TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

WOOLHOPE NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB.

[ESTABLISHED 1851.]

1908, 1909, 1910, 1911.

"HOPE ON."



" HOPE EVER."

HEREFORD: PRINTED BY JAKEMAN AND CARVER.

Issued December, 1914.

Moolhope Anturalists' Field Club.

FIRST FIELD MEETING, TUESDAY, MAY 30TH, 1911.

WILD WALES.

VISIT TO RHOSGOCH AND PAINSCASTLE.

INTERESTING INCIDENTS.

Not for many years have the members of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club toured the wild and charming surroundings of Rhosgoch and Painscastle, and there was small cause for wonder that the field meeting of Tuesday to this district was so largely attended on the occasion of the first field day of the season. The visit was made by kind permission of Captain Walter de Winton.

The major portion of the party, numbering about 60, boarded the 9.22 a.m. Midland train, on which compartments were set apart for the club, at Barrs Court Station, Hereford, and other members were picked up en route to Hay, where on their arrival they were met by this year's President, Mr. E. Cambridge Phillips. The President, unfortunately, was unable to accompany the members on their tour owing to a professional engagement, and Mr. Henry Southall, of Ross, acted as president during the itinerary. Conveyances having met the party at the station, they proceeded over the Wye Bridge, where toll was demanded and promptly paidfourpence for each horse and a halfpenny for each person—to Clyro. The weather was glorious, a cool breeze tempering what would otherwise have been the hottest day of the year. There was every promise of the atmospheric conditions continuing, and in this the party was not disappointed. At Clyro, the road to the right, past the Baskerville Arms, was taken, followed by a turn to the left past Cwm Evan Gwyn. Clyro was traversed on foot, many of the travellers felt constrained to remove their jackets, and some their waistcoats as well, during the ascent of this steep and long hill. Once more the conveyances were boarded, and the famous Rhosgoch bog was reached at the eastern end, where there is a Castle tump and some tumuli near Doleycanney. Driving along the northern side of the bog, Rhosgoch Inn was reached at the scheduled time of 12.15. Rhosgoch meaning "red bog," it is appropriate that the name of the landlord should be Gore.

At the inn the members partook of luncheon, after which the Hon. Secretary read a few notes on the "Black Headed Gull," which frequent the bog, as follows:—

The black-headed gull (Larus ridibundus) is one of the most generally distributed species around the coast of Britain. A more appropriate name would be the brown-headed gull, for the adult male, in spring, has a dark brown hood, which is lost in winter; the mantle is French grey, tail and under parts white, the latter with a pink tinge; outer primaries characterised by white centres, and dark margins to the inner webs. The length of the bird is 16 inches, wing 12 inches. Gulleries such as we are visiting to-day are common inland in the Eastern Counties and also in Wales, and extend as far north as Northumberland. The farthest inland, so far as I have been able to ascertain, are those of Norbury and Aqualate Mere in Staffordshire, which have been celebrated for centuries. The nests are built of sedges and flags on clumps of rushes, etc., or on the bare ground. The eggs are generally three in number, and vary from an olive brown to pale green, blue or salmon colour, with blotches of black and dark brown. They measure 2.2 by 1.5 inch. The laying season begins about the middle of April.

They are omnivorous feeders, nothing seems to come amiss. They take fish when they can get them, but as they are unable to dive, they only catch those that are the near the top of the water. On the other hand, they are a true friend to the farmer, devouring large numbers of grubs, daddylonglegs, cockchafers, etc.

In olden times, in Staffordshire, the young were counted good eating. They were caught by driving them into nets before they could fly. As many as fifty dozen were captured alive at a drive, and sold for 5s. per dozen. They were then fattened on offal. Three drives were made in the season, and the profit was from £50 to £60. The eggs of the bird were also taken as human food for centuries past. Fifty years ago as many as 16,000 eggs were collected in a single season at Scoulton gullery in Norfolk. Yet the gulls seem to hold their own in most districts.

I am indebted for these few notes to "Saunders' Manual of British Birds," "Bewick's British Birds," and to an interesting article entitled "Wild Country Life" that appeared in "Country Life" of June 25th, 1910.

Following the reading of this paper the members proceeded, under the guidance of Mr. James Price, gamekeeper to Captain de Winton, to the bog, which was entered at the western end, and they soon found themselves amid the haunts of the black-headed gull and the curlew. They were conducted along the southern side of the bog for some distance, and then a few of the more enterprising members of the party proceeded through the bog knee deep to inspect the nests of the gulls, curlew, and snipe. Some photographs of the nests were obtained. A return was made to drier ground, and the tour was continued in Indian file, owing to the somewhat treacherous nature of the ground, to the place where the Osmunda regalis was to be found. The greater part of the members then returned through the fields on the southern side of the bog, whence they obtained a glorious view of its whole length, the profusion of cotton grass in full flower adding considerably to the charm of the scene. During the walk over the bog at least 50 or 60 of the black-headed gulls were seen, and several nests containing eggs were visited. The curlew (Numenius arquata) were also in considerable numbers, as well as common snipe (Gallinago coelestis), and the nests of both, containing eggs were found. A young teal (Nettion crecca) was seen, which proves that they nest on the bog, and there was a moorhen's (Gallinula chlorabus) nest containing a number of eggs. There were also wild duck and other birds. The following is a list of the plants observed on the bog:

List of Rare Plants found between Hay, Rhosgoch and Painscastle, May 30th, 1911.

By Donald Mathews.

Menyanthes trifoliata
Veronica scutellata
Scutellaria minor
Anagallis tenella
Chenopodium Bonus-Henricus
Salix repens
Triglochin palustris
Habenaria chlorantha
Eleocharis acicularis
Calamagrostis epigeios
Phragmites communis
Osmunda regalis
Ophioglossum vulgaris
Equisetum sylvaticum
Chara vulgaris

Rhosgoch abounds with species of carex, but the time was too hurried to search much. The list above gives a very poor idea of the plants to be found in the neighbourhood.

Rhosgoch Inn was again reached about 2.15.

The Hon. Secretary, holding in his hand a bronze spear-head, said Mr. Griffiths, late of Portway, and now of Hereford, had lent it to him. It was unearthed near a tumulus on Dolebedwyn Farm, near the eastern end of the bog, about 70 years ago, and an uncle of Mr. Griffiths gave a bushel of wheat for it. The head was sent up to the British Museum, and they wrote a description of it, which Mr. Griffiths had unfortunately mislaid, but so far as his recollection served him, it was said to belong to the Bronze Age, 4th or 5th century.

Mr. Parker said he had something to say to supplement that. The late Mr. Richard Banks, of Kington, read a paper upon three celts, one of which was the one produced, and one which he possessed. They were found in Radnorshire about the year 1865, and the one he possessed was found at Bleddfa, and was covered with green patina. In it was a place for a cleft stick at the end, and it was about two inches broad at the cutting part.

Before 2-45 the party was on the way to Painscastle, which was reached in about twenty minutes. Here they were met by Mr. Tuck, the tenant, and conducted by him to the top of the mound, where the keep stood. From this point a fine view of the surrounding country was obtained, including the Brecon Beacons, the Radnorshire Hills, the Black Mountains, and the higher Herefordshire hills. An interesting diversion in the day's proceedings was the fact that some field operations by yeomanry in camp at Brecon were being engaged in, and the party had an opportunity of seeing modern tactics of war. Here and there on the road to Painscastle the party had passed by a soldier alone but for his horse, watching a bridge, a lane, a gate, or otherwise, as the case might be. At the Maesliwch Arms at Painscastle they saw a small party mounted washing down the dust collected during the operations, and above, on the site of the old castle, a machine gun was in position ready for the fray. The members were given to understand that an invading army was attempting to cross the river Wye into Radnorshire, and it was the duty of the defending force to prevent them from doing so, if possible. As the top of the castle mound was reached, the enemy's scouts were sighted, by means of field glasses, on the Begwyns, quite a short distance away. A Maxim gun, borne by a heavy horse, was rapidly brought into position, from which these scouts were fired upon, but nothing appeared to happen.

While on the site of the castle, Mr. Mortimer Baylis read a paper written by Mr. Edmund Cheese, and which appears in the Club transactions for the year 1879, page 181. From this it appears that the site of the castle was formerly a British camp, on which a Norman knight named Paine built the castle about the year 1136. Leaving Painscastle on the return to Hay, via Clyro, the members had to walk over a considerable portion of the Begwyns, which at the top reaches a height of 1,361 feet. On the way a scout of the invading army was in imminent danger of being made a prisoner by a party of horsemen numbering about 200, who were on the march. Seeing his predicament, the party found him a place in one of the vehicles and conveyed him through the oncoming troop to safety.

The Crown Hotel, Hay, was reached about 5.5 p.m., and the members at once sat down to an excellent dinner prepared by the management. Here they were met by the President. The party during the day was as follows: Mr. E. Cambridge Phillips (president), his Honour Judge Ingham, Lt.-Col. J. E. R. Campbell, the Rev. P. H. Fernandez, Rev. Preb. W. H. Lambert, Rev. A. G. Jones, Rev. F. J.-Lansdell, Rev. A. H. McLaughlin, Rev. H. B. D. Marshall, Rev. W. Marshall, Rev. R.T. A. Money-Kyrle, Rev. W. E. T. Morgan, Rev. M. R. S. Onslow, Rev. L. W. Richings, Rev. W. O. Wait, Rev. S. Cornish Watkins, Rev. Preb. H. T. Williamson, Rev. R. Hyett Warner, Rev. F. S. Stooke Vaughan, Rev. Claude Lighton, Dr. H. E. Durham, Dr. C. S. Morrison, Dr. Scudamore Powell, Messrs. W. Mortimer Baylis, J. H. Berrow, George Child, R. Clarke, W. E. H. Clarke, P. Leighton Earle, J. B. Fowler, R. H. George, G. H. Grocock, E. J. Hatton, F. S. Hovil, A. G. Hudson, J. J. Jackson, F. R. James, John Lambe, A. H. Lamont, W. G. Lloyd, C. E. A. Moore, Alfred Parker, J. T. Pitt, H. H. Quilter, A. Simpson, Henry Southall, J. W. Stephens, Alfred Watkins, W. M. Wilson, Truman C. Cook, and T. Hutchinson (hon. secretary). The visitors were Mr. Edwyn C. Gurney, Mr. J. M. Hutchinson (Natal), Mr. Matthews (Redditch), Rev. H. H. Gibbon (Glasbury), Rev. G. A. Hopkins (Kington), Mr. Campbell (Kingsland), Mr. Henry Griffiths, Mr. W. Watkins, Mr. W. Carman (Herejord Times). Mr. J. B. Pilley, assistant secretary, was prevented from attending, Mr. R. Clarke acting as deputy.

The President having proposed the loyal toast, Mr. Hutchinson said Mr. Southall had a few words to say.

Mr. Southall said he wished to speak of the very great loss the club had sustained within the last month by the death of one of the most active, valued, and useful members, the Rev. Augustin Ley, late of Sellack, and who recently lived in the neighbourhood of Ross. It had been his privilege to work with him on behalf of that society

RHOSGOCH AND PAINSCASTLE.

You all know that Hay station is in Herefordshire. Leaving the station yard we crossed the Dulas brook and entered Breconshire and Wales. On the left we see traces of the old town walls and then ascended the Ship pitch. Is not this more correctly the Sheep pitch? There is a Ship-street in Brecon, which is generally supposed to be really Sheep-street. After we had entered the town of Hav we turned to the right towards the bridge crossing the Wye. It is interesting to notice that in the garden of the last house on the left there once stood a Friends' Meeting-house. I have also heard that burials have taken place here. We crossed the Wye, a little above the old ford, and entered Radnorshire. There is an amusing account of this ford in Jones's "Breconshire," describing Leland's tour through Breconshire: "Descending from some part of the Blake Mountaine he saw on the hither side of Wy, a good mile from the Hay, the Castle of Clereho, after passing over Wy river, the which for lack of good knowledge yn me of the fourde did sore troble my horse and I cam in crepusculo to the Hay." Commenting on this, Jones remarks: "He should have said noctu, for no man in the daylight with his eyes open would have crossed the Wye in his journey from the Black Mountain to Hay, as they are both on the same side of the river." To the right, as we ascended the pitch on the Radnorshire side, is Boatside. Here is a well-defined Roman camp of considerable dimensions, covering about forty acres. For over three hundred years the ninth Roman legion was stationed here. The farm is now called Boatside, but formerly it was known as Carnaff Grange. The present Wyecliff was the old Boatside. Mrs. Dawson suggests that it derived its name from Caer, a camp, and Naff, probably the name of one of the Roman generals. Some tesselated pavement and a few Roman coins have been found here. About a mile from Hay we came to Clyro village. Lewis's Topographical Dictionary gives the derivation Claer, clear, and Wy, water. the right we passed Peter's Pool, probably at one time the old bed of the river, and once the fish pond of the monastery, and just above it the Castle tump. May not this originally have been a British. encampment, used later by the Normans? It is a circular camp with moat all round. Williams in his "History of Radnorshire" speaks of this eminence as containing about two acres of land with remains of extensive buildings which appear to have once covered the whole area. To-day no traces of masonry can be found: Is it not the old story that here as in so many other places all the stones have been removed for building purposes elsewhere? On the outer side of the moat to the east there still remain traces of masonry. Mrs. Dawson says: - "Here stood Clyro

Castle, or rather Royle, as the castle was then called. In 1397 it belonged to Thomas Earl of Warwick, whose ancestor, Guy de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, married the heiress of Rob. de Tony, and had with her the Cantref of Elvael." I do not quite understand how Williams should suggest this as the site of the monastery, and the buildings at Clyro Court Farm as the old Clyro Court mansion. I feel more inclined to accept the latter as the site of the monastery. There is a tradition that there was a subterranean arched passage from the Castle to the Wye. Clyro Court Farm is on the left of the road leading to Llowes. There is a fine arched gateway leading into the yard, or may it not be the Cloister Garth? To the right there are some interesting buildings. In the first room that we come to-probably the refectory—there is an old oak blade running from the base to the apex. The next compartment is the kitchen with its large fireplace, stone jambs, and oak beam resting on them. To the right there is what appears to me a very distinct buttery hatch, opening from the kitchen to the refectory. Beyond there are two door archways, one 6ft. broad and 8ft. high. There are also two windows with four oak mullions. A few years ago the old well, 60ft. deep was discovered, but has now been filled in. Many years ago it is said that a number of old wooden figures were found in a room here, but what has become of them I cannot discover. Close by is a meadow called the Saints' Meadow. I have also heard it called the Saints' Rest—probably the burial ground of the monastery. There is a farm near Boatside called Tirmynach—Monksland. These lands were given by Ein on Clyd to the Abbey of Cwmhir.

The church is a modern building, and contains nothing of interest. The base of the tower is the oldest part, probably 13th century. In the Vicarage grounds there is the old church stoup, with the date carved on it, 1687. There must be some history attaching to an old house opposite the south entrance gate to the churchyard. There is a porch with a stone seat, and two recesses on the right and left, and doors leading to two cottages. Above the porch is a stone with two carved niches. Near the lychgate was the stocks, and just beyond, the village pound. There is a house in the village called the Sacred Cottage. At Pentwyn, once the property of the Brynons, an old Radnorshire family, it is said that John Wesley and Fletcher of Madeley, stayed and preached in the kitchen from the hearthstone. For years this old stone was held in much veneration, and when alterations were made in the house, it was taken up and removed to the cottage opposite, Paradise, where it now lies at the entrance door. Is not Paradise a name given sometimes to a monastery garden?

Leaving the village, we passed Cwrt Evan Gwyn, an ancient farmhouse with a tumulus near surrounded by a moat. The road

leading from Tirmynach by the Lower House to Cwrt Evan Gwyn is called the Monk's road, and is defined by the yew trees growing in the hedges. At Gwernffyddau, just opposite, I am told that there are traces of fish ponds, said to have belonged to the monks. This property once belonged to the Whitney family, and probably they gave its name to Whitney on the Wye. In a field adjoining the road at Crossway there stands an upright stone of considerable dimensions.

There was nothing of further interest until we reached the Castle Tump near Talybedwen. At the base I noticed some sunken stones which might be examined. Near this ground some years ago there was found a bronze spear-head which is now in the possession of Mr. T. Griffiths, Prior House, Prior street, Hereford. There is another tumulus at the back of Pontfaen, a third at Dolcannau, and a fourth at the head of Rhosgoch. I have been told that the soil of this mound is not similar to the adjoining ground. On the Little Mountain at the back of Castle Tump there is a camp, which I have not seen, but from a description given is probably Roman. There are two streams issuing out of Rhosgoch, one flowing into the Arrow, the other the Backwy, into the Wye. I cannot discover the name of the first stream unless it be the Millo. There is a Caemillo-Millofield and Cwmgwillo-Millo-dingle. About a mile east of the Rhos is an interesting old farmhouse, now known as Llanshiver, really Llys Ifor, Ifor's Court. Williams says that it is encompassed by a deep trench of considerable depth, and by a high rampart or vallum. Tradition says that this property once belonged to a chieftain, or regulus, named Ifor. Ifor was the father of Cynhyllyn, from whom descended Ellistan Glodrudd, regulus of Moelynaidd and Fferllys; or, perhaps, Ifor, the son of Idureth, and younger brother of Madoc, Lord of Moelynaidd and Elfael. He goes on to suggest that it was never of any military importance except as a position from which an enemy attacking Painscastle, 21 miles distant, might be in turn attacked in the rear. Before we leave Rhosgoch I would just like to allude to Bryngwyn Church, over a thousand feet above sea level, which is well worth a visit. There are some interesting sculptured figures in the church, and in the churchyard a cross. The register books are, I believe, the oldest in the rural deanery (Hay), dating back to 1614.

We now arrived at Painscastle. Camden speaks of Castell Pain which was built by Pain, a Norman. As we have already had a paper on the castle by Mr. Edmund Cheese, published in the Transactions for the year 1879, and as there is a chapter on Painscastle in Mrs. Dawson's "Antiquities of Radnorshire," I do not propose saying anything further on the subject.

In Symonds' "Record of the Rocks" there is an allusion to the geology of this district, in which he says: "Nowhere in the neighbourhood are the relations of the Upper Ludlow Shales with the Passage beds better shown than about Painscastle, but the difficulty here, as elsewhere, is to show a conformable passage upwards into the Old Red proper above the Passage rocks, which in this county are of considerable thickness." The members will have noticed the shell fossils in the stones of the castle. About 30 years ago, when a portion of the castle walls was taken down, a number of cannon balls were discovered embedded in the masonry. There are two of these here for inspection, kindly lent by Mr. Price, King's Head, and Mr. Cartwright. It is sad to see the traces of decay all around the village, deserted cottages falling into ruin, the sign of the tendency of the age, families leaving the country, and flocking into the towns, to find better wages in the iron and coal districts of Glamorganshire and Monmouth. Formerly there were two fairs held here, on May 12th and in December. At Upper House, the farm adjoining the castle, the porch is interesting, with its chamber above, and also a nice staircase. Allusion may be made here to the late vicar of Llanbedr Painscastle, the Rev. John Price, a strange character, whom I knew well. The Rev. D. Edmondes Owen, rector of Llanelwedd, has given a fair description of this eccentric man in an article in the "Treasury." This reminds me of a prior memorable vicar of Painscastle, Parson Button, as he was called. For years he was vicar and schoolmaster combined. The school was held in the church, as it so often was in those days. He was a bachelor, and spent much of his time in the village alehouse. Often he set the children a task while he adjourned for refreshments. consequence was that frequently the children got tired of waiting, and despairing of the return of the master deserted the school and made tracks for their respective homes. Sometimes it happened that they were confronted by the returning pedagogue, and sternly ordered to come back. Bidding one of their number to cut him a hazel twig, he drove them back to the church, and soundly trounced them for their disobedience. Once he was discovered by the children removing his possessions from one lodging to another, and carrying his bed on his back. This was too great a temptation, and so one of the more daring of the boys approached him from the rear, and giving the bed a good tug, down goes the bed, Parson Button, and all. On another occasion, having partaken of his favourite beverage a little more freely than usual, he was discovered asleep on the roadside not far from the castle, wholly oblivious to all things mundane. This put it into the head of one of the more ingenious and venturesome of the lads to summon his companions together, and tie the hapless victim to the axletree of a pair of old cart wheels, bowl him to the top of the ramparts and then send him careering madly down the steep descent of the mound, amidst the approving cheers of the interested spectators, but to the imminent peril of the life of poor Parson Button. One of the girls, a good conscientious child, who resented this rough treatment of her master, soon acquired the sobriquet of Mistress Button. Another celebrity of the village demands a short reference, namely, our ignorant school-mistress, who possessed a strong partiality for the gin bottle. Too illiterate to write the copy book headlines, she invariably awaited the arrival of the itinerant Nonconformist minister, who very kindly performed this part of her duty for her. Afraid of venturing upon the orthography of the difficult place names in the neighbourhood, she used to send her pupils to copy the spelling on the signboards of the carts and waggons around, and this was transferred to those marvellously ingenious pieces of workmanship generally called "samplers."

Not many years ago a strange sight might be seen in the village, some of the old men walking about in military red coats. The solution is this. These discarded uniforms were bought up in London by Mr. Thomas Phillips, a successful West Indian planter, and founder of Llandovery College, my old school, and sent down to some of his relatives who lived at Painscastle, for distribution among the poor.

Not far off, just over the hill to the S.W. is Llandewifach Church. About 35 years ago, when I was curate of Glasbury, I once took duty here, and to my great astonishment I found all the men sitting on one side and the women on the other. The Rev. Preb. T. Williams who was then in charge of the parish, tells me that it was a regular custom there, and also that the women curtsied as they entered the church, relics probably of pre-Reformation days. The curtseying was doubtless not intended as "making obedience to the parson," but bowing to the altar. One sees both these practices in some of our churches even in these enlightened days.

Leaving Painscastle on our return journey we crossed the Bachwy at Rhydlydon, "the broad ford," where a sword was unearthed some years ago, and is now in the possession of Mr. Thomas P. Lyke, Lodge Farm, Crosswood, near Aberystwyth. I am told that it has a basket hilt, and is probably of English make, circa 1650. A cannon ball was also found here. On the shoulder of the Beacons to the right, so it is said, were once placed the guns for an attack on the castle.

A little further we passed Crosfaelig—Maelig's Cross. Maelig was the son of Caw, Prince of Strathclyde. He was originally a soldier, but afterwards devoted himself to a religious life, and studied

in the great College of Llancarfau in Glamorganshire, under the famous Cadoc. Ultimately he is said to have settled in Llowes, and built a monastery there, probably on Llowes Common. Llowes Church is dedicated to St. Maelig. Llowes is derived from "Lloches,' (a cell, or retreat).

Not far distant is Llowes Hall, or as it used to be called Tybeddau, or Tyrbeddau, "the house" or "the field or land of the graves." About 100 years ago, I am informed, two old swords were found here, and a great number of skulls, pointing to the fact that a battle was once fought on the spot. And tradition corroborates this.

Just opposite Penforest, on the side of the old road leading to Llowes, is a stone, which in company with the Rev. Preb. T. Williams and Mr. C. J. Lilwall, I recently examined, but found nothing to indicate its original use. It has evident marks of the chisel on it. The prose of the stone I take to be this, that in the uncertain past some one attempted to cut off the round portion from the rest of the stone in order to convert it into a font, or trough, or grindstone, but for some reason or other gave up the task. The poetry or romance of the stone is told by Mr. Portman in his "Sacred Stones of Hay," and is as follows: "The 'folklore' of the district connects this stone with a spirit that used to ride behind anyone on horseback, who passed by there after sunset, and at the present time few would care to pass this place at night." Unless some member of the Club can offer any reasonable solution, I must leave the mystery as the showman generally leaves any difficult problem or awkward question of the children, with these suggestive words: "You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

The Hon. Secretary said he had a paper by Mr. John Hutchinson, late Librarian of Middle Temple, who expressed his regret at being unable to be present, on "Charles I. in Breconshire and Radnorshire," also some verses by the same author on Rhosgoch and Painscastle, which appeared in the Transactions for the year 1879, page 187, but these could not be read owing to want of time.

The party then left for Hay station, arriving in Hereford at 8.40 p.m.