Leicester Daily Post
Aug. 6. 1918

Here and There.

VERDUN AND LEICESTERSHIRE.

"General Knowledge" papers are very popular with examiners desirous of discovering whether children are well-read or not; to local examiners in search of good questions for testing purposes let me suggest "Is there any connection between Verdun and Leicestershire?" I must confess that a few hours ago I should have broken down in face of that question; but a little book which I have just been reading has made me think quite a lot on the subject. The book is entitled "Lutterworth Church and its Associations," and its early pages tell that for 350 years the Manor of Lutterworth was owned by the De Verdun family.

FROM VERDUN TO LUTTERWORTH.

The first to acquire possession of it was Bertram de Verdun, who seems to have descended at no great distance from one of the warriors who came over from France with William the First, and helped him to capture this island of ours. Thus it was a family "of Verdun" which came from the town which is so famous in the history of the present war to settle in Lutterworth somewhere at the beginning of the twelfth century, and continued to be the ruling family of those parts.

NEWBOLD VERDUN?

Remembering this, I began at once to wonder whether we have not a Leicestershire village which gets its name from the little French town that is now so familiar in our news. At the time of writing I have no ready means of ascertaining if my guess is correct, but it seems exceedingly likely that Newbold Verdon should really be Newbold Verdun. There are several Newbolds in the county, and to distinguish them it seems to have been found necessary to attach a Norman appendage to the Saxon name in the form of the family name of the land-owner. Thus the Newbold near Owston is Newbold Saucy, and the one near Gaddesby is Newbold Folville. Is it not likely that Newbold Verdon is the Newbold belonging to the Verdun family?

OWNED LAND AT IBSTOCK.

This seems specially probable when we know that the Verdun family owned land in that part of Leicestershire. It was Roesia de Verdun who founded Gracedieu Nunnery (so the little book before me tells), and there is to be found in the records of the Borough of Leicester the following:—

> Note that Nic. de Verdon son and heir of John de Verdon of Draycote on Dunsmore, Knight, before Henry Clipstone, Mayor and other good men of the town, released to Sir Robert of Swillington, knight, his right in a moiety of Ibstock manor.

This is dated March 27th, 1384, so that at that time the Verdun family owned land at Ibstock, which is not very far away from Newbold Verdon.

DESCENDED FROM A STUART FAMILY.

The Verdon family seemed to die out in this neighbourhood before the end of the middle ages, and other well-known local names take their place as landowners at Lutterworth. In Stuart times the Cole family resided at the Spital mansion, and William Cole, who married the second daughter of Sir Henry Halford, of Wistow, served in the Army of Charles the First, and rose to the rank of a Colonel. He was buried at Laughton Church. The Cole family, unlike the Verdons, can be traced right down to the present day, and it adds a touch of interest to the descent to be told that the mother of Mr. J. H. King, the well-known Leicestershire and England cricketer, was a direct descendant, she being the last of the Coles.

THE STORY OF A STONE.

Mr King's mother, by the way, is identified with the recovery of one of Lutterworth's most cherished relics. The church of the place once had a very beautiful spire, seen and admired for many miles around, but this fell victim to the great storm of 1703, referred to in Evelyn's Diary. No effort appears to have been made to preserve the material of the spire, so that it could be replaced in position; thus it came about that one Richard Cole was allowed to take a good deal of it away to embody in a garden wall he was erecting. Amongst the rubbish was the vane stone of the spire, and this, instead of finding a place in the wall, was treasured by the family as a souvenir. It remained in the possession of the Coles for 160 years, and was exhibited to the Leicestershire Archæological Society in 1861. Then the stone unaccountably disappeared, and no trace of it was to be discovered. In 1906, however, in clearing away some rubbish preparatory to building new premises in the town, workmen discovered fragments of ancient church work, and amongst it the lost coping-stone. It was recognised by Mrs King, who accidentally saw it, and it has since been presented to the Rector, and has been placed under the tower arch of the church.

FIVE SPIRES BLOWN DOWN.

From personal observation I know that the storm we had last March did a good deal of damage in the Lutterworth district, but it must have been quite a meek and mild sort of storm compared with the one which raged over the same area in 1703. The little book to which I am referring pretty continuously as I write says:—

> There is a tradition that five spires were destroyed in the immediate neighbourhood by this storm, whose violence was without recorded precedent. On the same night fell the steeples at Frowlesworth, Monks Kirby, and Gilmorton; the spire at Bitteswell, which is evidently but a remnant of its former self, was probably the fifth.

STIL NOT RESTORED.

The Vicar of St. George's, Leicester, who has had to stay his hand in endeavouring to get the spire of his church rebuilt, may be interested in the steeple-restoring means adopted by the people of Lutterworth, after the calamity which befell their church in 1703. They applied to the King for a Brief—that is to say, permission to collect for the purpose; and a copy of the Brief granted to them by George the Second is preserved in the British Museum. It tells how that, because the church is in a ruinous condition, that the parishioners had previously spent considerable sums on it, that the sum of £1,162 was required for the restoration, and that because this sum was beyond the powers of the people of the district—

> We impower them to ask collect and receive the alms and benevolence and charitable contributions of all Our loving subjects throughout England, Our town of Berwick-on-Tweed, and the counties of Fflint, Denbigh, and Radnor, and from house to house throughout the counties of Leicester, Northumberland, and Warwick to enable them to repair the said church and rebuild their said steeple.

That house-to-house collection does not seem to have had very much effect, though, for the steeple has not yet been restored, though six monarchs have followed George on the throne since then.

TEMPTED TO VISIT LUTTERWORTH.

The above are only a few of the interesting things one may read in "Lutterworth Church and its Associations." It is exceedingly well written by Mr. S H. Skillington, from facts supplied by the local historian of Lutterworth (Mr. A. H. Dyson), and is neatly printed by the local firm of Gee and Co. After reading it one wants at once to go off to swell the ranks of the 10,000 visitors "from every part of the English-speaking world" who visit Wycliffe's Church annually.

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