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**An Address Delivered at Evesham By the President of the Society**

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## AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT EVESHAM

By PROFESSOR C. W. C. OMAN, M.B.A.,

*President of the Society.*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I was indeed touched by your kindness when I received, some little time ago, a letter from my old friend, your late President, informing me that the Society had done me the great honour of electing me as his successor. Though quite a senior member of the Society—it is twenty-five years, I think, since I made my first excursion under its auspices—I fear that I have been rather an intermittent one, and conscience told me that the office which you have been good enough to bestow on me had been better earned by many another of our number. I can only express to you my sincere gratitude, and my firm intention to do my utmost to carry out my duties to the best of my ability. I should indeed be ungrateful if I did not, considering what I owe to the Society: how many pleasant summer tours through the Vale and the Forest and over Cotswold must be put down to its account; how much archæological knowledge its members have placed at the disposition of the inquirer. Turning one's memory back to the past years, one finds an unending series of fair memories—all the glories of Gloucestershire, all the antiquities of Bristol and of our cathedral city, Berkeley and Cirencester, Tewkesbury and Northleach, the splendid Roman villas of Woodchester and Chedworth, the suggestive fragments of Hailes, the mouldering camp of Dyrham, many a remote village church full of architectural problems and of monuments of forgotten families, many a gabled manor hidden in the folds of Cotswold, the very knowledge of whose existence would hardly have reached one but for the energetic pioneering of our Society.

and which one could certainly not have seen without its organisation. All this pleasure and knowledge enjoyed and acquired I gratefully put down to the credit of our Association.

But most especially must I turn my gratitude in one direction. You have been good enough to elect me President in succession to the most valuable of all our members, the man who has been for twenty years the mainspring of our machine, the guide of all our journeys, the invaluable referee in all our archaeological puzzles, the untiring organiser of all our practical activities. To those who have known Canon Bazeley so long as I have, and who have regarded him for so many years with such respect and affection, it is unnecessary to say more in his praise. But despite of the vote of thanks that has already been passed to him as President, I must add my own small tribute of admiration for the best of Secretaries and of Presidents. It is hard to succeed to the chair of such a notable benefactor of the Society; for what can I contribute to your knowledge or your instruction compared to such a master of all our local antiquities? I only wish that I could promise to follow worthily in his steps, but that is beyond me—I can only pledge myself to do my poor best.

Certainly, however, the surroundings in which we meet to-day are sufficiently inspiring. We are in a way trespassers, it is true, for we have once more passed across the frontier of our own county, as we did before when we visited Worcester and Bath, Malmesbury and Burford. But to say the truth, I have always personally felt trespassing to be rather an exhilarating occupation, and nothing surely could be more tempting than to step across our boundary into this lovely valley of the Avon. We shall, moreover, again and again in our movements of the next two days be able, like Antæus, to renew our vigour by a momentary touch with our mother earth of Gloucestershire; for in this region we are in among the most complicated set of county boundaries that exist anywhere in England. Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire are so chaotically intermixed hereabouts, that one is continually

passing across loose fragments of the one that seems least likely to meet us. I wonder whether we could not encourage some member who is learned in Domesday Book, and can give us the history of each manor back to the days of the Hwiccas, to read us a paper some day on this geographical problem. Why does the all-pervading Hundred of Kiftsgate extend its tentacles on every side, and encircle so many scraps of Worcestershire? Why are loose fragments like Blockley or Shenington dropped abroad in alien territory? Probably there are those present who could explain the problem with ease, and I surmise that I should not be the only person present who would be grateful to know the whys and the wherefores.

Is it too late to hope that some paper on these queer anomalies might be added to our agenda? I have an unsatisfied appetite for more information on our Gloucestershire Hundreds and their early history. Most of all, I may add, do I long to know something about the vanished Hwiccian County of Winchcombeshire, which must have embraced all the land hereabouts. It was, as I dare say that many of you know, apparently in existence in the ninth and tenth centuries,<sup>1</sup> and ended about 1010, when Eadric Streona, the wicked favourite of Æthelred the Redeless, among his many other lawless deeds, abolished it, apparently by throwing it into Gloucestershire.<sup>2</sup> But whether some part of it may not have fallen into Worcestershire also I should not care to say. The Gloucestershire Hundreds have shifted to a very appreciable extent since Domesday. When the map of their arrangement in 1086 is completed, shall we find any help in reconstructing the ancient boundary of Winchcombeshire?

This is all by way of parenthesis. I must not go farther on this line or I shall be trespassing on the realm of your President

<sup>1</sup> In Birch's *Cartularium Saxonicum* we have a document dealing with a transfer of lands between the Sees of Hereford and Worcester, in which the phrase "*into Wincelcumbescire*" occurs. It dates from 803.

<sup>2</sup> The note in Heming's *Cartulary*, 280, runs: "Provincias provinciiis pro libito adjungebat, nam vice-comitatum de Wincelcumb, quæ per se tunc erat, vice-comitatus Glocestræ adjunxit."

of 1906, Mr. Taylor, whose special domain is the history of the Hwiccas, and of the centuries that immediately follow them. I am always using his pamphlets when I deal with the ancient history of the lands of the Lower Severn, and can assure him that I have found them invaluable for lectures and book-writing alike.

May I suggest another line of enquiry which would be very valuable to some of us, the small clan of numismatists to which I belong. The Oxford Association has just collected a complete history of the coin-issues of its local mint, from Alfred to Henry III. The Saxon and early English mint of Gloucester had a history exactly parallel to that of the mint of Oxford, starting and ending about the same time. May we hope some day for a short illustrated history of our coinage and its annals? And if someone reminds me that Oxford had once, in its later history, a great outburst of mintage, during the Civil War of Charles I, cannot Gloucestershire say as much, since there was a lavish issue from the Royalist mint of Bristol during the years 1643-44-45. A very interesting find of half-crowns of Charles I was made on Cotswold only last year, and, as I looked through the 160 pieces, it was interesting to find that Bristol and Oxford were equally represented among them, while there was a mere sprinkling of the issues of Weymouth, Worcester, and York. I hope that some day a paper on this find may be laid before you; it would certainly be as appropriate in your *Proceedings* as in those of the Numismatic Society of London.

This summer our tour along the valley of the Avon will be almost entirely mediæval in its interest, the earlier history being only touched when we come once or twice upon a Saxon fragment in a church like Wyre, or relics such as the beautiful cross-head with the inter-twisted dragons at Cropton. Of the Roman remains which often attract such an important part of our attention, as, for example, during our recent Cirencester meeting, there is nothing to be seen this summer. A Roman road, one of the many "Icknielts" which joins

our Foss Way, runs quite close to our circle of touring, but I do not think that we cross it—certainly we have nothing Roman to inspect. But I may remind you that quite close to Evesham, at Cleeve Prior, on the line of this road, only five miles away, was discovered the greatest hoard of Roman gold and silver coins ever found in England. Would that we knew what had become of them. But 1811 was a time in which scientific cataloguing of coins was rare, and those through whose hands the 100 gold and perhaps 600 silver coins of the Cleeve find went were sufficiently beginners in archæology to muddle Valerian with Valens, and to make no accurate count of the pieces, distributed among mints and emperors. When Canon Bazeley, the Local Secretary, and I visited Cleeve last week we found that traditions about this find were still rife in the village. The local tale was that a miser bought up the whole hoard and buried it again. But I fear that it is much more likely that they were taken up to London, and disposed of as mere gold and silver.<sup>1</sup> Copper hoards of much larger size have often, of course, been found in England, such as the vast but rusty mass in the shrine of Coventina, on the Northumbrian Wall; the interesting bulk of coins of the British usurpers Carausius and Allectus, found in Woolmer Forest, which was apparently part of Allectus' military chest; and (last but not least) the small brass of Constantine in literal thousands from the Forest of Dean, which our late member, Mrs. Bagnall-Oakeley, so laboriously and systematically catalogued. But gold and silver finds on a

<sup>1</sup> The mention of the Cleeve find made in this address set our energetic Local Secretary, Mr. Barnard, to work. He discovered a paper by the late Mr. R. Tomes, called "Contributions towards the Parochial History of Cleeve Prior," from which it appeared that the coins were secretly disposed of in small lots. Mr. Barnard's letter in the *Four Shires Journal* drew another from Mr. Heywood, a grandson of one of the two persons who were present at the actual ploughing up of the hoard. It results that the discoverers took the coins to a Mr. Bennett, then the principal resident in the village, who disposed of them, and gave to the finder money sufficient to buy a house and garden, and to start in business as a haulier—a sum of several hundred pounds.

large scale are very rare, and this Cleeve find was the largest ever made. The second largest was the forty-eight gold pieces found last year at Corbridge on the Roman wall: but this was less than half the gold record of Cleeve, while the Grove Hill hoard of silver was similarly only about half that of the Cleeve find in numbers.

Our archæological neighbours to east and west are very busy at Roman antiquities this year. Though I was not able to visit South Wales with some of you this spring, I have been reading the reports of the Cardiff Society, and note that something more is to be done at Caerleon. You will, many of you, remember a visit to Caerwent which we made more than ten years ago, when the excavations there began. But Caerleon is obviously going to be a much more important business, as can be seen from the notes on it that appeared lately in the papers. I trust that, when the diggings there are fully developed, we may perhaps be able to stray once again over our border in that direction. The other promising Roman site—to the east of us, not the west—which is just going to be systematically worked over is Verulamium, St. Albans. This, I fear, is too far from our beat for the Society to visit *en masse*. But the place was so important—it was the third town of the Roman south, only yielding to London and Camulodunum in size and wealth, and the site is such a virgin one as regards excavation, that we may expect almost anything to appear. Some of us must visit St. Albans this autumn in detail, since we cannot all go in company, and draw sidelights from it, in order to enable us to understand the better our own Corinium and Glevum.

One point more for your pondering. It is now nearly twenty years since the Society ventured so far from home as Oxford. I remember the visit well, since I was privileged to help Mr. Madan in doing the work of Local Secretary, and had the honour of supplying tea to the members in the sacred precincts of All Souls' Library. May I hope to welcome you once again to Oxford at no very distant date? There must

be scores of new members enrolled since the last visit, and alas! too few of the old ones who followed Canon Bazeley to the last. Oxford is still as rich as ever in things archaeological, nay far richer, since we have added to our store the Fortnum mediæval antiquities—that rich medley of bronzes and majolica, glass and gems. We have this very year, too, acquired by Mr. A. J. Evans's munificent gift, his father's splendid collection of Saxon and other early metal work and jewellery; while his own Cretan collection is unrivalled save in Crete itself. While if you yearn for the pleasant drive no less than for the walk around closely-crowded architectural treasures, we have a fine selection of good village churches close in to the city—Yarnton, Cumnor, South Leigh (with its wonderful fifteenth-century frescoes), and Stanton-Harcourt (with its great family tombs), lying in a convenient circle within a lovely country-side. I will promise, having descended in due course from the presidential chair, to officiate in the more lowly part of Assistant Local Secretary once more, whenever you deign to direct your steps in our direction, and there are other members of the Society who will, I know, be equally willing to put their services at your disposal. It may not be next year, but let me implore that your visit may not be delayed much longer.

I have been warned by your Secretary to be short in my address. Your archæological work is all before you, and seeing with the eyes is far more important for the Society than hearing with the ears. So I will not ask your pardon for bringing my few remarks to a close by thanking you once more for the honour you have done me by placing me in the chair in which I sit and inviting you, as soon as the formulæ of our meeting are completed, to follow me to the site of the abbey, and to hear Mr. Walker explain to us the architecture of the two interesting parish churches, which lie so closely pressed in to the stretch of green sward that represents the vanished glory of the foundation of St Ecgwin.