

A NEW HISTORY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

SAMUEL RUDDER 1779

Our last Journal reprinted those sections on industry from Rudder's history listed under Gloucester and places beginning with A. We now continue those parishes arranged under B and C.

BARNSLEY

There are large quarries, on the north-east side of the village adjoining to Bibury, where they raise a very excellent kind of white freestone, almost equal to that of Bath. The pits are fifty or sixty feet deep, out of which they get the blocks of stone by means of a wheel and axis.

About twenty years ago; a vein of coal was found in one of those pits, which gave hopes to the country of being supplied from thence at an easy rate, with that useful fuel, which came so expensive to them by reason of long carriage; but those hopes were soon frustrated, and the proprietor disappointed. Indeed I am told that the matter was never examined into with that diligence and perseverance which the importance of it required.

BARRINGTON (GREAT)

Here is a quarry of freestone remarkable for its durability, and therefore, it is said, much of the stone hath been used in repairing of Westminster abbey; and Blenheim-house was built with it.

The broad cloth manufacture hath been carried on here, but there is very little at present.

BERKELEY

What the town was above two centuries back, may be seen by Leland's description of it: 'The Towne of Berkeley', says he, 'is no great Thinge, but it standythe well, and in a very good Soyle. It hath the very much occupied, and yet some what dothe, Clothings.'

...Several old accounts mention the clothing trade having flourished in this place, but it hath long since deserted it, and is not succeeded by any other kind of manufacture.

It hath been observed that this borough gives name to one of the hundreds of the county, which is very large, consisting of thirty-three parishes and tithings, beside the borough..... This hundred is famous for producing the best cheese in the kingdom.

As the parish is large, so the soils are various; but a red kind of earth or clay enters into the composition of most of them. There are some orchards that produce good cider. The oak thrives well here, but 'tis no where less cultivated. It is shocking to see almost all the trees wantonly lopt and headed for firing, a practice the more inexcusable, as the forest-coal is rendered cheap by means of the navigation up the river.

There is plenty of iron ore in this parish, but not a sufficiency of wood to work it. However, it appears by the great quantities of rich cinders which have been lately found at Peddington, and carried to the furnaces in the forest of Dean, that our ancestors had iron-works here.

BICKNOR (ENGLISH)

This village, like most others in the Forest of Dean, produceth coal and iron ore.

BISLEY .Chalford-bottom.

Chalford-bottom is a deep and narrow valley, about a mile in length, lying partly in Minchinhampton, but the greater part, being on the north side of the river which runs to Stroud, is in this parish. On the curious traveller's first approach, it presents at once a very striking and respectable appearance, consisting of a great number of well-built houses, equal to a little town, lying very contiguous, but not joined together. These are intermixt with rows of teniers, along the

side of the hill, on which the cloth is stretched in the process of making.* This variety of landscape is uncommonly pleasing, and so great and surprising is the acclivity where some of the buildings stand, that in different approaches to the same house, you ascend to the lowest story, and descend to the highest. In this bottom are eight fulling-mills, and here and in the villages above the hill, called the Linches, within the parish, great numbers of people, employed in the different branches of the woollen manufacture, reside. But the trade has lately been very much on the decline.

Sir Robert Atkins asserts, but I know not upon what authority, that the first clothing-mill in these parts was erected in Todmore, Todesmore-bottom, in this parish; and that the famous Roger Bacon, commonly called friar Bacon, (an eminent mathematician and philosopher for the age he lived in, and thence reputed a conjurer by the vulgar) was born there; and that he was educated at St. Mary's Chapel in Chalford, now St. Mary's mill. But Dr. Cave and other biographers make Ilchester in Somerset to be the place of that great man's nativity. He died in 1284.

Troham, or Trougham. Tithing in the parish of Bisley.

This place is remarkable for quarries of good tile, from which the vale country is supply'd at five shillings a thousand, or twenty five shillings the waggon-load. Should the navigation to Stroud take place, it is probable this article may be of considerable consequence.

Benefactions. Bisley.

Mr Thomas Butler, clothier, in 1688, gave £1.10s a year for a sermon, and bread to the poor.

Mr Walter Ridler, clothier, in 1697, gave £100.

* After scouring or washing cloth is stretched, by means of hooks, on tentering frames to dry. This prevents creasing and shrinkage. The frames or racks can still be seen in use today in Ireland. Presumably similar racks were used after fulling, see the reference to Netherlypiatt in editorial. A.C.

BITTON

Great quantities of coal are dug in this parish, out of pits which are fifty yards deep, and some of them more. Here is also plenty of iron-ore, and rich cinders of the same metal, for smelting of which a furnace has lately been erected, where they use coke instead of charcoal.

Several manufactures are carried on here, which deserve particular notice. The bras-mills are large works for making utensils and thin plates of that metal. There are also machines for rolling and splitting of iron, for grinding of logwood, &c. and a pin-manufacture, though yet in its infancy, furnishes employment for a considerable number of hands.

Hanham. Tithing of Bitton.

There were formerly two machines in this tithing for raising water for the use of the city of Bristol, taken notice of in some books, but they were removed in the year 1720.

CAM

The poor are employed in the clothing business, by masters at Dursley and Uley; but about thirty years ago, there were three or four considerable clothiers residing in this parish, who are since dead, or have declined business.

CHELTENHAM.

Here is no manufacture carried on, but the women and children of the poorer sort spin woollen yarn, for the clothiers about Stroud.

CIRENCESTER

It has two weekly markets, on Monday and Friday. The first, for grain and all sorts of commodities, is very much frequented; the other is chiefly for wool, butchers-meat, and poultry. The wool-market was once very considerable, 'till the dealers in that article began to travel the country, and buy their wool at the farm-houses, which at length had its effect, that instead of thirty or forty waggon-loads, which used to be brought hither every market-

day, there has been, for some time, scarcely any sent to market; and the Boothall, where the wool was usually deposited, is now taken down.

Frequent oppositions in the borough, in choosing their representatives in parliament, have made the poor inhabitants more licentious, and less industrious, than they formerly were. These circumstances are unfavourable to manufactures, and generally prevent them from rising to any degree of eminence. The cloathing business flourished here, according to Leland, in the reign of King Henry the Eighth; but at present little is done in that manufacture.

The heavy edge-tools of this place are in great reputation, especially those knives which curriers use in shaving leather; and which find a market all over Europe and America. Wool-combing is on the decline. Carpet-making hath lately been introduced; and there are a few cheneys, harrateens* and light stuffs manufactured. But stocking frame-knitting, which was set on foot about forty years since, lies at the last gasp, under many disadvantages, and is only kept from expiring by the cordial influence of a very large estate, which was charitably intended to promote some considerable manufacture here. The principal business is woolstapling and yarn making, for which the town is well situated, near the clothing country.

Benefactions.

The Yellow School was erected and endowed by will of Mrs Rebecca Powell, who died in the year 1722, and left an estate for that purpose. A school house was purchased and fitted up at the expence of near £1200 but some difficulties arising about carrying the will into execution, the court of chancery, upon application to it, decreed that £212. 8s per annum be apply'd to cloathing, maintaining, teaching to write and cast accounts, and bringing up twenty boys in the art of stocking-frame knitting. Twenty girls are also cloathed every year, and are taught to read, and to spin worsted.

James Shewell, silkman, gave £10. and Mrs Elizabeth Edwards, in 1726, gave £100 the annual produce of all which to be apply'd to putting out poor children apprentices.

* Harrateen - a kind of linen fabric formerly used for curtains and bed furnishings. Cheyney - an obsolete word for China. Was similarly a lightweight furnishing fabric. The General Advertiser 1789 refers to "Ready-made Furniture....either Harrateens, Cheyney, Flower'd Cotton, checks".

John Oates, clothier, £10. 1680.
William Kerby of London Salter £10.

The large engine for extinguishing fire was given by Sir Benjamin Bathurst. That of a more modern construction, built by Newsham, was presented to the town by the two representatives The small one was purchased by the inhabitants of the town.

CLIFTON

The river Avon empties itself into the estuary of the Severn at Kingroad, seven or eight miles below Clifton. The tide rises to the height of thirty feet and upwards, upon which the merchant-ships ride into the port of Bristol.

There are antient fortifications and entrenchments upon Clifton-hill, where a wind-mill now stands.....

Mr Goldney has a handsome house here, with fine gardens, a grotto of shell-work, and a canal with fountains, supply'd with water by a fire-engine.*

The stone in this part of the country is rich in iron ore, which when broken from it, is of various colours, redish, crimson, brown, and yellow; some like spar, only heavier and transparent; others like emery, and there is a sort in pieces, beautifully streaked, and rising in the appearance of little bubbles, which the druggists call the blood-stone....

In the same rock are veins of lead-ore, intermixed with a brown stone, of the nature of calamine; which is not uncommon in these parts. And there are several sorts of ochre of different shades, from a deep red to a light lemon-colour, but they are never found except about the lumps of iron-ore, from which they originate.

CRANHAM

..... is remarkably uneven, with many steep and rugged hills covered with beech wood.

The large beech wood is usually converted into gun-stocks for Birmingham, and the waste and smaller wood into charcoal.

* The use of the word 'fire-engine' at this time denotes a Newcomen Engine.

CROMHALL

The fossil productions of this village are pit-coal, and white-lay stone. Of the former there is a great plenty; but the works are relaxed for some time. The latter is common to many other neighbouring parishes. It burns to an excellent kind of white, strong lime, in making of which some of the labouring inhabitants are employed, whilst the women and children spin wollen-yarn for the clothiers about Wotton-under-edge.