

CHAPTER XIV.

WEST WICKHAM AND ADDINGTON.

West Wickham—Annals of the Parish—Wickham Court—Gallery of Portraits—Keston Church.—“The Archdeacon’s Well”—Etymology and Early History—Wickham Church—Mr. West, the Friend of Lyttelton and Pitt—The Post Glover’s Absence of Mind—Discovery of Palaeolithic Weapons and Instruments—A Group of Remarkable Trees—Addington, its Boundaries and Etymology—Castle Hill—Singulae Tenure of the Manor—Descent of the Manor—The Parish Church—The Burial-Place of Archbishop Tait—A Cluster of Tumuli—Addington Park—Its Purchase as a Seat for the Archbishops of Canterbury—The successive Archbishops who have lived here.

Few parts of even the distant suburbs of London—not excepting the districts which we have just described—are prettier or more “sylvan” than the country between Hayes and Croydon; and probably few rural villages, even in Yorkshire or Devonshire, are more sequestered than West Wickham, which almost adjoins Hayes and Keston Commons, and which, up to the present time, has not suffered to any great extent from the incursions of the “demon of bricks and mortar.”

The parish adjoins Surrey both to the south and the west, and is the next parish westward from Hayes. It derived its appellation of Wickham from the Saxon words *wic*, a street or way, and *ham*, a dwelling, and received the prefix of West to distinguish it from two other parishes of the same name in Kent: namely, East Wickham,* near Plumstead, and Wickham Breaux, near Canterbury. The parish lies high; and although of considerable extent, is not very thickly populated. Half a century ago there were not more than ninety dwellings in the whole parish, the number of the inhabitants at that time scarcely amounting to 600, whilst at the present time, such has been the slow rate of increase that the population now does not reach a thousand. The district is delightfully undulating, consisting of hills and dales, or “bot-toms,” as they are locally called, which are plentifully overgrown with ferns. The author of Unwin’s “Half-holiday Handbook” tells us that Wickham is one of the most celebrated of the London entomologist’s “happy hunting-grounds.” The district seems one vast repository of insect life, and many “good things” in entomology are still found there, including West Wickham Wood, Shirley Common, and the outlying portions of the Archbishop’s Park at Addington. An extension of the South Eastern Railway has recently been made from Beckenham, with stations at Eden Park, West Wickham, and Hayes. “It is to be hoped, writes the author of the above-mentioned work, “that this new branch, whilst supplying the means of access to the City, will not be instrumental in introducing hordes of the London ‘rough.’ In some beautiful

localities it has been found that bringing the railway right up to it, and planting a commodious ‘Railway Inn’ in close proximity, has been the means of closing the locality to the lover of nature and rural scenery by the wholesale introduction of the rough aforesaid, who does not care to visit a district if it entails a walk of four or five miles.”

The soil of the parish is varied, being in some parts chalk, and in others gravel, sand, and clay. In the centre stand the court lodge and church, and about midway between the church and Beckenham, to the north-west, is the village, mostly consisting of cottages, but having in it, or close by, one or two good residences.

Mr. Britton, in his “Beauties of England and Wales,” thus describes West Wickham:—This village was, in the reign of Edward II., the property of the Huntingfields, of whom Sir Walter de Huntingfield procured the grant of a weekly market for this manor in 1318, but the market has been long discontinued. It afterwards passed through several families to Sir Henry Heydon, who rebuilt the manor-house and church in the reign of Henry VII. His descendants sold it to the Lennards; and it was late the property of Sir John Farnaby, Bart., in right of his wife Mary, daughter to the late Mr. Samuel Lennard, the illegitimate son of Sir Samuel Lennard, Bart. Many of the Lennards were men of note in their day, representing the county of Kent in several Parliaments. Sir Samuel Lennard was knighted early in the seventeenth century, and his son, Sir Stephen, was created a baronet in 1642. The last of the family, Miss Mary Lennard, married Sir John Farnaby, of Kippington, near Sevenoaks, whom she outlived. Lady Farnaby resided here till her death in 1833. She was succeeded in the property by her only surviving son, Sir Charles Francis Farnaby, on whose death, in 1861, the estate passed to his nephew, Colonel John Farnaby Lennard, eldest son of Sir John’s only daughter, by her marriage with General Sir William Cator, K.C.B. Colonel Farnaby-Lennard, who still owns the estate, had a baronetcy conferred upon him in 1880.

Wickham Court, the residence for some three

* See ante p. 34.