per ipsum de tempore in tempus

domino Regi factorum et solutorum usi fuerunt et a toto praedicto tempore

cujus contrarii memoria hominum non existit in contrarium uti

consueverunt omnibus et singulis libertatibus privilegiis et franchesiis

modo et forma prout per ipsum Willielmum Skynne superius sunt clamata

tanquam ad praedictum mesuagium terras et tenementa praedicta spectantia

et pertinentia, et eis omnibus et singulis juxta vim formam et effectum

clamei sui praedicti usi fuerunt, et idem Willielmus Skynne adhuc utitur

prout ei bene licet. Et hoc paratus est verificare prout curia

consideraverit unde idem Willielmus Skynne petit praedicta libertates

privilegia et franchesias hic ut praefertur per ipsum superius clamata

sibi et haeredibus suis allocari juxta clameum suum praedictum.

TOBIAS ROSE.

No. III.

TABLE I.--FORMED BY MR. MACHEN.

An Account of the Admeasurement of Trees in Dean Forest; viz., A, an Oak

near the Woodman's in Shutcastle; B, "Jack of the Yat," an Oak Tree on

the Coleford and Mitcheldean Road; C, a large Oak in Sallow Vallets; D,

an Oak which appears to be formed of two Oaks grown together, on the

Lodge Hill, 300 yards west of York Lodge; E, a black Italian Poplar in

the Garden at Whitemead. All taken at six feet from the ground.

[NOTE: In each table, Inc = Increase in Size.]

A B C D E

{265} {265a} {265b}

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

Ft.ins ins Ft.ins ins Ft.ins ins Ft.ins ins Ft.ins ins

Oct 3 9 - - - - - - - - -

1814

,, 3 1.625 - - - - 17 2 - - -

1816 10.625

,, 3 1 - - - - 17 3 1 0 -

1818 11.625 11.5

,, 4 1.25 - - - - 17 4.125 - -

1820 0.825 7.125

,, 4 1.75 - - - - 18 5.125 - -

1822 2.625 0.25

,, 4 4.5 1.825 - - - - 18 3.5 - -

1824 3.75

,, 4 5.5 1 - - - - 18 6 - -

1826 9.75

,, 4 8 2.5 - - - - 18 2 - -

1828 11.75

,, 4 10 2 - - 12 - 19 0.75 4 3 -

1830 4.5 0.5

,, 4 0.75 - - - - 19 1.25 - -

1832 10.75 1.75

,, 4 0.5 - - - - 19 4 2.25 6 -

1834 11.25 1.75

,, 5 0 0.75 - - - - 19 9 5 6 9 7.25

1836

,, 5 0.75 17 9 12 6 20 2 5 7 3.5

1838 0.75 10.5 0.5

,, 5 1 0.25 17 10 1 12 0.25 20 4 2 7 7 6.5

1840 10.75

,, 5 0.25 17 1.25 12 0.75 20 8 4 8 0 5

1842 1.25 11.25 11.5

,, 5 3.5 2.25 18 3.5 13 1 1.5 - - 8 10 10

1844 2.75

,, 5 1.25 18 0.75 13 1.5 21 0 4 9 5.25

1846 4.75 3.5 2.5 3.25

,, 5 6 1.25 18 1.75 13 4 1.5 21 4 4 9 10 6.75

1848 5.25

,, 5 6.5 0.5 18 6 0.75 13 0.75 21 2.5 10 2 4

1850 4.75 6.5

,, 5 7 0.5 18 0.5 13 0.5 21 8 1.5 10 8 6

1852 6.5 5.25

,, cut - 18 0.75 13 2.75 21 10 2 11 6.5

1854 down 7.25 7.5 2.5

TABLE 2.--FORMED BY MR. MACHEN.

An Account of the Admeasurement of several Oak Trees in the Bailey Copse

(North), A, B, C, D, E, and F.

N.B.--The Copse was open for many years, and the Oak underwood kept down

by cattle browsing. It was enclosed in 1813, and thickly stored, and the

underwood cut in 1817. It is now (1818) well stored with young Oaks of

the same description as those measured.

A B C D E F

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in.

Oct. 7.75 - 10.75 - 9.5 - 9 - 12.625 - 10.75 -

1818

,, 9 1.25 13 2.25 10.5 1 10.25 1.25 14.375 1.75 12.125 1.375

1820

,, 10.25 1.25 15.125 2.125 11.25 0.75 11.5 1.25 16.25 1.825 13 0.825

1822

,, 11.375 1.125 17.125 2 12.375 1.125 12.625 1.125 17.75 1.5 14.75 1.75

1824

,, 12.25 0.825 18.75 1.625 13.25 0.825 13.75 1.125 19.125 1.375 16.125 1.375

1826

,, 13.125 0.825 19.5 0.75 13.75 0.5 14.5 0.75 20.375 1.25 17.25 1.125

1828

,, 13.625 0.5 20.375 0.825 14 0.25 15.25 0.75 21 0.625 17.75 0.5

1830

,, 15.375 1.75 22.25 1.825 14.5 0.5 16.625 1.375 22.5 1.5 19.25 1.5

1832

,, 17.375 2 25 2.75 15.625 1.125 18.125 1.5 24 1.5 21 1.75

1834

,, 19.125 1.75 27.75 2.75 17.625 2 19.5 1.375 25.75 1.75 22.75 1.75

1836

,, 21.125 2 30.375 2.625 19 1.375 20.75 1.25 27.75 2 24.25 1.5

1838

,, 22.825 1.75 32 1.625 20.375 1.375 21.75 1 29 1.25 25.75 1.5

1840

,, 24.625 1.75 33.825 1.825 21.75 1.375 22.625 0.825 30.25 1.25 27 1.25

1842

,, 26 1.375 34.75 0.825 22 0.25 22.825 0.25 30.75 0.5 27.5 0.5

1844

,, 27.5 1.5 36.5 1.75 22.75 0.75 23.625 0.75 32.125 1.375 28.625 1.125

1846

,, 30 2.5 38.75 2.25 24.5 1.75 25.25 1.5 34.125 2 30.625 2

1848

,, 31.5 1.5 40.5 1.75 26 1.5 26 0.75 35.5 1.375 32.5 1.825

1850

,, 32.75 1.25 41 0.5 26.75 0.75 26.25 0.25 37 1.5 33.75 1.25

1852

,, 33.75 1 44 3 26.75 - 27.25 1 37.75 0.75 34.75 1

1854

TABLE 3.--FORMED BY MR. MACHEN.

An Account of the Admeasurement of Seven Beech Timber Trees growing in

Doward Wood, near the walk by the side of the River Wye. They are clean

and smooth in the bark, and appear fast growing.

A B C D E F G

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins ins

Oct. 64.5 - 52 - 56.25 - 58.25 - 56.5 - 53.25 - 47.25 -

1838

,, 65 0.5 53 1 57.125 0.825 59 0.75 57.5 1 53.75 0.5 49 1.75

1840

,, 66.75 1.75 54.25 1.25 58.5 1.375 60.375 1.375 58.625 1.125 55.125 1.375 49 -

1842

,, 69.75 3 54.5 0.25 59 0.5 61.25 0.825 59 0.375 55.75 0.625 49 -

1844

,, 73 3.25 55.5 1 60.25 1.25 62 0.75 59.5 0.5 56.5 0.75 49.5 0.5

1846

,, 73.25 0.25 56 0.5 61.5 1.25 62.25 0.25 60.25 0.75 57.5 1 50.5 1

1848

,, 73.5 0.25 56.25 0.25 62.5 1 63.25 1 60.5 0.25 58.75 1.25 50.75 0.25

1850

,, 76 2.5 56.5 0.25 63.25 0.75 64.5 1.25 61.5 1 59.5 0.75 51.5 0.75

1852

,, 78 2 58 1.5 64.75 1.5 65.625 1.125 62.5 1 61.25 1.75 52.5 1

1854

TABLE 4.--FORMED BY MR. MACHEN.

An Account of the Admeasurement of 14 Oak Timber Trees, A, B, C, D, E, F,

and G, growing on Hall's Hill, and H, I, J, K, L, M, and N, on

Pritchard's Hill, both near the Ride in the Highmeadow Woods. The trees

are probably now (1822) 80 or 90 years old.

FIRST PART.

A B C D E F G

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in.

Oct 61 - 62 - 65.5 - 67.375 - 46.5 - 82.5 - 49 -

1822

,, 62.5 1.5 63.75 1.75 68 2.5 69 1.625 49.25 2.75 83.25 0.75 52 3

1824

,, 65 2.5 65.75 2 71.75 3.75 71.5 2.5 52 2.75 84 0.75 55.5 3.5

1826

,, 67.25 2.25 67.5 1.75 74.5 2.75 73.25 1.75 54.75 2.75 85 1 58 2.5

1828

,, 68.25 1 68.5 1 75 0.5 73.75 0.5 55.25 0.5 87.25 2.25 59 1

1830

,, 69 0.75 69.5 1 76.5 1.5 74.25 0.5 56.75 1.5 88.25 1 60.5 1.5

1832

,, 71 2 71.25 1.75 77.5 1 75.25 1 57.5 0.75 90 1.75 61.5 1

1834

,, 72.5 1.5 72.75 1.5 78.5 1 76 0.75 58 0.5 91 1 62.5 1

1836

,, 73.5 1 73.5 0.75 79.75 1.25 76.5 0.5 59 1 92 1 63.75 1.25

1838

,, 74 0.5 74.75 1.25 80.25 0.5 78 1.5 59.25 0.25 92.5 0.5 64 0.25

1840

,, 75.625 1.625 74.825 0.125 81.5 1.25 79.125 1.125 59.25 - 93.375 0.825 64 -

1842

,, 76.75 1.125 75.75 0.825 82 0.5 80.25 1.125 60.5 1.25 93.75 0.375 65.75 1.75

1844

,, 78 1.25 77.5 1.75 82.75 0.75 81.5 1.25 61.5 1 96 2.25 67 1.25

1846

,, 80.25 2.25 78.5 1 83.25 0.5 82.25 0.75 63 1.5 96.25 0.25 67 -

1848

,, 82 1.75 79.75 1.25 84.75 1.5 83.75 1.5 64.5 1.5 98 1.75 68 1

1850

,, 82.5 0.5 80.5 0.75 85.25 0.5 83.75 - 65.25 0.75 98.5 0.5 69.75 1.75

1852

,, 83.25 0.75 81.25 0.75 85.5 0.25 86 2.25 66.25 1 99.25 0.75 71 1.25

1854

SECOND PART.

H I J K L M N

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in. in.

Oct 49 - 31.25 - 46.75 - 30 - 67.25 - 36.75 - 28 -

1822

,, 52.25 3.25 32.25 1 49.5 2.75 32 2 69.75 2.5 39 2.25 29.75 1.75

1824

,, 55.75 3.5 33.75 1.5 52.5 3 34.5 2 72.5 2.75 42.25 3.25 31.75 2

1826

,, 58.25 2.5 35.25 1.5 55.25 2.75 37 2.5 75 2.5 45 2.75 34 2.25

1828

,, 59 0.75 36 0.75 56 0.75 37.5 0.5 76 1 45.5 0.5 34.5 0.5

1830

,, 60.25 1.25 38 2 57.25 1.25 39 1.5 77.5 1.5 47.25 1.75 36.25 1.75

1832

,, 61 0.75 38.75 0.75 58 0.75 39 - 78.75 0.75 48 0.75 37 0.75

1834

,, 62 1 39.5 0.75 59 1 40 1 79 0.25 48.75 0.75 38 1

1836

,, 62.75 0.75 40.5 1 60.25 1.25 41.75 1.75 80.25 1.25 50 1.25 39 1

1838

,, 63 0.25 41.25 0.75 61 0.75 42.75 1 82.25 2 51.5 1.5 39.25 0.25

1840

,, 63.75 0.75 41.25 - 61 - 43.25 0.5 83.25 1 53.25 1.75 39.5 0.25

1842

,, 64.25 0.5 42 0.75 62 1 44 0.75 84.75 1.5 54.5 1.25 40.125 0.625

1844

,, 66.25 2 43 1 62.75 0.75 45.25 0.5 85.75 1 55.5 1 41 0.825

1846

,, 67 0.75 44 1 63.75 1 46.25 1 86.5 0.75 57 1.5 42 1

1848

,, 68.75 1.75 44.5 0.5 65 1.25 47.5 1.25 88 1.5 58 1 43 1

1850

,, 69 0.25 44.75 0.25 65.75 0.75 48 0.5 89 1 59 1 43.75 0.75

1852

,, 69.5 0.5 45.75 1 66.375 0.625 48.75 0.75 90 1 60 1 44 0.25

1854

TABLE 5.--FORMED BY MR. MACHEN.

An Account of the Admeasurement of nine Trees growing on York Lodge Hill:

A, B, C are Oaks; D, E, F are Turkey Oaks; and G, H, I are Chesnuts.

These trees have been planted singly on the open Forest without any Fence

(now 1836), about 20 years since.

FIRST PART.

A. Oak. B. Oak. C. Oak. D. Turkey E. Turkey Oak.

Oak.

Inc Inc Inc Inc Inc

ft.in. in. ft.in. in. ft.in. in. ft.in. in. ft.in. in.

Oct 1836 2 8.5 - 2 5 - 2 9.25 - 1 7.5 - 1 9 -

,, 1838 2 11 2.5 2 6.75 1.75 2 11.25 2 1 10 2.5 1 11.5 2.5

,, 1840 3 0.25 1.25 2 8.5 1.75 3 1.5 2.25 2 0.75 2.75 2 2.5 3

,, 1842 3 2 1.75 2 10 1.5 3 3.5 2 2 3.5 2.75 2 5.5 3

,, 1844 3 5.5 3.5 3 1 3 3 6.5 3 2 7 3.5 2 9 3.5

,, 1846 3 8 2.5 3 2 1 3 10 3.5 2 10 3 3 0 3

,, 1848 3 10.25 2.25 3 4 2 4 1 3 3 1 3 3 2.25 2.25

,, 1850 4 0.5 2.25 3 5.5 1.5 4 2 1 3 2.75 1.75 3 4.25 2

,, 1852 4 2.75 2.25 3 7.5 2 4 4 2 3 4.75 2 3 6.5 2.25

,, 1854 4 5.75 3 3 10 2.5 4 7 3 3 8.75 4 3 10.5 4

SECOND PART.

F Turkey Oak. G Chesnut. H Chesnut. I Chesnut.

Inc Inc Inc Inc

ft.in. in. ft.in. in. ft.in. in. ft.in. in.

Oct 1836 1 7.25 - 1 11.5 - 2 2 - 2 0.25 -

,, 1838 1 10.25 3 2 3 3.5 2 5.5 3.5 2 5 4.75

,, 1840 2 1.25 3 2 5.75 2.75 2 8.75 3.25 2 10 5

,, 1842 2 4.5 3.25 2 9.5 3.75 3 0 3.25 3 3.5 5.5

,, 1844 2 8 3.5 3 1 3.5 3 2 2 3 9 5.5

,, 1846 2 11 3 3 4 3 3 5.5 3.5 4 2.75 5.75

,, 1848 3 2.25 3.25 3 7.5 3 3 8.5 3 4 7.75 5

,, 1850 3 4.25 2 3 10 2.5 3 9.75 1.25 4 11 3.25

,, 1852 3 6.75 2.25 4 1 3 3 11.5 1.75 5 3.5 4.5

,, 1854 3 10 3.25 4 5 4 4 3.5 4 5 8.25 4.75

\_The following letter of Mr. Vaughan\_, \_of Court Field on the Wye\_, \_near

Lydbrook, merits insertion\_, \_as bearing testimony to the value of the

preceding Tables compiled by Mr. Machen\_, \_exhibiting the growth of Trees

in the Forest\_.

"Court Field, October 15, 1841.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I thank you very much for the interesting account you have sent me

of the result of your observation during a series of years upon the

growth of trees. It is really a most curious document. I ought to

have thanked you sooner, but I was anxious, first, to compare your

Table with the result of my own admeasurements of trees at Court

Field in various situations; and give you, at the same time, the

result of my calculations.

"I find that my experience fully corroborates yours, though it

induces me to believe that the forest growth is slightly below an

average--which the soil and situation would also induce one to

imagine.

"I calculate, from your Table, that an oak-tree measuring 6 inches

girt doubles its contents (exclusive of its increase in height and

limb) in 5 to 6 years. Whereas, a tree measuring 8.5 inches, or half

a foot girt, requires 10 or 12 years to double itself.

"With regard to the trees 170 years old, I find that A has increased

19 feet or 28 per cent. only in 30 years, and B 26 feet or 48 per

cent. during the same period; neither, therefore, paying much

interest on their value within the last 30 years.

"I calculate that the value of the acres of growing timber which you

refer to (73 oaks averaging 58 feet) would be 624 pounds at 7 pounds

10s. per 50 feet; or, if the original value of the land and expense

of ploughing it amounted to 25 pounds, about twenty-five times its

original value.

"If the thinnings be considered equivalent to the expense of

protection-fences, &c., and 25 pounds at compound interest for 170

years be calculated, 624 pounds will be found to be less than 1/20

per cent. = a hundredth of 5 per cent. per annum.

"I remain, my dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

"JOHN V. VAUGHAN."

No. IV.

Mr. Wyrrall's Survey of the Forest of Dean Iron Works in 1635.

"\_Canop Furnace\_.--Most pt new built, the rest repaired by the Farmers,

22ft square, wheel 22ft diamr. Furnace box built 4 years since by the

Farmers. Bridge-house 48ft by 21, 9 high, built 4 years, Bellow's boards

18ft by 4. Clerk's house and stable built by the Farmers. A cottage

built by the Workmen belonging to the Works, now occupied by the Filler.

Built before the Farmers hired.--Founder's house, Minecracker's cabin, A

Mine Kiln.

"\_Park Furnace\_.--Same dimensions, repaired 4 years since by the Farmers,

Wheel and almost all the houses built by the Farmers.

"\_Park end Forge\_.--2 Hamrs, 3 Fineries, 1 Chaffery, repd 2 years since,

one of the Fineries new.

"\_Whitecroft Forge\_,--built abt 6 yrs since by the Farmers, do do

"\_Bradley Forge\_.--do do do

"\_Sowdley Furnace\_, built 3 years--Qu. if rebuilt? Bridge house, pt

built by the farmers, pt old and decayd, Trow leading to the wheel, .5

made new 5 years since, decayd, 5 Cottages, 1 built by the Farmers. A

dam a mile above Sowdley built by the Farmers. A dam half a mile still

higher, built long since.

"\_Sowdley Forge\_, 2 Fineries, 1 Chaffery built 2 years, in the place of

the old Forge. Trows & Penstocks made new by the Farmers, decayed.

"\_Lydbrook Furnace\_, 23ft long, 9 bottom, 23ft deep, new built 3 yrs

since from the ground, 3 ft higher than before, much cracked. A great

Buttress behind the Furnace to strengthen it.

"\_Lydbrook Forge\_.--1 Chaffery, 2 Fineries, House built 4 years, being

burnt by accident."

Besides the above, Mr. Wyrrall also transcribed the following additional

particulars from a MS. dated 23 September, 1635, and endorsed,--"The

booke of Survey for the Forest of Deane Iron work, and the Warrant

annexed unto yt."

"\_Cannope Furnace\_.--Now blowinge, and likely to contynue aboute 3 weeks.

The most part new built, and the rest repaired by the Farmers about 4

years since. Stone walls, about 60lb, consistinge of the stone body

thereof 22 foote square, wherein are:--

"In the fore front 4 Sowes of Iron }

and the Tempiron Wall 3 Sowes } 7 Sowes.

"A Wheele, 22 Foote diamr, 7 Iron Whops, one the Waste, made about three

years since. With Shafte and all things belonginge about 20lb, in good

repaire.

"The Furnace Howse half tiled, built with timber 4 years since by the

Farmers, cost about 80lb, in repaire.

"The Bridge house, 21 foot broad, 48 foot longe, and 9 foote heigh, built

about 2 years since, the bridge about 4 years, covered with bords

bottomed with Planks.

"5 bellow bords ready sawed, 18ft longe, 4ft broad. A Watter Trowe 1ft

at bottome and 15 ynches high, 75 yards longe, leadinge the water to the

Wheele, cut out of the whole tymber, and ledged at the top, newe made

within 4 years, and now in repaire, cost about 20lb.

"The Hutch leading the Watter from the Wheele, 5 foot square, 85 foote

long, not mended by these farmers, in repaire.

"In doinge of the saied Workes, besids the Hutch used by estimate about

150 Tonns, at VIIIS, and the Hutch about 40 Tonns, being trees only slitt

and clapt together at 5s the Ton.

"\_Outhouses\_.--The Furnace Keeper's Cabbyne built of timber covered with

bords built by the Farmers, cost 3lb, 4 tonns.

"A Cottage neare the said Furnaces built by the workmen of the said

Works, now enjoyed by the Filler there, and not belonging to the Workes.

"A Howse wherein the Clarke dwells, built by the Farmers wth a stable, 20

Nobs 6 Tonns.

"Another howse adjoyninge for the founder, built before the Farmers'

time.

"Another little cabbyne for the Myne Cracker, built before the Farmers'

time.

"8 dozen of Collyers Hurdles, 13s 4d.

"A Myne Kilne not in repaire, built before the Farmers' tyme, with 5

piggs of Iron in the walls, 20s will repaire.

"Cole places.

"\_Implemnts\_--one paire of Bellowes furnished with iron implemnts,

somewhat defective in the lethers, valued at 15lb, made by the Farmers,

the repaire whereof will cost 6lb 13s 4d.

"6 cambes of iron in Wheele Shafte waying about 4cwt.

"3 water Trowes for the Worke.

"1 Grindstone, 19 longe Ringers, 1 short one, 1 Constable, 7 Sinder

Shovells, 1 moulding Ship, 2 casting ladles, 1 cinder hooke, 1 Plackett,

2 buck stoves, 1 Tuiron hooke, 1 Iron Tempe, 1 Sinder plate, 1 dame

plate.

"4 Wheele barrowes, 1 great Sledge, 1 Tuiron plate cast, 1 Shamell plate,

1 Gage, 1 crackt wooden beame and scales, furnished, and triangles, 1 ton

of Wtts, Pigs used for weights upon the bellows poises, 3.5c of Rawe

Iron, 1 new firkett in the Backside, 1 lader of 14 rungs, 1 dozen of cole

basketts, 2 Myne hammers, 2 Myne Shovells, 2 Coale Rakes, 2 Myne Rakes, 2

baskes to put myne into the Furnace.

"\_Parke Furnace\_.--The stone body thereof 22 foote square in the Front, 2

broken sowes, one taken thence, 2 sowes in the Wall.

"Repaired 4 years since by the Farmers, viz., the backe wall from the

foundation to the top, and parte of the wall over the Bellows, 40lb it

cost.

"The Water Wheele 22ft heigh, wth a Shaft whereon 7 whops, 2 Gudgions and

2 brasses, built about the same tyme, in repaire, valued at 20lb. The

Furnace Howse tiled, built with stone wall 9 foot heigh, 22 foote square,

the Roof good, built about the same tyme, in repair, saving a Lace by the

Bridge. The stone worke valued at 10lb. The Carpenter's worke one the

roofe at 20s, the tilinge valued at 6lb 13s 4d.

"A Pent house under the Furnace, 10s.

"The Bridge House 42ft longe, 22ft broad, the said walles 8.5 foot,

covered with boards, double bottomed with plancke, upon stronge sleepers,

valued at 40lb.

"Fence Walls all built by the Farmers about 4 yeares since.

"100 Foote of trowes made of square timber, hollowed and covered with

plancke, valued at 10lb, made by the Farmers.

"Another Water course, built with stone one both sides and covered wth

planckes 2.5 foot broad, 46 foot, in repaire, 5lb.

"An Iron cast grate one the same watercourse.

"A watercourse of half a mile one the North of the Furnace, at the head

thereof a dam and a small breach, wants soweringe, otherwise good, cutt

by the Farmers, and cost them 20lb, and will cost 3lb.

"A Water course of above .5 mile to the South, made before their tyme.

"The Hutch built with stone and covered with plankes of 6 foot heigh, 3

foot broad, 70ft, saving about 11 foot at the vent which is timber,

repaired by the Farmers, in repaire, but the Courant stopt below with

cinders, 13lb 6s 8d; the cutting of a newe will cost 8lb.

"The Fownder's howse built before the Farmers' tyme.

"A Cottage adjoininge.

"A Cabbyne for the bridge-server, covered with boards, built by them

about a yeare since, 3 tonns, 18ft longe, 11 broad, valued at 5lb.

"A Cabbyne adjoining to the Furnace for the Furnace Keeper, about a Tonn,

built by the Farmers, and valued at 2lb.

"A Faire Howse, the ends stone built, the rest with Timber 50 foot longe,

16 broad; in it is a crosse building stories heigh, in repaire, tiled,

built before the Farmers now granted, with 2 stables belonging, of

tymber.

"A smale cottage, now William Wayt's.

"A myne kilne, the inside in decay, the piggs of iron taken out of the

draught thereof, the repaire will cost 2lb.

"Tymber in doeinge of }

the saied worke .. } 150 Tonnes, worth VIS VIIID the tonne.

"\_Implemnts\_.--1 pr bellowes open with the furniture of iron thereto

belonging, defective in the lethers, valued at 13lb 6s 8d, the repaire

will cost 10lb.; 2 buckstaves, 1 dam-plate, 2 sinder plats, 1 tuiron

plate, 1 plackett, 1 gadge, 1 tuiron hoocke, 1 dam hoocke or stopinge

hoocke, 4 iron shovells, 9 ringers, 6 cole baskets, 2 wheel barrows, 2

myne hammers, 1 coale rake, 2 cinder raks, 1 great sledge, 1 ringer

hammer, 1 constable, 1 shammell plate, 6 iron cambs.

"A beame with scales, hoocks, triangles, and lincks, with about .5 a ton

of rawe iron for a wt, in repaire; 1 sowe of iron of 16cwt. which was in

the front wall, soe now lyes before the doore, 5lb.

"1 Grindstone, 2 bellowe boards, never used, and 4 old ones, 1lb 10s.

"Collyers' Hurdles.

"The tymber ymployed about the said worke estimated at 140 tonns, and

valued at 8s the tonn, 56lb.

"The Repaire of the body of the furnace and the buildings, beames thereto

belonginge, and other defects, to make it fit to blowe, estimated at

60lb.

"\_Parkend Forge\_--consistinge of 2 hamers, 3 Fyneryes, and 1 chaffery,

repayered about 2 years since by the Farmers, viz., 2 newe drome beames,

2 great hamers, shafts with wheeles and armes all newe, the body of the

forge repaired in sundry places, one of the fyneryes built newe with the

whole and shafts.

"The harmes to the great hamers newe and in repaire, valued at 12lb.

"One other finerye chimney, made within the yeare, 5lb, 3 newe trowes

through the bay, 26ft longe a piece, covered with planke one the west

side, 13lb 6s 8d.

"The hamer hutch one the west side, heigh and broad one the one side,

plancked in the bottome ranges of tymber with spreaders conteyninge 150

foote in length, 40lb.

"The chaffery wheele in the west side, old and decayed, 3lb to repaire

it.

"One longe trowe one the est side leadinge the watter to the fynerye, 66

foote longe, 6lb 13s 4d; another great trowe with a penstocke, 32 foote,

cost 3lb 6s 8d; 1 great penstocke in the hamer trowe, 14 foot longe, 2

foote square, 40s.

"2 Water Pricke Posts with his laces, 4lb.

"The Hamer Hutch one the west side, 4 foote square, bottoms and sides

with plancks, 2 ranges of timber 150 foote longe, 10lb.

"The bodye of one Fynerye wheele all newe, made within 2 yeares last past

by the Farmers.

"One little house for the carpenter to work in one the bay.

"Two ranges of tymber worke in the lower side of the bay, consistinge of

sils, laces, and posts, built by the Farmers within 2 yeares, 120 foote,

12 heigh, 80lb.

"The front of the bay where the water is led to the west side and

drawinge gates built about 2 years since. Stone walls on each side, 5lb.

"A flowd gate with 6 sluices, strongly tymbered, built with stronge wall

one either side thereof, 160 foote longe, 3ft heigh, 3 foot thicke,

aproned and plancked on the top for a bridge 3 years since, 44 foot

longe, 22ft broad, 50lb.

\* \* \* \* \*

The same careful investigator (Mr. Wyrrall) of every particular relating

to the iron-works of the Forest formed a glossary of the terms used in

the above specifications, which not only sufficiently explains them, but

also shows that very similar apparatus continued to be used in this

neighbourhood up to the close of the last century. It proceeds thus:--

"\_Sows of Iron\_ are the long pieces of cast iron as they run into the

sand immediately from the furnace; thus called from the appearance of

this and the shorter pieces which are runned into smaller gutters made in

the same sand, from the resemblance they have to a sow lying on her side

with her pigs at her dugs. These are for working up in the forges; but

it is usual to cast other sows of iron of very great size to lay in the

walls of the furnaces as beams to support the great strain of the work.

"\_Dam Plate\_ is a large flat plate of cast iron placed on its edge

against the front of the furnace, with a stone cut sloping and placed on

the inside. This plate has a notch on the top for the cinder or scruff

to run off, and a place at the side to discharge the metal at casting.

"\_The Shaft\_ of a wheel is a large round beam having the wheel fixed near

the one end of it, and turning upon gudgeons or centres fixed in the two

ends.

"\_The Furnace House\_ I take to be what we call the casting house, where

the metal runs out of the furnace into the sand.

"\_The Bridge\_ is the place where the raw materials are laid down ready to

be thrown into the furnace. I conceive that it had its name (which is

still continued) from this circumstance--that in the infancy of these

works it was built as a bridge, hollow underneath. It was not at first

known what strength was required to support the blast of a furnace

bellows; and the consequence was that they were often out of repair, and

frequently obliged to be built almost entirely new.

"\_Bellows Boards\_--not very different from the present dimensions.

"\_Water Troughs\_--scooped out of the solid timber. This shows the great

simplicity of these times, not 150 years ago.

"\_The Hutch\_, or as it is now corruptly called the Witch, a wide covered

drain below the furnace-wheel to carry off the water from it, usually

arched, but here only covered with timbers to support the rubbish and

earth thrown upon it.

"\_Cambs\_ are iron cogs fixed in the shaft to work the bellows as the

wheel turns round.

"\_Cinder Shovels\_, iron shovels for taking up the cinders into the boxes,

both to measure them and to fill the furnace.

"\_Moulding Ship\_, an iron tool fixed on a wooden handle, so formed as to

make the gutters in the sand for casting the pig and sow iron.

"\_Casting Ladles\_, made hollow like a dish, with a lip to lade up the

liquid iron for small castings.

"\_Wringers\_, large long bars of iron to wring the furnace, that is to

clear it of the grosser and least fluid cinder which rises on the upper

surface, and would there coagulate and soon prevent the furnace from

working aright.

"\_Constable\_, a bar of very great substance and length, kept always lying

by a furnace in readiness for extraordinary purposes in which uncommon

strength and purchase were required. I suppose this name to have been

given to this tool on account of its superior bulk and power, and in

allusion to the Constable of St. Briavel's Castle, an officer heretofore

of very great weight and consequence in this Forest.

"\_Cinder Hook\_, a hook of iron for drawing away the scruff or cinder

which runs liquid out of the furnace over the dam plate, and soon becomes

a solid substance, which must be removed to make room for fresh cinder to

run out into its place.

"\_Plackett\_, a tool contrived as a kind of trowel for smoothing and

shaping the clay.

"\_Buckstones\_, now called Buckstaves, are two thick plates of iron, about

5 or 6 feet long, fixed one on each side of the front of the furnace down

to the ground to support the stone work.

"\_Iron Tempe\_ is a plate fixed at the bottom of the front wall of the

furnace over the flame between the buck-staves.

"\_Tuiron Plate\_ is a plate of cast iron fixed before the noses of the

bellows, and so shaped as to conduct the blast into the body of the

furnace.

"\_Tuiron Hooke\_, a tool contrived for conveying a lump of tempered clay

before the point of the tuiron plate, to guard the wall from wearing away

as it would otherwise do in that part, there being the greatest force of

the fire.

"\_Shammel Plate\_, a piece of cast iron fixed on a wooden frame, in the

shape of a ---|, which works up and down as a crank, so as for the camb

to lay hold of this iron, and thereby press down the bellows.

"\_Firketts\_ are large square pieces of timber laid upon the upper woods

of the bellows, to steady it and to work it.

"\_Firkett Hooks\_, two strong hooks of square wrought iron fixed at the

smallest end of the bellows to keep it firm and in its place.

"\_Gage\_, two rods of iron jointed in the middle, with a ring for the

filler to drop the shortest end into the furnace at the top, to know when

it is worked down low enough to be charged again.

"\_Poises\_, wooden beams, one over each bellows, fixed upon centres across

another very large beam; at the longest end of these poises are open

boxes bound with iron, and the little end being fixed with harness to the

upper ends of the firketts are thus pressed down, and the bellows with it

by the working of the wheel, while the weight of the poises lifts them up

alternately as the wheel goes round."

No. V.

Dr. Parson's description of the mode of making Iron.

"After they have provided their ore, their first work is to calcine it,

which is done in kilns, much after the fashion of our ordinary

lime-kilns; these they fill up to the top with coal and ore untill it be

full, and so putting fire to the bottom, they let it burn till the coal

be wasted, and then renew the kilnes with fresh ore and coal: this is

done without any infusion of mettal, and serves to consume the more

drossy part of the ore, and to make it fryable, supplying the beating and

washing, which are to no other mettals; from hence they carry it to their

furnaces, which are built of brick and stone, about 24 foot square on the

outside, and near 30 foot in hight within, and not above 8 or 10 foot

over where it is widest, which is about the middle, the top and bottom

having a narrow compass, much like the form of an egg. Behind the

furnace are placed two high pair of bellows, whose noses meet at a little

hole near the bottom: these are compressed together by certain buttons

placed on the axis of a very large wheel, which is turned round by water,

in the manner of an overshot mill. As soon as these buttons are slid

off, the bellows are raised again by a counterpoise of weights, whereby

they are made to play alternately, the one giving its blast whilst the

other is rising.

"At first they fill these furnaces with ore and cinder intermixt with

fuel, which in these works is always charcoal, laying them hollow at the

bottom, that they may the more easily take fire; but after they are once

kindled, the materials run together into an hard cake or lump, which is

sustained by the furnace, and through this the mettal as it runs trickles

down the receivers, which are placed at the bottom, where there is a

passage open, by which they take away the scum and dross, and let out

their mettal as they see occasion. Before the mouth of the furnace lyeth

a great bed of sand, where they make furrows of the fashion they desire

to cast their iron: into these, when the receivers are full, they let in

their mettal, which is made so very fluid by the violence of the fire,

that it not only runs to a considerable distance, but stands afterwards

boiling a great while.

"After these furnaces are once at work, they keep them constantly

employed for many months together, never suffering the fire to slacken

night or day, but still supplying the waste of fuel and other materials

with fresh, poured in at the top.

"Several attempts have been made to bring in the use of the sea coal in

these works instead of charcoal; the former being to be had at an easy

rate, the latter not without a great expence; but hitherto they have

proved ineffectual, the workmen finding by experience that a sea coal

fire, how vehement soever, will not penetrate the most fixed parts of the

ore, by which means they leave much of the mettal behind them unmelted.

"From these furnaces they bring the sows and piggs of iron, as they call

them, to their forges; these are two sorts, though they stood together

under the same roof; one they call their finery, and the other chafers:

both of them are upon hearths, upon which they place great heaps of sea

coal, and behind them bellows like those of the furnaces, but nothing

near so large.

"In such finerys they first put their piggs of iron, placing three or

four of them together, behind the fire, with a little of one end thrust

into it, where softening by degrees they stir and work them with long

barrs of iron till the mettal runs together in a round masse or lump,

which they call an half bloome: this they take out, and giving it a few

strokes with their sledges, they carry it to a great weighty hammer,

raised likewise by the motion of a water-wheel, where applying it

dexterously to the blows, they presently beat it into a thick short

square; this they put into the finery again, and heating it red hot, they

work it under the same hammer till it comes to the shape of a bar in the

middle, with two square knobs in the ends; last of all they give it other

beatings in the chaffers, and more workings under the hammer, till they

have brought their iron into barrs of several shapes, in which fashion

they expose them to sale.

"All their principal iron undergoes the aforementioned preparations, yet

for several other purposes, as for backs of chimneys, hearths of ovens,

and the like, they have a sort of cast iron, which they take out of the

receivers of the furnace, so soon as it is melted, in great ladles, and

pour it into the moulds of fine sand in like manner as they do cast brass

and softer mettals; but this sort of iron is so very brittle, that, being

heated with one blow of the hammer, it breaks all to pieces."

No. VI.

Being Minutes, &c., of the Court of Mine Law.

"Forest of Deane to witt.Att a Court of Mine and Miners of Our Sovereign

Lord the King, held att the Speech-ouse, in and for the Forest of Deane,

on Tuesday the 13th day of December, in the year of Our Lord one thousand

seven hundred and forty-eight, before Christopher Bond, Esqr, and Thomas

James, gentleman, deputyes to the Right Honourable Augustus, Earl of

Berkeley, Constable of the Castle of St Briavels, in the County of

Gloucester, Christopher Bond, Esqr, gaveller of the said mines, and

Phillip Elly, deputy gaveller of the said mines.

"\_The names of the Jury\_.--Richard Powell, Simon Bannister, George

Thomas, Frances Dutheridge, William Kerr, Richard Hawkins, Joseph Cooper,

Samuel Kerr, Henry Roberts, William Meeke, Richard Tingle, James Teague.

"William Gagg otherwise Smith, and his Vearns, \_against\_ James Bennett

and his Vearns.

"I complaine against William Gagge and his Vearns for hindering our

levell and doing of us willfull trespas, whereby we have sustained great

damage, att a stone (lime) coale worke called Churchway, otherwise

Turnbrooke, in the Hundred of Saint Briavels, (as this,) they hindered

the levell, and deepwall they would not bring forward to our new pit that

was then just downe. We leave this to the best proof & the order.I asked

them the reason, and they told me it was to make coale scarce and men

plenty; they went back sixteen or eighteen weeks into their scale,

contrary to the rule and custom of all free miners beneath the wood with

us; and likewise before, they hindered the levell in their new deepit.

And wilfully more they cut up to their land gutter, and tooke in the

water by a single sticken gutter in their backer deep pit, and turned it

across the bottom of our deep pit into our air gutter, which we prepared

for ourselves and them, whereby our lamping the charks was swelled downe,

and have destroyed the air, and filled our gateway with water and sludge,

and very likely to destroy the levells, and put us by getting a scale of

coale there. And by their so doing, I and my vearnes are dampnified

thirty pounds. All this I will prove myself and by evidence in the

King's mine."

Another suit, dated 20th January, 1753, is also subjoined:--

"William Dukes and his vernes, plaintiffs, \_against\_ William Keare and

his vernes, defendants.

"We complain against William Keare and his vernes for wrongfully

forbidding us out of a stone coal work, called the Gentlemen Colliers,

within the Hundred of St Briavels, that we should not get any coal of the

deep side of our former work, which coal our levell drains, and ours

being the most ancient level. We leave this to the best evidence.We have

attended the place, and burned our light, according to our laws and

customs, and through this wrong forbidd we are dampnified five pounds.

And whereas several forbidds have been given before, we, the aforesaid

plaintiffs and defendants, left the same to the determination of Charles

Godwin and Richard James, and we the said plaintiffs have duly observed

the said determination, and that the said defendants have gone contrary

to an order made by 48 free miners in getting of coal that our levell

would have drained, and have dampnified our levell, whereby they have

forfeited the penalty of the said Order. And this we will prove by

evidence, and the damages in getting coal we will leave to the Order in

Ct.

"We deny the forbid given to him or his vernes. We forbidd them in

getting any coal betwixt our work and theirs, except their levell could

dry it fairly. There was an agreement betwixt us, and they went contrary

to the agreement, and this we will prove ourselves and by witnesses."

Here is a copy of an Agreement, resembling no doubt the one mentioned

above:--

"August the 8th.--In the ear of our Lord 1754. Aun award, or an

Agreement, made by Richard Powell, John Jenkins, Wm Thomas, Thos Worgan,

and James Elsmore, betwixt James Bennet and his vearns, belonging to a

coale work called by the name off Upper Rockey, and Robert Tingle and his

vearnes, belonging to the Inging Coale Work near the Nail Bridge, within

the Hunderd of Saint Bravewells; and we have farther agreed that the fore

said James Bennet and his vearns shall have the liberty of getting what

coale their leavel will dry without being interrupted, but they shall not

get coale by the strength of hauling or laveing of water within the

bounds of Robert Tingle and his vearns, except to drowl their work, under

the forfet of the sum of five pounds; and we do farther agree that Robert

Tingle and his vearns shall com in at any time to see if they do carry on

their work in a proper manner without trespassing them; and if the

foresaid James Bennet and his vearns do interrupt them for comming in to

see their work, they shall forfeit the sum of five pounds. And we do

order the partys to stand to their expenses share share alike, and the

viewers to be paid between both partys, which his fifteen shillings.

"The mark of X RICHD POWELL.

"The mark of X JOHN JENKINS.

"The mark of X JAMES ELSMORE.

"The mark of X Wm THOMAS.

"The mark of X THOS WORGAN."

The following is a specimen of an official "Forbid:"--

"Thomas Hobbs. I do hereby, in his Majesty King George the Third's name,

being owner and chief gaveller of his Majesty's Forest of Dean, in the

county of Gloucester, and of the coal and mines therein, forbid you, your

verns, your servants, agents, or workmen, for getting, diging, or raising

any more stone coal out of any fire pitt or pitts, or water pitt or

pitts, a deep the Majors suff level gutter in the said Forest, or to

permit or suffer any stone coal to be got, dug, or raised out of any such

pitt or pitts, untill you have satisfied and paid me his Majesty's gale

and dues for working and getting coal in such pitts for two years last

past, and untill you agree with me for the gale and dues of such pitt and

pitts for the future. If you break this forbid, you will incur the

penalty of an Order made by forty-eight free miners.

"Dated this 22d day of } JOHN ROBINSON, &c.,

May, 1775. } deputy gaveller."

In the terms of a Memorandum, apparently of this date, or perhaps

earlier, it is said:--

"The place of gaveler within the Forest of Dean is held by patent from

the Crown, & by vertue of his office the gaveler hath a right to put a

man to work in every coalwork or work for iron mine within the limitts of

the Forest, or within any private person's property in the hundred of St

Briavels (but not in any stone quarry that is belonging to Ld Berkeley).

This right the gaveler never makes use of by setting his man to work in

the mine pitt or coalwork, but lets it out to the partners of the work at

such price as he can agree for, which is from twenty shillings to three

pounds a work."

NOTES.

{2} It is absolutely certain that the stone may be made to oscillate:

indeed one of the Hadnock woodmen states that when sufficient force is

applied to it, at the proper point, you can even hear the gravel grinding

underneath.

{4} A corruption, apparently, of the British word "crowll," meaning

"caves."

{12} We must, however, remember, in calculating the price of labour in

the middle ages, that the value of money was about fifteen times greater

than at present; and the coins, which were of silver, were double their

present weight.

{16} Of these lands the Rev. G. Ridout, the Vicar, has kindly furnished

the following list:--

Acres

Land near English Bicknor, 199

"Hoarthorns," containing

,, ,, Lydbrook ,, 21

,, Ruardean ,, 13

,, ,, ,, 81

,, Flaxley, Little Dean ,, 94

,, Abbenhall, "Loquiers" ,, 51

,, Hope Mansel ,, 41

,, Weston ,, 37

,, Lea and Longhope ,, 90

,, Lydney and Blackney ,, 329

,, Paster, Nels, and 507

Whitecroft ,,

,, Ellwood ,, 134

,, Whitemead ,, 220

,, Bream ,, 213

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2030

{18} See ante, p. 7 and 13.

{25} See post, p. 116.

{27} One of them, as a specimen, will be found in the Appendix No. II.

{85} The meat market there is reported to have been much injured long

before this time, by the singular circumstance of a murderer, named Eli

Hatton, having been gibbeted on Pingry Tump, a point on the Forest hills

overlooking the town, the flies from the body being supposed to resort to

the meat on the butchers' stalls. The body was cut down in the night

time, but the stump of the gallows is yet remembered by old inhabitants

as "Eli's Post," and as a spot to be avoided, especially at night.

{87} Mr. C. Meek, of the Morse, has ascertained that Lord Nelson spent

the 20th, 21st, 22nd of August, 1802, at Rudhall House, near Ross.

{89} See page 79.

{95} Drawings of the mice were made and sent to Lord Glenbervie.

{111} Warren James was concealed in a coal-pit on Breem's Eaves, and was

induced to come up by Thos. Watkins, who had the reward offered for his

apprehension. With the exception of his conduct on this occasion, he was

a man of good character, and a dutiful and affectionate son to an aged

mother, who was supported by him.

{118} The map at page 15 exhibits the direction taken on this occasion.

{122} To such a scheme the chief objection, in the words of the Hon.

Thomas Frankland Lewis, appeared to be, that, "unless guarded against by

some special provisions, the land will become subject to all the abuses

which are so much complained of as to charity lands in general. It is

altogether unlike a fund to be raised when and as it is wanted; there it

is, and it must and will create objects on which to bestow itself, if it

does not find them." The proposition was consequently not carried into

effect.

{126} These three gentlemen opened their commission on Wednesday the 5th

of September following, at Coleford, and after successive meetings it was

there finally closed on Monday, the 20th of July, 1841.

{149a} The same stick was usually employed, being considered by long

usage as consecrated to the purpose.

{149b} A pleasing emblem of such improvement seems manifested in the

following lines of Richard Morse (a young native Forester), on a

"Primrose found in a natural arbour among the large oaks in the Forest."

"Pretty little lonely flower,

How I love thy modest blow!

Ever grace this little bower,

Here in safety ever grow.

"And, if tempted by ambition

E'er to leave my humble cot,

May I learn from thee submission

To be happy with my lot.

"For while storms spread desolation

'Mong the lofty trees around,

In thy lowly situation

Peace and safety may be found.

"So, when states and empires shaking

Bid the rich and great beware,

I, comparatively speaking,

Am secure from strife and care.

"Though the wintry blast should wither

Thy pale blow--thy leaves decay,

Gales, the first that spring sends hither,

Thy perfume shall bear away.

"And like thee, I too shall perish,

When my life's brief summer 's o'er;

But there is a hope I cherish,

To be blest for evermore.

"Winter past, so drear and hoary,

Thou again wilt spring and bloom:

So I hope to rise in glory

From the darkness of the tomb."

{151} The preservation of the existing crop depends mainly upon the

practical inculcation of this principle.

{152} "River Jordan" occurs in the neighbouring parish registers many

times during the last 150 years; also "Providence Potter;" one of whose

representatives, a sad drunken fellow, once went to his humane squire in

great distress. The worthy gentleman, after suggesting various

expedients, but to no purpose, at last said--"Well! he could see nothing

for it but to trust in Providence." "Lord bless ye, Sir, why, Providence

has been dead these ten years."

{163} The Author has had the satisfaction of promoting the erection of a

tablet in Holy Trinity Church, to the memory of a man who had been so

useful in his generation.

{172} This liberal gift may be regarded as a fitting memorial of Mr.

Machen's fifty years' services in connexion with the Forest.

{189} Our best thanks are due to Sir Martin Crawley Boevey, the present

Baronet, by whom many of the incidents in this chapter have been

communicated.

{191} It is built of the two Forest stones--the red grit with grey stone

facings, the stonework throughout being executed in the most perfect

manner. The edifice consists of a chancel, nave, and N. aisle, with open

oak roofs, covered with Broseley tile, with crease tiles, and the gables

are mounted with rich floriated crosses. At the N.W. angle of the

building rises in beautiful proportion the tower, capped with a shingle

broach spire. The chancel is furnished with a sedile, credence-niche,

stalls, reading desk, and lectern. The 3-light E. window by Gerente

contains, in twelve compartments, a Personal History of Our Saviour,

suggested by the verses in the Litany:--"By the mystery of Thy holy

incarnation . . . and by the coming of the Holy Ghost." The other

windows, all different in their tracery, are of Powell's quarry glass.

The alabaster reredos by Philip exhibits in its three medallions the

Feeding of the Multitude, the Institution of the Holy Communion, and the

Agony in the Garden; and on the E. wall are illuminated, by Castell, of

London, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed. The

pulpit and font are of Painswick stone, with serpentine marble shafts;

and the chancel rails, stalls, open seats, together with an exquisitely

worked south porch, are of massive oak.

{197} The new road over the Plump Hill in its formation exposed an

ancient mine-hole, in which was found a heap of half-consumed embers, and

the skull of what appeared from its tusks to be a wild boar, the

fragments perhaps of a feast partaken of by our Forest ancestors.

{198} One, or perhaps two roads, traversing the Forest from north to

south, are yet wanting for public accommodation.

{216} Amongst the Patent Rolls of Henry III., dated 1238, occurs one

entitled "de forgeis levandis in Foresta de Dean."

{235} At all times obligingly permitted to the Author by Mr. John

Atkinson, the Queen's Gaveller.

{264} This large Oak is called "Jack of the Yat." Yat means gate here.

It is probably 500 years old. It was struck by lightning a few years

since.

{265a} In Sallow Vallets, a quarter of a mile below the Lodge; 90 yards

round the outside of the branches.

{265b} This tree about eight feet from the ground separates into two

large branches, or rather distinct trees; the rent or chasm in the trunk

grows wider, and we have now (\_i.e.\_ in 1847) fastened the limbs together

with iron to prevent its breaking into two parts.

\*\*\*END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FOREST OF DEAN\*\*\*

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