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Some Notes on Wresden, Uley

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SOME NOTES ON WRESDEN, ULEY.

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THE parish of Uley, which adjoins Dursley, is remarkable for the number of hamlets and homesteads within its confines which possess very distinctive names. Whitecourt, Shadwell, Crawley, Ludgershall, Bencombe, Rockstoves, Angeston, Stoutshill, Cold Harbour, Cat's Castle and Wresden, all have interest for the local historian. Some of them are doubtless of an antiquity equal to, perhaps even greater than that of Uley itself, for though it may not be possible to trace them to any early period by documentary evidence, still their designations shew that they are settlements of no modern date.

It is with the last mentioned of these places that we propose to deal in the present paper. It is of some antiquarian interest, being, not only the spot where "Spanish cloth" was first manufactured in the parish, but, probably by reason of its inaccessible position, also one of the few ancient houses which survived the prosperity of Uley as a "clothing centre." It would be difficult to define what Wresden is. Perhaps we may style it a hamlet, for although there are now but three houses bearing the name, the time has not long passed by when there were five or six cottages, in addition to the houses now standing. The etymology of Wresden must be left for the students of place names to determine. It was known by that name in 1566, but is frequently corrupted by the villagers into Wresdown and Resdown, while the first Ordnance Survey marks it under the grotesque form of Rest Down. In situation, scarcely a mile from the town of Dursley, it is in the middle of what once was Uley West-field, but which long ago was enclosed, most of it, probably in the 17th century. It lies on the slope of land which extends from the southern side of the picturesque hill, known as Downham, to the brook or river Ewelme. A little away on the north-west is the farm called "Cold Harbour," a name which at once reminds us that we are close to the Roman encampment of Uley-Bury, while on its

eastern side Wresden has for a neighbour the cottage and small holding quaintly known as Cat's Castle. Though very near to the boundary line of Uley and Dursley none of the fields belonging to Wresden adjoin the latter parish. Perhaps these border fields were, until a comparatively recent date, commonable lands, or more probably waste ground, forming a kind of "no man's land" between the two parishes. Even at the present day some parts of the boundary between Uley and Dursley in the fields near Wresden, are still undefined. Formerly, no doubt, the folks living at Wresden were able to take their cattle and other produce across this waste to Dursley, only three-quarters of a mile away, but with the enclosure this convenience ceased, and though a right of foot way was always retained, their only other means of egress, until recent years, was the Wresden lane, almost impassable at the best of times, and quite so in winter, which led to the village of Uley, and necessitated a very long detour if the town of Dursley was the traveller's destination.

The hamlet, if it may be so styled, of Wresden consists, or rather consisted, of two groups of houses, the one close to the lane, the other mid-way between it and the river Ewelme. It is the latter, now known as Wresden Farm, which is the only one possessing any interest to the antiquary, though it is just possible from the fact of its proximity to the road, and from some obscure reference to "Great Wresden," that in very early times the former may have been the more important of the two. At the same time it may be that "Wresden" is really a field name, in which case Great Wresden would merely indicate an inclosure of somewhat larger area than was usual. The description of the place in 1566 it will be seen somewhat favours this view. Rising out of Downham Hill is a streamlet which runs through the lower Wresden, and was called Silverstream, so old villagers have stated, adding also that Wresden itself was known by the same name, though the accuracy of their recollection is open to question. Wresden does not possess any remarkable architectural features. It is built of rubble and roofed with the stone tile of the district, and it is evident from the weather mouldings on the chimneys that at one time it must have been thatched. In plan it consists of a

dwelling house, fronting the south, with a dairy and "cellars" to the east, at the end of which is a large barn projecting southwards, thus forming the letter L. On the north-west lies what is evidently the "backhouse" mentioned in Richard Barkeley's conveyance. It was once detached, but the space between it and the farm house was built up some fifty or sixty years ago, and it now forms another dwelling. Part of it appears on the right hand in the sketch of the north side of the farm house, which is here re-produced by permission of the proprietors of the *Pictorial World* (See fig. 1.) The dairy, cellar, and barn are evidently coeval,



(Fig. 1.)

and probably date back to the 16th century, perhaps even earlier, though it is difficult to form any exact opinion since they do not possess anything more distinctive than one or two windows with plain chamfered dripstones and mullions. The front of the dwelling-house may have been rebuilt at a later date, for it is of the roughest description, and does not possess even mullions or stone dressings to the windows. On the north side a very interesting porch was added in the 17th century, pargeted in imitation of brickwork, with the initials $\frac{E}{1} \cdot \frac{E}{8} \frac{E}{7}$ upon a heart. Both on the outside and in the little room over the porch is a small decorated panel, which is probably intended for the pargeter's trademark. The sides of the porch have open baluster work, and within the last twenty years one of the shutters thereto still remained. During

some repairs in 1869 a finely moulded stone mantel shelf was destroyed, and the unsightly pent house shewn in the sketch was built against the porch. On a gable end is a stone with the initials and dates $\begin{matrix} I & E \\ T & J. & S. \\ & 1848 & \end{matrix}$ the last one indicating when it was rebuilt. A portion of an old iron fire back has been preserved with part of the initials and date still remaining. In one of the bedrooms is a very fine Jacobean bedstead, with back and canopy most elaborately carved, but somewhat injured in effect by the loss of the posts at the foot. At the head are small figures of angels and two niches, which evidently have been utilised by former tenants for placing candlesticks in.

Mention should be made of the fine group of yew trees in the two gardens, which were evidently planted some three or four centuries ago to indicate the boundary of the property, a duty which they still fulfil.

Beyond the fact that Wresden formed part of that manor of Uley called Whitecourt nothing is known of its early history. This manor belonged to the Berkeleys of Stoke Gifford, and was parcelled out by Richard Berkeley, Esq., afterwards Sir Richard Berkeley, in 1566, amongst thirteen feoffees, to whom he also allotted proportionate parts of the lordship of Uley. John Smyth of Nibley, in his *Hundred of Berkeley*, gives an account of this transaction, and tells us that chief rents were reserved amounting to a gross sum of £40, being a greater amount than Sir Rich. Berkeley had hitherto received from the tenants of the manor, and that provision also was made for a reeve to collect the rents. It fell to the purchaser of Wresden to "electe, choyse and apoynte ane reve or balyfe," to collect the chief rents payable by the various freeholders in Uley, although it was a duty which had been long obsolete when the Wresden chief rent was commuted in 1854. The conveyance executed by Richard Berkeley is still extant, with his seal attached, on which are his initials R. B. It is dated 5th Sept., in the 8th year of Queen Elizabeth, 1566, and purports to be made between "Richarde Barkeley of . . . in the Countie of Gloucestre, Esquyer," and Gyles Brownyng of . . . in the Countie of Glocestre" The grant was made in

consideration of a "certeyne somme" of money, and of the annual chief rent of eight shillings payable quarterly. The premises then conveyed were described as "All that messuage or tent^t with thappurtenaunces nowe or late in the teanure or occupacon of the said Gyles Browninge, with a other house called the backhouse or kychen with an orchard a backsyde and a gardeyne by estimacon a farundell and one cloce of pasture called Wresden by estimacon thre acres shutinge upon grete wresden and shutinge alonge by the oversyde of William Samfordes leese called the Moores And one acre of meade by estimacon lyinge in the nether feilde next Robarte Bassettes meade called the wolpens cloce, lyinge on the east side of yt and lurgurshales lande on the west side of yt And one cloce of pasture lyinge in hollowe eln' shuting alonge by Elmnes lane by estimacon thre acres One farundell of pasture lyinge at the lynche shutinge alonge by Elinnes lane and the linche leese headdinge yt And one meade lyinge at Banchwell by estimacon a farundell lyinge betwene banchewell streame and Carvers grounde. And thre halfe acres of lande by estimacon lyinge at Cammes Broke shuting upon the Broke at the nether end. And one acre of lande by estymacon lyinge at Long thorne over the over syde of Daunceys lande and one pece of lande at Crawles sharde by estimacon on acre shutinge upon Crawles grene And two halfe acres of lande by estimacon lyinge at banchewell shutinge upon the waye that goeth towards wresden at the over ende And halfe an acre of lande by estymacon lyinge on Shiples broke at the netlier ende And one acre of lande by estimacon lyinge in Birkem betwene daunes two landes And a farrundell of lande by estimacon lyinge in the nether feilde on the over syde of William Dornes lande And a farundell of lande by estimacon lyinge in Uley under the Clyffe betwene the Clyffe and Thomas Dornes lande Also all the common and fredomme with the lordshippe of Uley As much as dothe belonge to a farundell of grounde."

It is impossible now to satisfactorily identify the various parcels, but we may guess that Wresden is part of a field at present known as Dry Leaze, and Moores belonging to William Samford, are perhaps the field now belonging to Mr. Vizard,

which adjoins the Ewelme on the south side of Wresden. Grete Wresden seems to be the arable ground in front of the cottage before mentioned. The particulars are remarkable as shewing how very scattered the fields belonging to the farm were in former times. The cause of this is clearly the ancient system of common fields. In the present case the lands were scattered all over the parish, and this is probably due to the existence of more than one common field in the parish, for we have evidence in the deed above of at least two, Uley west field and the Nether field. Wolpen's Close and Lurgershales must have been quite a couple of miles from Wresden, and the same remark will apply to Crawle's sharde, which doubtless is close to the present hamlet of Crawley. Banchwell may be identified with Barnwell stream, traditionally pointed out as the spring from which the garrison of the great camp on Uley-Bury obtained their water supply. Shiples broke must be the ancient form of Shibley, which is the name given to land lying between Rockstowes and Angeston. The inconvenience of a farm being thus sub-divided into strips of land a mile or two apart must have been very great, and it is difficult to realise it in these days of "ring fences." As late as 1851 one of these outlying parcels of land, known as Newbrook or Angeston, was sold to the late Mr. T. B. L. Baker, and that referred to above as "halfe an acre lying on Shiples broke," seems to have been disposed of a few years before. Even at the present time the "tyning" and "Uley field" are separated from the rest of the farm by several fields.

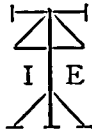
From the time of Gyles Browninge for upwards of a century the title deeds have disappeared, though there is reason to believe that they were in existence not very many years ago.

Smyth's *History of the Hundred of Berkeley* renders little assistance, for his account of Ewley is evidently incomplete, but as he mentions that when he wrote one Richard Browning held some of the land which had been parcelled out by Richard Barkely in 1566, we may assume that Wresden continued for many years in possession of the family of Gyles Browninge.

By 1665 it is evident that Wresden had come into the possession of John Eyles, but whether by descent or purchase

there is no evidence to show. In 1684 he put in an iron fire back, and was evidently then married, as his wife's initials appear thereon, as they do also upon the porch already alluded to, which he built three years later. This John Eyles distinguished himself by introducing the manufacture of "Spanish cloth" or kersey-mere. It is of course impossible to say when cloth was first woven at Wresden, and the date of its discontinuance is also doubtful, but weavers were certainly living at the cottages at the time of the downfall of the Uley cloth trade, and within living memory woad was grown in the neighbouring fields. It is singular that no trace of John Eyles can be discovered in the parish register and nothing is known of his family. But his monument with his cloth mark still exists in Uley Church. It formerly was against the south wall but on the rebuilding of the church in 1858 was placed in the tower. It has already been printed, but a more accurate copy is given below :

Behind this wall lyes the
 Body of John Eyles aged 91
 years and ^oy first that ever
 made Spanish Cloath in ^sy Psh.
 To whose Gratefull Memory
 this Monument was Erected
 by M^rBayley Gent. of Wreisden
 1731



The peculiar device following the inscription is of some interest, as it is a late instance of the survival of the ancient merchant's mark. An old Uley weaver, living a few years ago, suggested

that the device was intended to represent a "swift" or reel on which to wind yarn.

The date 1731 indicates the time when the monument was erected and not the death of John Eyles, for that must have occurred earlier than 1722. No record of his burial can be found, and this is evidently due to the inaccurate way in which the register was kept in the early part of the last century.

By indenture, dated 20th January, 1693, John Eles of the parish of Uley, clothier, and Elizabeth, his wife, in consideration of the intended marriage of Michael Bayly of Uley, clothier, nephew of the said John Eles and Elizabeth, his wife, with Elizabeth Rowdon, daughter and co-heir of Thomas Rowdon of Almeby, Hereford, gent., granted to Edward Morse of Dursley, gent., and the said Thomas Rowdon, as trustees, the messuage wherein the said John Eles and Elizabeth his wife did then inhabit commonly known as Wresden. Michael Bayly, who thus became interested in Wresden, evidently carried on the business of a clothier there for some years. In 1731 he, however, leased the farm to one Samuel Sowls of Uley, yeoman, at the rent of £46 for 12 years, imposing at the same time a fine of £10 an acre on land "eared¹ plowed and converted to tillage." The fields allowed for tillage were the Tynning, the lands in the West and Shibley fields, the Meares, and the upper part of Marshalls piece, doubtless that now known as "The Massalls," next Downham Hill. But he reserved to himself the "old house and garden, together with the new stable or building between the old house and the new barn, and also the liberty of the brewhouse for washing and brewing." The "meers" were probably held by Mr. Bayly on lease only, for an indenture is extant dated 1700, by which Thomas Small of Nailsworth, clothier, leased to Michael Bayly for 12 years at the rent of £5, "a close of arable land called the meers, containing eight acres in the west field, now divided into two by a quick-set hedge set on the top of the great meer."²

Michael Bayly, as we have seen, married Elizabeth Rowden about the year 1693. They had two children, Thomas and

¹ "Eared" prepared for cultivation with corn.—ED.

² The lands here called *meers* were doubtless wet marshy ground when they received that name, but the "great meer" upon which the quick-set hedge was planted was a prominent balk or boundary in what was once a common-field.—ED.

Elizabeth. Thomas Bayley, the son, released his interest in 1723 to his father, and died unmarried. In consequence of a voyage he made to the East Indies a resettlement of the estate was made, and the deed by which this was done was recorded in the Rolls Chapel, and is now preserved in the Public Record Office. It is referred to in the letter below.

Michael Bayly in 1731, still described as of Uley, married again. His second wife was Mary Ashmead, of Gloucester, and their marriage settlement bears date 7th Sept. 1731. Shortly afterwards he removed to Gloucester, and became one of the sheriffs of that city in 1733 and 1740, and Mayor in 1747.

Mr. Bayly appears to have been a dissenter, and a member of the Independent meeting house at Cam. It is evident that he took an active political part, and was a strong opponent of the Jacobites. As an illustration of the political state of Gloucester at the time of the rebellion in 1745, the following letter of Michael Bayly's, addressed to his grandson, "To Mr. Phillimore at a silke shop und' a long Gallare on London Bridg," will prove of interest to the reader.

Oct^r y^e 11th 1745.

Dear J :

Acording to y^e pleasing prospect I had of scing good M^{rs}. D.— at Bath I prepar^d to go there pers^ut to an Intemation I gave her by Lett^r but I did not Reach M^r Thomas^s untill 2 days after she was gon : but my vialent Cuz. Adye soon gave me to know the time she set out : & hope Youl not suffer me to Remain long Igno^t how she got home & now is togeth^r with M^{rs}. Fill to whom I hope you will in the best maner tender unfained service & make you make my Requests Known as above.

And now I am turning my thoughts to y^e glumie veil that hanges over Great brittan but y^e midlin and common people seemes Rath^r to glorie in than be affect^d. with & this leads to tell you how much mys^elfe is the marke and envey of y^e mob of this plac & not a day passes without incontestable prufes thereof which putts me upon Informing you that when y^e. wicked begin they its feared will make a full end therefor If I never did inform you I do now that should my writeings be destroye^d I Registered my Estate at y^e Rowles Chapell Chancery Lane I believe much about y^e yeare 1726 or may be a year or two before or a year or Too aft^r. & I hope god will bles y^e little I Leave wth grete Incres & what ever decays with you yet godlynnes with Contentment is sure gain & Cannot be tacken from you I am to all y^t. bear yo^r name an affectionate Humble Ser^t. MB.

The subsequent history of this homestead may be very briefly summed up. Michael Bayly died about 1748. By his will dated 2nd April, 1745, with codicil of 20th October, 1746, and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, he devised "Resdown" to his grandson and executor, John Phillimore, of London. Michael Baily deserves to be remembered as a benefactor to the parish of Uley, for he left money to pay a school dame to teach children not having relief from the parish. John Phillimore was the eldest son of Jonathan Phillimore, of Cam, clothier, by his first wife Elizabeth, Michael Bayly's only surviving child. She was buried at Cam in 1723, leaving a daughter, afterwards Elizabeth Bliss, and a son John Phillimore just mentioned. This John Phillimore was a wealthy silkman who carried on his business at Cateaton Street, and New Broad Street, London, and resided at Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. He died in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1795, aged 72, leaving two daughters, co-heiresses, Mrs. Pearse and Mrs. Vincent, who, however, did not succeed to his Uley property. John Phillimore had a younger half brother, Robert Phillimore, who assisted him in his business, and to whom in 1783, "out of natural love and affection," he conveyed this estate as a gift. Robert Phillimore, who never married, survived his brother but a few months, and was buried amongst his ancestors in Cam churchyard on the 24th November, 1795. By his will he devised his estates at Uley and Cam to his sister Eleanor Phillimore of Bridgnorth for her life, on whose death, in the month of February, 1837, within a few weeks of completing her 98th year, Wresden, in accordance with the terms of her brother's will, passed to his nephew in the possession of whose descendants it still remains.

Such is the history of this ancient farmstead which has been mainly compiled from title deeds and family papers which are still extant. No stirring episodes are connected with it, and there are many other places in the neighbourhood which must possess a history of more general interest. But its association with the Uley cloth trade and the fact that it has passed from one family to another without alienation for so long a period, may render the foregoing acceptable as a contribution to the history of the parish.