Tarrs ? a hill
Shobdon Rock
Bonemill

The History of Kingsland.

The British Isles had a well developed river-system before the oncoming of the ice sheets of the Great Ice Age, and the effect of glaciation was to modify rather than to change completely the existing valleys and land forms.

This bears out the contention of archaeologists that originally Lugg was a much bigger river, and that it then ran in a more or less straight line from Leintwardine to Aymestrey, quite near Wigmore. In the Ice Age a huge glacier travelled across country through Shobdon, and when it reached Mortimer's Cross an enormous tongue of ice curled round up the Aymestrey Valley, forming a large lake at Wigmore, and completely damming Lugg there when the thaw eventually came. This changed the course of the river higher up, and caused it to split in two, when half of it came down as it does now through Presteigne, Kinsham and Lyepole, the other half being diverted through the Downton Valley to Ludlow, forming what is now known as the river Teme. That glaciers were here cannot be disputed, for high up on the sides of the Tarrs stones could be seen a few years ago, bearing undoubted glacier striations, marks deeply scored on their surface as other stones were dragged across them by the movement of the upper part of the ice, as pressure compelled the glacier to move forward.

There is then an enormous gap in history, while the receding ice and snow were replaced by warmer conditions and life became possible. The period of the first colonisation of this district would probably be about 2000 years before the birth of Christ, when the Celts began to invade England from the Rhinelands, or what is now known as Germany.

Many animal and bird call-words came over with them, after travelling across France, where they are still in use. These call-words were widely used by the Saxons, and many of them are quite common inKKingsland to-day.

There is now a lapse in local history of another 2000 years, when traces of the inhabitants, the early Britons, can be found everywhere around here. Ambrosius and Caractacus left fortifications behind them, Croft Ambury being named after the former leader. The one at Wapley, near Shobdon must have been particularly strong, as the camp lay upon the top of a hill, flattened there with an area of about 25 acres, much too steep to be attacked on the Presteigne side, and defended on the Shobdon side by triple high ramparts and deep ditches, the only entrance being through one narrow gateway. Water was of course the chief requisite, and although the camp lay at an elevation of 1000 feet, springs supplied a deep well which can be seen and used to-day.

The Romans next occupied Herefordshire, and had military stations at Kenchester and Leintwardine. The former, till then under a corn field, was laid bare some years ago, the whole site exposed, and the many objects of interest unearthed were deposited in the Hereford Museum. The small amount of money needed to purchase the field was not forthcoming, and eventually the site was ploughed over and corn grown there again.

The Romans evidently made considerable use of this district, as their road, Watling Street, ran through Stretford, Street Court, over Pinsley (where the remains of their ford can still be seen), along Hereford Lane, and up through Aymestrey to Leintwardine. Civilians, foot soldiers and chariots must oft often have passed along Hereford Lane in order to link up with the military road to Shrewsbury and the North. Street Court is undoubtedly built upon Roman foundations, and at one time the remains of a hypocaust could be

seen in the cellars, the early central heating system.

After another big gap in history, one comes to Saxon times, when there was certainly a church in Kingsland, practically upon the same spot as the one to-day. As there was a church, so there must have been a village round it, most of the dwellings being made of daub and wattle, and thatched with reeds. The district here was then much more wooded, and there was a good deal of bog and marsh. A glance at some of the field names in use to-day gives evidence of this, and the whole of the adjoining Wegnalls was just a morass; the word 'Leominster' itself is derived from pure Saxon, meaning the town in the marshes.

Merowald, king of West Mercia, was so keenly interested in Kingsland that when he endowed the Abbey of Nuns at Leominster upon its first foundation, he granted it with charges upon most of the surrounding parishes, with the specific exclusion however of Kingsland. It is very doubtful however if he ever built a castle upon the mound in front of the Rectory, and he certainly was not buried there as this took place in Wohlock Abbey, which he had also founded.

There is little doubt that this mound is the site of a strong Saxon stockade. When danger threatened, as often happened being so near the Welsh border, the able bodied defenders, after driving their stock into the outer enclosure, themselves retired to the inner one which probably contained earth works. The two moats, at that time being much broader and deeper, were flooded from the adjacent Prill, and the villagers armed with bows and arrows would be in a quite defensive position. Probably the women and children shut themselves up in the church until the invaders had been driven off, as this was the usual custom at that time.

Fifty years ago many of the dialect words used locally were pure Saxon, but the tendency to-day unfortunately is to replace these with words which have a Latin derivation, and in another 50 years the old-fashioned colourful expressions will have completely vanished.

It is worth mentioning here that a few years ago a curiously hollowed-out stone was found amongst shingle under the Tarrs, and submitted to the British Museum for identification. They reported that it was a miniature Saxon mortar for grinding corn, and it was eventually offered to and accepted by the museum in Hereford.

Another item of Saxon interest was that on the topmost ridge of the Tarrs, there used to stand a tall upright stone called locally "The Warrior's Grave", which tradition ascribed to be the resting place of one of the important leaders at that time. No more of it than this was ever discovered, and later, when oak trees were being felled up there, a saw pit was dug near the stone, and when the work was completed the men finally amused themselves by uprooting it, and throwing it into the pit. Even then it still projected three feet from the surrounding turf, but as the whole area has now been ploughed over, it is completely buried out of sight.

A further long unfilled gap brings us to the year 1461, probably the most eventful period in the history of this parish and district. Before entering upon the battle of Mortimer's Cross, it may be helpful here to throw some light upon local conditions.

The houses, just as in Saxon times, had timber frameworks, the squares being filled with osiers, willows or nut rods, the whole then being plastered over both inside and outside, pretty much as one can see still in Wigmore Abbey. Black Hall at Aston is a good example of the architecture at that date, and is particularly interesting in that it is the only house in the parish that was standing when the battle was fought. The country

round was still heavily wooded, and there was still a good deal of marsh which probably would not be drained for another 200 or 300 years. If one doubts this, consider how it took a major war in 1914 to cause the draining and cultivation of hundreds of acres of marsh land between Brock Bridge and Pembridge land which from Saxon times had produced nothing but sedges and bog weeds, and now produces good crops of wheat!

It is probable that even in this village there was much more timber around than there is now, and this seems to be borne out by the name of "Boar Field", or the field where swine were turned out to fatten on adjacent acorns.

The rivers ran pretty much as they do to-day, and it is interesting to note that in Domesday Book it is recorded that there was a mill above Lugg Bridge where the present one now stands.

One other fact, and an important one, is that from the end of the Aymestrey Valley nearly to Kingsland was one large plain called the Great West Field, and it was mainly up and down this plain that the battle of Mortimer's Cross was fought out one winter day in the February of 1461.

Many of the descriptions of the battle are rather confusing, as they wander over events outside local interest, and contain names of the attendant Earls, barons and knights which do not affect the main issue from our point of view. It is perhaps better therefore to give a more straightforward account, and to cut out everything that is not absolutely essential.

One may fix in mind only three persons therefore, Henry VI, who was governing the country, and governing it very badly; the Duke of York who lived in Ludlow Castle; and his son Edward of March who lived in Wigmore Castle.

The cause in the beginning of all the trouble was that the King was very ill, and for a time was quite insane. The Duke of York therefore was appointed Protector of the Realm, and ruled the country from London. Both he and his son at Wigmore are interesting to us, because they were descendants of the Mortimers, who rebuilt Kingsland Church. Many of the able bodied men in the village too must have been enrolled amongst the troops at Wigmore Castle.

The Duke had only been in London 12 months when the King recovered his sanity, or anyhow, his supporters who hated the Duke said he had, so the Protector was dismissed from his office, and returned to Ludlow Castle.

The Duke was annoyed at this, still more so at the way in which the country became mismanaged, and as he had a very strong claim to the crown through his mother, two years later he got together an army, largely composed of Herefordshire troops, fought against the King's forces at St. Albans, and drove them off the field in rout.

The Duke guessed that it would not be necessary to follow this up, and in this he was quite right, for the King, or perhaps one should say the court round him, re-appointed the Duke as Protector, and for the next 12 months all was well.

Court intrigues then culminated in further trouble, and again the Duke was dismissed. So once more he retired to Ludlow, and filled up the next three years with tournaments and pageants, both there and at Wigmore.

During this time the country was frightfully mismanaged, and there was so much dissatisfaction at the state of things, that the Duke marched an army into Staffordshire, and again defeated the Royalists.

This however was only a temporary success, for the King's advisers decided upon a counter-attack, gathered another army together, and marched to Ludlow.

The tide was now setting against the Duke, for one of his chief leaders, being haavily bribed, deserted to the enemy with a large number of troops. With the loss of such a large body of trained men theDDuke's forces retreated, his main leaders escaped abroad in panic, andtheir men were disbanded and returned to their homes.

The Royalists struck while the iron was hot, called Parliament together, and the whole of the Duke's leaders, including of course himself, were attainted.

Up to now the struggle had only been for the control of the government, but after the issue of this attainder it became a matter of life and death. Gradually the leaders returned from abroad, gathered more forces round them, andfought battles at various places with varying success. This culminated with a defeat in Yorkshire, where the Duke of York was killed, and in derision his head, surmounted by a paper crown, was nailed above the main gate in York.

The Royalist success was so great that it now only remained for them to crush the Duke's son, Edward of March who was still living in Wigmore Castle, in order to achieve a final victory; and all chances of rebellion would then be at an end.

Order were then given to the Royalist leaders to march into Herefordshire,to link up there with their allies from Wales, and for the combined army of about 12,000 men to march upon Wigmore and destroy the castle, after defeating and routing its defenders.

Things began to look very black for the Yorkists, as Edward of March had got together an army of 8,000 men, and knowing nothing of the impending trouble from Wales, had started to go north, to avenge the death of his father

Luckily he was warned just in time, turned back through Orleton and Lucton, forded Lugg which was in full flood from melting snow, and pitched his camp directly his men had crossed the river. All along the flooded bank wet and wearyysoldiers built their fires, andfortunately had two days' rest before Edward was informed that the enemy had reached Presteigne.

Edward, though only 20 years of age, was already a skilful leader, and when the Royalists and Welshmen began to make their appearance over the hill in a line with Shobdon Rock, they found instead of an empty plain, no fewer than 8,000 trained troops to meet them. These troops were gathered entirely from the counties of Hereford, Gloucester, Radnor and Shropshire, and had long been inured to war.

The knights andtheir squires fought with sword, lance, mace and battle axe; but the foot soldiers depended entirely upon the pike, and the popular brown bill. This latter was a horrible weapon, something like a modern hedge-slasher, but with a sharp point, and with double razor edges from which projected two ot three sharp spikes. The archers of course mainly used the long bow, and though the knights were replacing chain mail with armour of tempered steel, yet the long bow at 250 yards could pierce a mailed knight through breast and back, or nail both his thighs to his horse at one shot.

Early on the morning of Candlemass Day, 1461, the young Earl split his army into three groups. Hisright wing was in front of the valley running up to Covenhope; his centre occupied the ground defending the Aymestrey Valley; andhisleft wing was in front of and parallellwith the river Lugg.

So the sun rose over Kingsland on that fateful morning, shining dimly through a mist over ground covered with snow, soon to be turned from white to red. As sometimes does appear under these conditions, a mirage of three suns shone through the mist, finally merging into one, and Edward seized upon this as a good omen to hearten his troops, andit waspassed from rank to rank that the Duke's three sons would be victorious on the battle-field, andthat the combination foreshadowed the crowning of Edward of March as the future King of England.

Having disposed of his forces as already explained, Edward pitched his tent near Bluemantle Cottages, which afterwards obtained their name from the fact that from that spot Edward sent a Bluemantle Herald to offer to decide the battle by single combat with the Royalist leader, as he was anxious to spare histroops the slaughter which he knew could not otherwise be avoided. The offer was scornfully rejected, and at 9 o'clock in the morning the Royalists attacked all along the line.

An interesting thing then happened which it is quite possible historians may have misunderstood. We are told that the Royalists attacked Edward's centre so furiously that they drove his forces up the valley to Aymestrey, andthen nearly to Wigmore, and explain that as this took a considerable time to accomplish, they overshot the mark, exhausted themselves in the pursuit, and were badly cut up when they tried to rejoin the main army below.

But consider the matter from another angle: Edward was, as has already been explained, a trained and skilful leader, and it is much more likely that he laid a trap for the Royalists, retiring slowly up the Aymestrey Valley to lead his enemies to destruction! Anyhow that was what happened, for

forcing their way back to Bluemantle again, they not only had Edward's troops harrying their rear, but found that he had posted archers behind and all along the banks of Lugg, and also along the high ground parallel with the present road; the thousands of arrows streaking across the valley from both sides must have done a fearful amount of damage.

When this disorganised force at last emerged upon the plain below, they found to their dismay that their own troops there were in retreat, andthey had great difficulty in linking up with them again, and in inducing them to attack once more. For a time they succeeded, but about an hour before sunset broke once more, this time finally, and Edward's forces drove the enemy right off the field. There is little doubt that the over-impetuous charge of the Royalists up the Aymestrey Valley contributed very largely to the final result, for in the beginning they had heavily out-numbered the Yorkists.

The leader of the Welsh troops had retreated long before, and was chased into Kingsland, where to complete his misfortunes he ran into an armed party of Yorkists from Leominster, and wascompelled to surrender

It is worth stopping for a moment to contrast the morning and evening scenes.

The sun rose over Bluemantle with thousands of troops facing each other, with the colour and glitter from pennone and weapons, with the fanfares of trumpets and everything that made war romantic. Then the sun sets over Shobdon hills, and its failing light shines upon a stricken field; small bodies of Royalists still being attacked and killed or taken prisoner; and the ground strewn with dead and dying men.

A good many of the Royalists were driven into the Shobdon marshes, and perished there, others gained temporary security in the woods round Kington and Presteigne, but 4,000 Royalists were known to have been slain, and the total number left dead on the field cannot have been fewer than 6,000.

They were probably buried in long deep pits where they lay, and if the plough could delve deep enough, it would even now turn up all sorts of implements of war and strange objects.

The gates of London were now opened to Edward as the result of this victory, and within a month he was proclaimed King, and crowned as Edward IV.

Quite naturally he always had a great affection for Herefordshire,and his banner bearing the device of three golden suns on a blue field waved above his troops in battle. The badge of his retainers too was a rose-en-soleil, a white rose surrounding a golden sun, thus perpetuating the conditions when the battle opened.

Edward had still one more battle to fight, but that of Mortimer's Cross - and it must always be remembered that Edward was a Mortimer - was the deciding factor in the long struggle between the adherents of the white rose and the red, andpeace at last descended upon a country which had been torn asunder by civil strife over a period of 30 years.

An appropriate requiem may still be read in Dinmore Church:

"The knights are dust, their swords are rust,
Their souls are with the saints we trust."

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Nothing more is known of Kingsland until the year 1553, when they supported the interests of Princess Mary against those of Lady Jane Grey.

The Catholic party had collected a formidable army round Leominster, and the Kingsland and Pembridge troops were commanded by Streete of Streete Court. In the end the protestant party all capitulated, amongst them being Sir James Croft of Croft Castle, and John Harley, bishop of Hereford.

Mary thought that this had been of such vast importance to her cause, that she granted extensive privileges to Leominster, andconferred the honour of knighthood upon Streete.

In later reigns the only known item of interest is that after the battle of Worcester in 1651, Charles II got as far as Leominster, slept there, and then passed through Kingsland on his way to Presteigne. On his way there however, he discovered that he was being pursued, changed his route, and eventually crossed the Shropshire border.

The next gap in Kingsland history brings us to somewhere about 1700, when things of interest had been passed on to children and grand children, enabling us to give to-day manyauthentic customs of the past.

The worst feature of this district at that time was the state of the roads. The oldcoaching road from London to Aberystwyth, which passed through Kingsland, was kept in rough repair, but elsewhere the surfaces were often just deep ruts, filled with water all through winter. From time to time these ruts were filled with mud and rubble, while the worst places actually had faggots trampled into them. It is on record that the Lord of the Manor, travelling from Shobdon to Leominster in his coach drawn by four or six horses, often had to be extricated by a team hastily borrowed from a neighbouring farm.

In 1827 however, Macadam succeeded in bringing into general use a system of mending roads with broken stone, and of making their surfaces convex instead of concave.

In order to pay for this enormous expense toll gates were installed at about two-mile intervals. These with a cottage at one side completely barred the way, and beasts or vehicles had to pay a fee to the man who controlled the gates, before he open-them, and allowed them to pass. The toll gate in Kingsland was on a waste piece of ground about 200 yards north of the railway station, the next one to the south being at Arrow Green, and to the west near Mortimer's Cross. Fortunately there is arecord of a tablet which was affixed to the front of the toll gate here, and it bore the following inscription:

Tolls payable at this Gate...

For every horse or other beast drawing any coach, landau, chaise, chariot, chair or hearse	3d.
For ditto drawing any carriage with narrower wheels than 6 inches, (except as above).	4d.
For ditto drawing any carriage with 6 inch wheels	3d.
For ditto drawing any carriage with 9 inch wheels (not rolling a surface of 16 inches each side	2d.
For ditto drawing any carriage with 16 inch wheels, or 9 inch wheels rolling a surface of 16 inches on both sides	1½d.
For every pair of mill stones	2/6.
For every horse, mare, mule or ass, not drawing	1d.
For every cow, bull or ox	½d.
For every calf, sheep or ~~dog~~ Hog	½d.

N.B. Double Toll on Sunday.

The old coaching road, after leaving Leominster, came through Cobnash, over Pinsley at the railway station, and along Hereford Lane to Mortimer's Cross. There was a regular service from Aberystwyth to London through Leominster, the distance being about 214 miles; after leaving the latter town the journey to London took about 24 hours.

Later still, when turnpikes were done away with, Heaps of stone from Cleo Hill used to be distributed along the side of the road at short intervals. These were broken up with light hammers and spread over the road in wheel barrows. This happened every autumn, and the stone lay there until the traffic rolled it in, and nobody travelled without an implement for picking out the loose stones that so constantly got lodged in a horse's shoe.

As far back as the reign of Charles II attempts had been made to make the navigation of the river Lugg ~~navigable~~, and further attempts were made in the reign of William III and again in 1774, but for various reasons each scheme fell through. In 1791 an Act of Parliament was passed, empowering the raising of £150,000, and this sum was actually subscribed publicly.

The idea was to run a canal from Kington to Staunton-on-Arrow, Kingsland, Leominster, Putnal Field near Orleton, and eventually joining the Severn near Stourport, as this would have opened up a route by which the Midlands collieries could have sent coal easily and cheaply to the whole of this County.

Work was started in Kingsland from Dry Bridge nearly to the Boar Field, and the excavations must have taken quite a long time. Another gang of men prepared the stone foundation which may still be seen at low water about 400 yards below Lugg Bridge.

At the same time the Orleton excavations were also being dug, and the chief trouble arose there. The unforeseen difficulties at that end were so serious that the whole scheme was finally abandoned after no less than £70,000 had been expended, with the whole scheme not nearly half completed.

From the top of the Tarrs one could have seen all this work in progress, and as it has now been ploughed over, it is worth recording that quite near the Warrior's Grave, which has already been described, there used to be a bastion about 30 yards long, with side wings protecting it for about the same distance. Tradition says nothing about this, andthere was no means of ascertaining either its purpose or its date.

Tradition does however state that Kingsland Church was built from stone quarried on the Tarrs. There certainly were extensive quarries from which quantities of stone must have been taken, and at one time the road to the necessary ford could clearly be seen. Vehicles carrying stone through the river then passed along an old road which still exists, and which joins the main road to the village by the side of the Bone Mill.

This house has been standing in its present condition about 200 years, but is probably standing upon the site of a still older one. About 50 years ago a curious thing happened in connection with it.

In the living room there was an old oak mantelpiece, in the middle of which was a carved dog's head. One day a slip of paper could be seen protruding from the dog's mouth, (possibly an extra hot fire had warped the woodwork slightly), and when this was pulled out, with it there came half a dozen copper coins. Upon inspection the whole of the interior of the head was found to be packed with copper coins, all of them dated between the years 1750 and 1790.

For more than 300 years Kingsland had a weekly market and an annual fair, and evidently occupied an important position in connection with the surrounding villages, none of which enjoyed a similar right.

This originally was granted by Margaret the widow of Lord Mortimer in a charter,the weekly market being every Saturday, and the fair being held upon the Feast of St.Michael in a large meadow to the east of theChurch, and which to this day is still called Fairfield.

All animals sent to the fair were liable for tolls to the Lord of the Manor, and wardens were appointed to collect these tolls. These wardens occupied cottages at the principal approaches to the village on the north and south, one being called the Upper Wardens and the other the Lower Wardens. The Upper Wardens was enlarged many years ago and is still known by that name. The lower cottage is probably still standing, but its name as such has long vanished.

When popular people were married the village shewed its approval in no uncertain manner. Upon leaving the Church porch they were greeted with showers of rice, and this anyhow did have a meaning, and was quickly disposed of by the birds afterwards; which is more than can be said of the modern custom of throwing confetti, which makes a horrid mess in thechurchyard until the rain washes it away.

The bells used to peal merrily, and a special salute used to take place called Firing the Anvil. At that time, opposite the entrance to the school, was situated an old-standing carpenter's shop, which for some years specialized in turning out farm waggons; these were very solid and handsome pieces of work, and were eagerly sought for all over the County.

On these festive occasions a heavy anvil used to be dragged out from the smithy department, and planted on the ground at the entrance to the main road. The next procedure was to fill the large hole in the centre of the anvil with gunpowder, andplug this in with a piece of wood which had a hole drilled through its centre. The master now appeared carrying a long iron rod heated red-hot, and upon the being applied to the wooden plug, primed of course with more gunpowder, a most satisfying bang was procured, and these salutes went on at intervals all the afternoon.

Farming a century ago was carried on without much machinery. Corn was reaped with sickles and hooks, and much of it threshed afterwards by flails. One of the stock amusements was to hand a flail to someone who had never used one, and to ask him to lend a hand for a few minutes. Practically always the result was that within a matter of seconds he caught himself a terrific blow on the side of his head.

Workmen were paid small wages, but were allowed a free cottage, andgenerally kept a pig, much of its food being obtained from the farm itself. The wife too put in useful time gleaning after the corn wascutt, and she and the children made pocket money picking hops in the autumn, every sizable farm in the neighbourhood then being compelled under agreement with the landlord to grow hops upon a proportionate acreage: in fact there was not a farm in Kingsland that did not grow them.

A popular custom and amusement was to fine any stranger who entered the hop-yard, andthis was used to provide more cider. If the stranger objected, as often happened, he was deposited in one of the cribs after the hops had been empted out, and was promptly kissed by the oldest and ugliest woman there. This always brought them to their senses, and they never made the same mistake again.

All the farms, and many other houses too, used to make their own cider, and this was one of the perquisites of the farm-hand. The cider was carried in little oak barrels, called locally 'bottles', andthese generally held about 1 gallon; but they varied in size, andfor some unknown reason a woman's bottle was much smaller, and rarely held more than one-third of the quantity allowed for a man. Most of these were made in Kingsland, for in the middle of the village was a cooper, who made barrels of all sizes for farmers in the neighbourhood.

In order to produce cider, the apples were first of all thrown into a deep circular stone trough, and aheavy mill-stone was revolved round this by means of a horse harnessed to the framework of the stone. The crushed fruit was then spread thickly between what they called 'hairs', smdllayers of these thick blankets were placed on top of each other in a large press; thid arrangement not only produced the necessary juice, but also kept back the solid matter, and filtered it at the same time. The refuse wasthen thrown out, and fermented, the result being that when the pigs began to feed upon it they became quite drunk, and staggered about until they could sleep it off. On one occasion at Cobnash still worse happened, for the ducks discovered some of this heavily fermenting refuse,(called locally 'must'), and greedily gobbling down quantities of their fortunate find, soon became so badly affected that they one and all collapsed in the snow. When the good housewife discovered this she thought that some unknown cause had killed off the whole flock, and being a careful soul decided to take them in to the kitchen fire,ppluck them, andprepare them in readiness for the next Leominster market.

The hard frost outside had been partly responsible for the birds' collapse, and they soon began to struggle when they felt warmth begin to permeate their chilled bodies. That placed the housewife in an awkward position, for she had already completely plucked several of the ducks, and they would not survive if they were turned out into severe frost in that condition, so she set to work with her needle, and provided all the unfortunate ones with scarlet flannel coats, and these remained on them until the thaw came and their feathers began to grow again. It provided a new amusement for the village to wander down to Cobnash, and watch a flock of scarlet-jacketed ducks solemnly parading about the farm yard.

The popular over-garment for the farm worker was the smock frock. This was mostly made of flax, and was both warm and rain proof. Many of them were elaborately hand worked, the shoulder pieces shewing hours of labour producing designs in feather-stitching. As in most things in those days, great pride was taken in work that was turned out, mass production being fortunately a thing of the future.

Most cottages kept bees in the old-fashioned straw skeps, and some of them still made mead from the honey, just as their Saxon ancestors had done. In case of a death in the family, someone had to go to the hives and tell the bees what had happened; it was firmly believed that if this was not done, the whole of the bees would promptly leave the hive. It was a common belief too that in the event of a swarm emerging, they would soon settle if they heard what used to be called 'rough music', and that then, no matter where they had alighted, the owner had a right to follow them up, and to capture the swarm. Constantly in summer one would hear a frightful din in the distance, and presently would appear the owner of the bees with all the available family, beating upon pots and pans with pokers or any other thing that would produce a n

produce a noise, and the neighbouring cottagers all intensely interested in all that was happening.

On the glebe land adjoining the Rectory used to stand the old Tithe Barn, though it is not known exactly where it was, neither is it known why or when it was taken down. The padlock used by the Rector came to light some years ago: one of the first Brahmas ever made, and dated 1717. It was made of solid brass, and weighed no less than 2½lbs., and with its curiously constructed key was quite unpickable. Two unusual features were that after it was locked and the key withdrawn, there was a special place for the Rector to affix his seal, to prevent any attempt at tampering with it, and at the bottom was an outlet provided for any rain that might collect in the lock. This padlock was presented to the Hereford Museum a short time ago, and is still on view in one of their glass cases.

On the sward close by the village pound, the remains of which can still be seen as the church is approached from the main road, stood the stocks. Unfortunately these were destroyed many years ago, and old offenders must have been very delighted to see rooted up the instrument where he had so often been encased, and if an unpopular man pelted with all kinds of unsavoury objects.

Like most villages in the County Kingsland possessed its Preaching Cross, the damaged shaft of which is still standing on the south side of the church. In the year 1641 a wave of extreme puritanism culminated in an order by Parliament for the destruction of all church crosses. The responsibility for the execution of this order was given to Sir Robert Harley of Brampton Bryan, and as he was the chief commissioner appointed for the carrying out of this work over the whole country, it is hardly surprising that in his own County every cross except two were badly mutilated; those two may still be seen intact at Bosbury and

the churchyards of Bosbury and Sellack, quite intact. Theffmmer was allowed to remain because the Rector agreed to have a special inscription cut on the cross which satisfied the religious scruples of the Puritans; and at Sellack the Vicar entertained with such hospitality - most of it probably liquid - that the soldiers sent to mutilate wnnt away, andforgot all about it.

Many of these crosses were replaced long afterwards, but those are the only two original ones in the County.

A custom that has died out in recent years was the giving of information to the village in general when the bell was tolled for a death. The sexton first of all gave information as to the sex of the person who had died, three strokes for a child, four for a woman and five for a man. The age was then rung out, andthis enabled the inhabitants to realise for whom the bell was being tolled. With a smaller self-contained population the neighbours took a greater interest in their fellows than they do to-day.

Until recent years the annual event when the Oddfellows met to go to church, parade the village, and afterwards have a dinner used to be much looked forward to by members, and indeed by all the parishioners too. They assembled in the centre of the village, mostly dressed in sober black; but when they reappeared from their dressing room each man wore alarge gaudy sash, nearly a foot in breadth, draped over one shoulder, with its fringed end reaching far below the waist.A tall white wand was carried too, and when they went in to dine, these were raised to make an imposing archway under which they all marched in turn, until the whole gathering had dispersed.

At the head of the procession formed to go to church was a huge silk banner on two poles, occupying nearly the width of the road; this, painted in oils, depicted the Good Samaritan, andbehind it they marched two deep to the annual Service.

As the normal meal at that time consisted of bread and cheese and cider, quaint things sometimes happened when the men found such afeast of unusual dishes of different kinds on the table before them. In the meat course one old fellow helped himself liberally to calves foot jelly, and smothered his hot roast beef with it; and later on, another one asked for 'some of that ere pudden with the pegs in it', andthough he thoroughly appreciated the trifle and the sherry with which it was saturated, he took no chances with what he thought were wooden pegs, but carefully laid all the almonds on one side of his plate!

Speeches and drinks filled up the rest of the day, andthen the regalia was laid away for another twelve months.

Until fairly recent years thatching was still an active trade, and a skilled man was always assured of plenty of work. Thatch of course had its advantages, in that it was a warm covering in winter and acool one in summer; but it had its drawbacks if anything set on fire. On one occasion about 1850 a fire broke out in the centre of the village, and the curious sight might be seen of a small gang of men seated on the ridge of a near-by thatched range of buildings, each man with a wet sack in his hands, and by this means as each spark flew across it was promptly extinguished and the building saved.

Kingsland has always been fortunate in its water supply, for with the rivers Lugg and Pinsley actually in the village, and Arrow little more than a mile away, water appeared at a depth of only nine or ten feet, and the quantity of sand through which it had passed acted as a perfect filter bed.

Originally all three riverss bore names bestowed upon them by theearly Britons: Lugg was called the Lug-ury, meaning bright clear water; Arrow was Aarwy, a stream subject to floods; and Pnsley was the Pensilley, the meaning of which has been lost.

In one old book of reference the theory was put forward that the early Britons called this little stream Pen-syllyr, meaning a confined river in a wide open space, andthere may besomething in this, but the derivation is not as easy to trace as it is in the case of Lugg and Arrow.

Pinsley rises in Shobdon Marshes, part of which are in this parish. and at the edge of a wood which is called Marsh Cover. Considerable springs bubble up there into two small ponds called Lady Pools. These are not more than 20 feet across, and are filled with clear water resting on what almost looks like a silvery-white sand, but of incredible depth, tradition saying that they are bottomless; as a matter of fact this sand is really very thin peat held in suspension, and although apparently solid, is frightfully treacherous.

As men were at work near-by it was one day decided to try to ascertain its depth, the result being that a heavy stone attached to a waggon rope disappeared out of sight, and when asecond rope was bent on to the first one, that disappeared too. As each of these ropes was 60 feet in length, one can imagine the plight of man or beast happening to blunder into one of these little pools in the dark.

There was one further thing of interest in connection with this marsh, as there was always atradition that a man and his wife used to live there, his hovel being in the middle of the bog, which was quite impenetrable in winter. He went by the name of Dick of the Delf, and maintained his family by keeping acouw and one or two sheep and pigs on the edge of the marsh, and probably very extensive poaching. The shack itself was supposed to be approached by a narrow path very difficult for anyone else to find.

After the experiment had been made with the Lady Pools, it was decided, as it had been a dry season and the marsh was partly drained, to find out if there was any truth in this tradition. At last, in the very worst part of the once boggy portion, the remains were discovered of what had been a solidly built hovel, for a quantity of stones were lying all around, and here and there a path could still be discerned, with stones paving it embedded in the mud.

This seemed to confirm the almost forgotten legend, andit was evidently all that was left of Dick's hut that now lay scattered on the peat.

Much of this land belonged to Street Court, and an old resident recalled the fact that about 100 years ago it was for a time a flourishing school, and by all accounts a very rough one, as indeed many schools were.

A popular amusement for the bigger boys was to procure a large old-fashioned door key,and to bore a small hole into the barrel from the top, thus turning it into a miniature cannon. Having done this a small charge of gunpowder was rammed home, and a few ears of corn or poppy seeds which would sting, but not cause any real damage. The weapon was then tied to a gate or railings, an unfortunate youth attracted within range, and a lighted match did the rest.

Amongst the other old customs that have completely died out are visits from house to house of Morris Dancers and the village hand-bells, the carrying round of a maypole on May 1st, and the observation of Oak Apple Day.

Morris dancing has been revived of late years, the only difference being that all the men taking part used to go round the villages with black faces, andthis always seemed to put a final touch to the performance, in addition to scaring the younger children.

Generally at Christmas too, a small picked team of men used to go round from house to house playing tunes on a very melodious set of hand-bells. These were lost sight of for some years, but it is understood that lately they have been presented to the village, so it is hoped that this custom may also be revived in the near future.

The carrying round of Maypoles on May 1st has quite died out. This was no mere bush, as was often used in other counties, but a good-sized young birch tree, with its branches covered with all kinds of coloured silks and ribbons to make a brave show. this was taken from house to house, people roused from their beds upon hearing the little may-song under their windows, and the youngsters going happily away with the coppers flung out in response.

Kingsland has always been a village that sided with the Royalists,(with the one exception of their having favoured the cause of Edward of March, in the battle of Mortimer's Cross), and on May 29th, the birthday of Charles II, every man woman and child used to wear a sprig of oak in remembrance. He had not only been saved by hidingiin an oak tree at Boscobel after the battle of Worcester, but eventually he returned to England on his birthday. Until quite recent times a sprig of oak was still commonly worn, and if possible, one with an oak-apple attached to it.

A custom that has for more than 200 years been of great value to the village, has been its right to send a small proportion of boys from the local school to Lucton School to finish their education. At that time each boy was provided with uniform consisting of cord trousers, a strong brown jacket faced with the necessary buttons in brass, and embossed with the school coat of arms, and acapp with similar buttons on its flaps.

These Lucton scholarships carried other privileges too, for upon leaving there, each boy was apprenticed to a trade, and the required fee paid over to the master man who was going to teach him.

The privilege, in part anyhow, still remains, but the uniforms were abolished about 70 years ago.

Tradition says that John Pierrepoint, who founded and endowed Lucton School in 1708, was thrown from his gig and killed when coming down Shobdon Rock. It is said too that after this had happened the slope of the hill was considerably lessened, and certainly if one walks up the Rock, near the top can be seen a definite split in the strata which bears out the legend. If the bed of the road really waslowered, it must have been a very steep and dangerous hill before this was done.

One of the bad old customs in the previous century was the prevalence of poaching. There was always a certain amount of sympathy with poachers, for it was often felt that there was little harm in taking the wild animals and birds for the pot, and that the men taking part were, to some extent anyhow, sportsmen. It used to be quite a common thing to see a field spaced all over with small bushes; this was to prevent the dragging along the ground of nets to trap the sleeping partridges. The rivers too, were staked in places, to prevent netting for trout.

There used to be three trees which were pointed out to visitors with interest. The oldest of these was the Battle Oak, a pollarded tree near Bluemantle Cottage, and undoubtedly standing when the battle of Mortimer's Cross was fought. Tradition says that Edward of March pitched his tent near it, and that it was from there that he sent a herald to offer to decide the issue of the battle by single combat.

In a garden, in the middle of the village there used to be an unusually tall tree, 60 or 70 feet in height, resembling the Stone Pine of Italy. The branches had all been lopped off until the top was reached, and there the smooth slender stem bore aloft a huge head of thick dark foliage. It went by the name of the Village Mop, and was a landmark for miles around. It waseventually blown down in a strong westerly gale, cutting in half a range of buildings near-by, and as it so happened, the greater part of the tree landing in an adjoining carpenter's yard.

The third tree, the Holgate Oak is still standing, and is such accuriosity that its history is worth recording. These oak trees, and this of course applies to the Battle Oak too, are not mature until they reach the age of about 300 years, and from then on their life is indefinite, anything from 900 to 1200 years.

Standing on the edge of the road, it is now the actual entrance gate to the farm 200 yards away behind it. Somewhere about 1760 it was apparently a dying tree, the trunk a mere shell hollow to the ground, and the walls nowhere more than three inches in thickness. It wasdecided to cut openings at front and back,anduse the framework as a support for awicket gate,although the tree was so top heavy that it did not seem possible that it could stand up to many more gales.

It has been in its present condition for the last 200 years, and is no more decrepi now than it was when the gate was first fitted

Amongst the local superstitions,(some of them being decidedly unsavoury, such as the eating of a roasted mouse as a cure for whooping cough), was a curious one that was quite common fifty years ago.

The popular belief was that if some of the hair of a person suffering from a disease of the throat was affixed to an oak tree from which an ash was growing, a cure would inevitably follow.

As late even as 1907 there was such a tree growing in Oaker Wood, and quite a large surface of the bark was covered with human hair nailed to it. Not only were local people responsible for this, but upon enquiry it was discovered that many old inhabitants who had emigrated to the Colonies were in the habit of sending hair to the gamekeeper with an appropriate fee for his help in curing their disease.

In Scandinavian Mythology under certain circumstances the spreading roots of an ash tree possessed curative properties, and it is possible that the link between belief and practice arises here.

A still more interesting superstition arose from cock fighting, a common sport 100 years ago, but fortunately now abolished.

The belief wasthat if eggs taken from a game hen, carried up to the nest of a crow or other bird of prey,andwere there hatched out, the game cocks would be much better fighters. Such eggs were therefore artificially coloured to deceive the prospective foster parents, andthese were exchanged for any already in the nest.

The old saying about 'shewing the white feather' arises from cock fighting, for they were always supposed to be deficient in courage.if there was the slightest tinge of white on their bodies.

Until about the year 1877 a peculiar custom was observed at many of the farms in the village. On January 1st, in order to usher in the New Year, the farm workmen and boys used to meet together in one of the ploughed fields between 5 and six o'clock in the morning, or even sooner. They then tied some bundles of straw together on a high pole andhaving set the straw on fire, whilst it was in full blaze, the man carrying the pole used to run over 12 ridges of growing wheat, andthen stop on the thirteenth.

Should the straw cease to burn before the thirteenth ridge had been reached, it was condidered a bad omen for the final harvesting of the crop.

This custom, like the one about an ash tree growing from an oak, is probably derived from Scandinavian mythology, when the number 13 waselways condidered unlucky. The idea was confirmed by the Last Supper of Christ, but the superstition itself is much anterior to Christianity.

It is believed that Wassaling also took place in Kingsland, and as it was a common custom in Lordisland, it was almost certainly practised here also.

In the early part of 1700 oxen were widely used for ploughing, and during the 12 days of Christmas yokes were never put upon their necks; this was in commemoration of our Saviour's birth in an ox stall. Then upon the twelfth evening the farm workmen and the boys repaired to the stalls provided with a large cake and ale. In the centre of the cake was a hole, through which was placed the horn of one of the favourite oxen. If the beast became restive and dislodged it, provided it fell behind him the cake was said to belong to the boys; but if the cake was thrown to the ground in front of the ox, it then belonged to the bailiff! But in any case, whether thrown off or not, it was shared among all of them. Everybody's health was then drunk, and stanzas then recited and sung for the welfare of master, mistress and the family, and also for a fruitful harvest of corn and apples.

A foot-note describing this ancient custom, makes it quite clear that if the ox upon whose horn the cake was impaled did not speedily become restive, he was gently pricked with thetines of a hay fork to make him so!

Many of the one-time industries of Kingsland are with us no longer, and a short account of those that have vanished is well worth recording, for they all contributed to the former importance of the village.

Two millers used to grind corn for people who baked their own bread, a universal custom in practically every household until fairly recent years. A fore-runner of the mill above Lugg Bridge was doing the same thing for our Saxon ancestors in the eleventh century.

A shoe maker made and mended for miles around, and incidentally this man was the village constable, andhis truncheon and handcuffs were always proudly hanging on the wall in his cottage.

A coal merchant had a regular office at the railway station, andthis has only recently been done away with.

Near the same place was a cabinet maker, who turned out finished articles that are household treasures to-day in many parts of the County. Oneyconstantly comes across his furniture in elm, a wood that has a lovely grain when finished and polished.

The cooper has already been mentioned, and some of the little cider bottles that he used to make may still be seen hanging up in cottages. They were all made of oak, and with ordinary care were practically everlasting.

The tailor was a busy man who made all the clothing for the scholarship boys who who went from the village to Lucton School.

There were three or four thatchers, who were never short of work, some of which was most elaborately done, and a treat to look at, as the best thatching always is.

Our saddler did repair work for all the farms in the district, andoften got orders for sets of harness.

In the saddler's later days he varied his work by making footballs, and many of the leading league teams played matches with footballs that had been made in Kingsland. At one time he also became a postman, and one often heard his little post horn in the distance, as he gave notice to people that he was on his rounds and would shortly be passing their door.

And last, but not least, was an expert near Lugg Bridge who used to make trout and grayling flies. He constantly got orders from over-seas, and local fishermen were always keen to order from him andtbo find out what was most suitable for that month andfor each type of weather. A keen entomologist, he used to study the flies actually flying above the river, and then make up artificial ones to match them.

One relic of the past that has not been touched upon was the Amateur Dramatic Society. This was started in 1884, and for 25 years was a source of entertainment to people over a wide spread area.

Originally it was brought into being to provide funds for various local charities, but finally for several years it concentrated upon acquiring capital for the purchase of a fire engine.

A very large granary in a central position was lent permanently, and this was fitted up with stage, foot lights, and seating accommodation for between 300 and 400 people. Dressing rooms were provided, and a quantity of scenery gradually obtained, the drop scene actually being painted by a friend who had exhibited pictures in the Royal Academy.

This old granarywas for many years a centre of social activity in the village, as it was always gladly lent for concerts,dances and lectures, or any gathering likely to be useful or beneficial.

No account of parish life would be complete without touching upon humour, for in those simpler days a good joke would last a very long time for the villagers. As for instance the occasion when a good lady had decided that grey hair would be much more attractive if it became golden. Unfortunately her young nephews found and secured the precious bottle of dye, and next morning the large white barn-door cock belonging to the house was seen proudly parading the road, white no longer, but of burnished gold from head to tail.

But the three outstanding tales that are worth repeating, go back very much further than that, and two of them serve as illustrations of old-time customs.

Shooting parties more than 100 years ago used often to have elaborate picnic lunches, and drinks were much more freely consumed than they are to-day. On the occasion in question some of the young bloods had done themselves pretty well, and on their way to the stubble where they hoped to find more coveys of partridges, they passed a large hornets' nest hanging from a willow tree, and one of the guns promptly put a charge of shot into the nest.

The result can be imagined, but as it happened they were not far from the river, and dropping their equipment they were shortly to be seen up to their necks in water, and there they remained until the hornets had all drifted away. The pointers however did not get off so easily,and in spite of their thick coats they were so badly stung that they had to be taken home.

Guns in those days were all muzzle-loaded, and it was quite an undertaking to carry about the necessary powder flask,(made of copper), leather shot flask, wads and percussion caps: a much more complicated process than just carrying along a pocket full of cartridges.

The following incidents also took place on the banks of the river Lugg, some150 years ago, and passed down from father to son the joke never failed to raise appreciative grins whenever the tale was related.

In a field quite near Lugg Bridge the owner of a large farm was putting up a quantity of oak posts and rails, but after a time the workmen reported that these were steadily disappearing. Notices were put up about the thefts, and it was known that the matter was being discussed in the village, but each evening a few more posts and rails vanished.

This was an annoyance as well as an expense, so one day the farmer decided that he must take drastic measures to put an end to the thefts.

Accordingly he went down to the river early one morning, taking with him a large auger and a bag of gunpowder. Getting quickly to work he bored several holes in each post, inserted a good charge of powder, fitted and drove home a neat plug in each hole, and then departed home chuckling at the thoughts of what would probably happen in the near future.

Work was suspended for a time, but the posts still went on vanishing, and shortly afterwards the village had an unusual excitement: two cottage ovens were blown up, a kitchen copper was displaced, and a three-legged iron pot blown clean through a window. Everyone except the sufferers was highly delighted, and the culprits of course soon guessed what had happened, but they were quite helpless; and needless to say the fencing-ter- was completed without the loss of any more material. The last incident is authentic also, and has the added value of being descriptive of the times.

At onetime there was no bridge over Pinsley after the road passes the present railway station, only a broad shallow ford, through which wayfarers had to splash. Traffic tended to deepen the river bed, and after heavy rains there would be a considerable amount of water in the brook.

On the occasion in question a farmer from the Bone Mill had set off on the Friday to Leominster market, with his wife on the pillion behind. This was quite an event for both of them, and while the wife spent most of the time shopping and gossiping with friends and neighbours, he spent most of his time in 'The Oak' ,(stlled in those days 'The Royal Oak & Unicorn), yarning with old cronies, and drinking quarts of cider.

When they decided to set out for home he was, as local dialect then had it, a 'bit bomboly like', or in other words market-piert; but at last he managed to mount his steed, and when his wife had settled herself behind him, hanging on to all the pots and pans that she had bought in the market, off they cantered.

All went well until they came to the ford over Pinsley, which a heavy thunderstorm had made deeper than usual. The extra flood of water, added to the increased clattering of kitchen ware thumping against its ribs upset the horse, and it bucketed about a good deal, and nearly threw the man off. However he managed to quieten it down, got through safely, and eventually arrived home, and called out for the maid to lend a hand with the various purchases.

She soon appears, looking very puzzled indeed, and presently calls out "wy maister, were be the missus?". The farmer turned round in the saddle, scratches his head, tries to recover his wits, andthen blurts out "wy, dang my buttons, I thowt as I a heerd summut go gob l' the bruk".