

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE DRIFFIELD MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES
AND GEOLOGICAL SPECIMENS.

BY J. R. MORTIMER.

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It was the Great London Exhibition of 1851 that first decided my taste for scientific inquiry. Afterwards, Mr. Edward Tindall's geological and archæological collections at Bridlington fired me with a strong desire to make a similar collection. A curious chalk cast was the first specimen I obtained, whilst a small Ammonite, which I bought of Mr. Tindall, was the first of its kind I possessed.

My brother, the late Robert Mortimer, of Fimber, had a like love for collecting.

For the first ten or twelve years the late Edward Tindall, of Bridlington, and the late George Pycock, of Malton, were almost our only rivals; yet we accumulated specimens but slowly. We had, however, during this period, trained many of the farm servants in this neighbourhood to distinguish and keep for us any geological and archæological specimens they could find. The small collection we then made mainly consisted of chalk fossils and a very few stone and flint tools. These we exhibited in cases in my offices at Fimber. Small though this display was it seemed to stimulate others to indulge in the same hobby, and soon our neighbourhood was more or less periodically visited by the thirteen competitors hereinafter named, and their agents, during a period of about 35 years, ranging from 1861 to 1896. None, however, of these enthusiasts, except Mr. Tindall and Mr. Chadwick, collected geological specimens, though all of them were active competitors for stone, flint, and bronze weapons. They constantly visited the district, and not infrequently bought from the very field labourers whom we had trained to distinguish these specimens, by overbidding us, and so running up the prices.

The combined energies of these gentlemen would, I believe, obtain from the same area quite three times the large number of stone, flint, and bronze tools and weapons that have been collected by my brother and myself, now exhibited in the Museum at Driffeld. If this be the case it should be asked, What has become of so great a number? In attempting to answer the question I will briefly refer to each collector's labours.

(1.) The late Edward Tindall, of Bridlington, not only commenced to collect more than 50 years ago, but he held the almost unrivalled access to a field rich from both a geological and archaeological point of view. Besides he was personally a diligent collector, so much so as to call forth at times uncomplimentary remarks from superficial observers. On one occasion whilst gathering specimens in a field near the sea at Bridlington two ladies were passing, and he overheard one remark to the other, "Look here, that poor old [meaning demented] man we saw last year is here again, picking up stones and throwing them down again." These "stones," of course, were the rejected specimens. I myself when similarly engaged have been accused of mushroom gathering.

Mr. Tindall obtained a great number of specimens, but he was always ready to dispose of them whenever any collector, no matter where from, wished to buy. Nevertheless he generally had on hand a considerable number of both geological and archaeological specimens, and amongst them were often some choice ones. After his death in 1877, at the age of 63, the collection he had then on hand was sold. Part of this was obtained by Mr. Robert Gatenby, of Bridlington; but what became of the remainder I do not know.

(2.) The late Mr. George Pycock, of Malton, made a collection, which he sold many years ago to the late Dr. Rooke, of Scarborough, and it is now in Dr. Rooke's son's private museum at Scarborough.

(3.) The Rev. Canon Greenwell, of Durham, amassed a large number of valuable specimens (independently of those he obtained from his excavations of the barrows), the greater number of

which were gathered from the surface of the Wold hills and the immediate neighbourhood. These the Canon sold in July, 1895, to Dr. Sturge, of Nice, and they are now in the south of France, to the great loss of East Yorkshire.

(4.) The late Frederick Porter, of Yedingham, had gathered together several hundreds of stone and flint tools, among which were some good specimens. He disposed of a portion of them, I believe, to the Rev. Canon Greenwell, but I do not remember what became of the others when he removed from Yedingham to Jersey in 1868.

(5.) The late Mr. Charles Monkman, of Malton, was for a considerable time an energetic collector. Some of his best specimens fell into the hands of the Rev. Canon Greenwell, and a few were obtained for the York Museum.

After his death, on April 13th, 1875, the remainder were quickly disposed of by his wife; but I am ignorant of their present whereabouts.

(6.) The late Charley Hartley, of Malton, obtained many specimens of both flint and stone implements from the same collecting ground. These, about the year 1875, he sold to the late Mr. William Robinson, of Houghton-le-Spring, near Durham, who had a large collection gathered from all parts.

Mr. Hartley afterwards made a second collection which, after his death on September 7th, 1883, was disposed of, and the best of these specimens were also bought by Mr. Robinson.

(7.) The late Rev. James Robertson, Curate-in-charge of Barton-le-Street, also for several years periodically visited the part of the Wolds from which I obtained my collection, and he procured a large number of pre-historic relics. Most of these, I have been told, he disposed of in 1876 to Mr. John Evans (now Sir John Evans), Nash Mills, Hemel Hampstead, and in 1877 my brother, the late Robert Mortimer, purchased the remaining portion of Mr. Robertson's collection for £25.

(8.) Mr. George Edson, also late of Malton, was a very careful and industrious collector of all kinds of specimens of

archæological interest, both as an agent to Canon Greenwell and on his own account. When leaving Malton he sold his collection by auction on May 8th, 1891, and many choice specimens were disposed of to various purchasers, a few going to the York and Malton Museums.

(9.) The late Thomas Allerson, of Norton, near Malton, was, like Mr. Edson, constantly being brought into contact with the farm servants and other field labourers when on his business journeys in this neighbourhood, most of whom had then become well skilled in distinguishing the value of different specimens. They were also quite ready to take advantage of the extra prices to be obtained from the rival purchasers then in the market. So keen was this competition at one time that to retain our hold of the market we distributed handbills, offering rewards, consisting of money and a free pass to the Leeds Exhibition in 1868, to those who would supply us with the greatest number of articles of various kinds. In 1873 Mr. Allerson had obtained a considerable number of pre-historic relics, which he then wished to sell, and he offered them to me. These I purchased of him, and they are now in the Museum at Driffield.

(10.) My friend Mr. Thomas Boynton, of Bridlington Quay, has a large and choice collection of stone, flint, and bronze weapons, of local origin; as well as a few from the south of England and other districts. He also possesses many very beautiful flint and chert arrow-heads and various instruments from America and other countries. He is frequently adding to his very fine collection, which should certainly be purchased to remain in East Yorkshire.

(11.) The late Rev. Thomas J. Monson, of Kirby Underdale, was merely one of Canon Greenwell's collecting friends in this neighbourhood, and after he had purchased a few specimens picked up by the farm servants he forwarded them to the Canon without having any further interest in the matter, or knowing more about them. The probability is that the district was not very much impoverished by his labours.

(12.) Mr. Robert Gatenby, of Bridlington, has obtained several hundreds of flint, stone, and bronze specimens, a few of which are very fine ones. He is still adding to the number.

(13.) Mr. Samuel Chadwick, late of Malton, who emigrated to New Zealand in 1895, was a very energetic collector of both fossils and implements. His business occupation brought him frequently among the farm labourers and quarrymen in the rural districts. This gave him exceptional opportunities for obtaining a considerable quantity of specimens, and for a considerable time he was my most active rival. That Mr. Chadwick made good use of these facilities the contents of the Malton Museum give ample proof. This fine and large collection, gathered almost entirely from the neighbourhood, also is sufficient evidence of his energy and knowledge as a diligent collector. Besides those placed in the Malton Museum he supplied many specimens to the York Museum, and a few to other places.

There were also a few minor collectors whose united labours have assisted to impoverish this neighbourhood.

For the last few years almost the only local collectors I have had to compete with are Mr. Thomas Boynton, Bridlington Quay; Mr. Robert Gatenby, Old Bridlington; and I may add Sir Tatton Sykes, Bart., of Sledmere.

COLLECTIONS FROM THE BARROWS.

Hitherto I have only referred to the collections of specimens which have been obtained from the surface of the land, or otherwise accidentally found.

In addition to these, four valuable collections of Ancient British and Anglo-Saxon relics have been obtained by excavating the barrows of this district.

(1.) The late Lord Londesborough explored a great number of barrows in this neighbourhood during a period of ten years, ranging from 1842 to 1852, and the principal of the articles he then discovered were placed in his museum at Grimston. After his lordship's death, when the house and estate at Grimston

were sold (about 1872), the contents of the museum were dispersed. Afterwards (in 1888), a portion of the relics were sold by auction by Messrs. Christie, Manson & Wood, at their rooms, King Street, St. James', London.

Of the present whereabouts of this large collection (excepting a small portion, including some rare specimens from a barrow at Kelleythorpe, near Driffield, which at the above sale found its way to the British Museum) I know nothing. I fear, however, that the whole of it is lost to East Yorkshire.

(2.) The late James Silbourn, of Pocklington, during the years 1851-2 opened several of the barrows in the neighbourhood of Huggate and Warter. Since then I have reopened nearly the whole of these particular barrows, as I could not distinguish before excavating which of them had been opened by Mr. Silbourn. I found that he had placed a strip of lead on which his name was stamped in several of the barrows he had opened.

In the spring of 1852 Mr. Silbourn, during an exploration in stormy weather, took cold, which brought on inflammation, and so caused his death. After this regrettable circumstance the pottery and many other relics he had obtained from the barrows were sold by his relations, and, like the previously-named collection, their fate is unknown to me, excepting—as in the previous instance—a very small portion, which is now in the British Museum.

(3.) The Rev. Canon Greenwell, of Durham, during a period of 30 years (1864-1894) excavated upwards of 300 barrows on the chalk wolds, immediately adjoining my field of research. An account of the greater number of these he published in his work on "British Barrows" (1877). The illustrations and descriptions in this very valuable book clearly indicate what a large treasure of relics was then obtained. That all these have been placed in the British Museum, and are now entirely lost to East Yorkshire, their legitimate home, is, I think, much to be regretted.

(4.) And lastly, I have myself explored nearly the whole of a series of the Wold barrows on an area of about 80 square

miles, between 1864 and the present time. That I have safely preserved the relics discovered during these researches the contents of the museum at Driffield will testify. I also possess about 1,000 drawings * which my daughter has made for me, of all the objects of interest which I have discovered; and I have in addition a full type-written description of the results of all my excavations.

And I may say that the procuring and arranging of this collection has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life.

That this collection should belong to and remain in the district has been and is my great and constant desire. Unfortunately, however, I cannot afford to offer it as a free gift; but, to prove my great anxiety for its remaining in the neighbourhood, I have offered it to the East Riding County Council at half its value.

Probably such a transaction by a County Council might seem to be a little in advance of the times; nevertheless, a time will come when such a thing will be done, and if the East Riding County Council accept this offer they will never regret being one of the pioneers in such an advanced and enlightened step.

From the memoranda I have just given it is sad to observe that of all the collectors I have referred to, including myself, only six are now living. It is also to be lamented that of the fourteen collections named only four remain in the neighbourhood, these being in the Driffield and the Malton Museums respectively, and those belonging to Mr. Thomas Boynton and Mr. Robert Gatenby. Of the other ten, nine are mainly absorbed by public and private museums in distant parts of the country, or have otherwise disappeared; whilst a great portion of one (the most important of the ten) has been removed so far as the South of France.

It is still more to be regretted that three of the most valuable collections of the four named explorers of the barrows

* Some of these were exhibited when the paper was read.

(viz., that of the late Lord Londesborough, the Rev. Canon Greenwell, and the late James Silbourn) have been dispersed and are lost to their native East Yorkshire.

Such, unfortunately, must be the fate of all private collections, if not permanently fixed during the life of their original owner, as it far too frequently happens that that which one generation gathers the next generation scatters.

I have said "more to be regretted" because it is possible that some future collector might obtain a small collection of specimens from the surface of the land, but to make another collection from the barrows of this district would be quite an impossibility, as they are practically exhausted.

From these lamentable facts it is evident that the neighbourhood has been deprived of a great number of its precious relics, which were a valuable legacy left by our ancient forefathers, and by right should have remained and belonged to the present and all future occupants of the district.

These valuable remains are almost the only reliable records of the customs and mode of living of our remote ancestors. They are the fossil history of the district, and they must always be of the greatest interest to the neighbourhood in which they have been found. It is, therefore, our bounden duty to provide, as far as possible, for their safe keeping in the district. Nevertheless, I have shown that, unfortunately, during the last thirty-five years this district has been immensely impoverished of its archaeological treasures. And it is much to be regretted that even at the present time the tendency is to favour the removal to distant collections any relics which are found in this neighbourhood, rather than assist to retain them in the district to which they belong by inheritance. Such instances have recently come under my notice.

At present, only three of all the eighteen collections I have referred to, viz., fourteen consisting of specimens obtained from the surface of the land, and four from the excavations of the barrows, remain in East Yorkshire.

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Surely the East Riding possesses some governing body that, before it is too late, will see the wisdom of permanently possessing these, and handing them down to future governing bodies as a source of education and a treasure of permanent value to the district. When this is accomplished, and it is known that this collection belongs for ever to the district, it will be a centre of donations of relics found in and belonging to the neighbourhood (rather than the specimens be sent to distant collections, where they can only be of minor value), and in time it ought to and will become a large and very valuable possession.