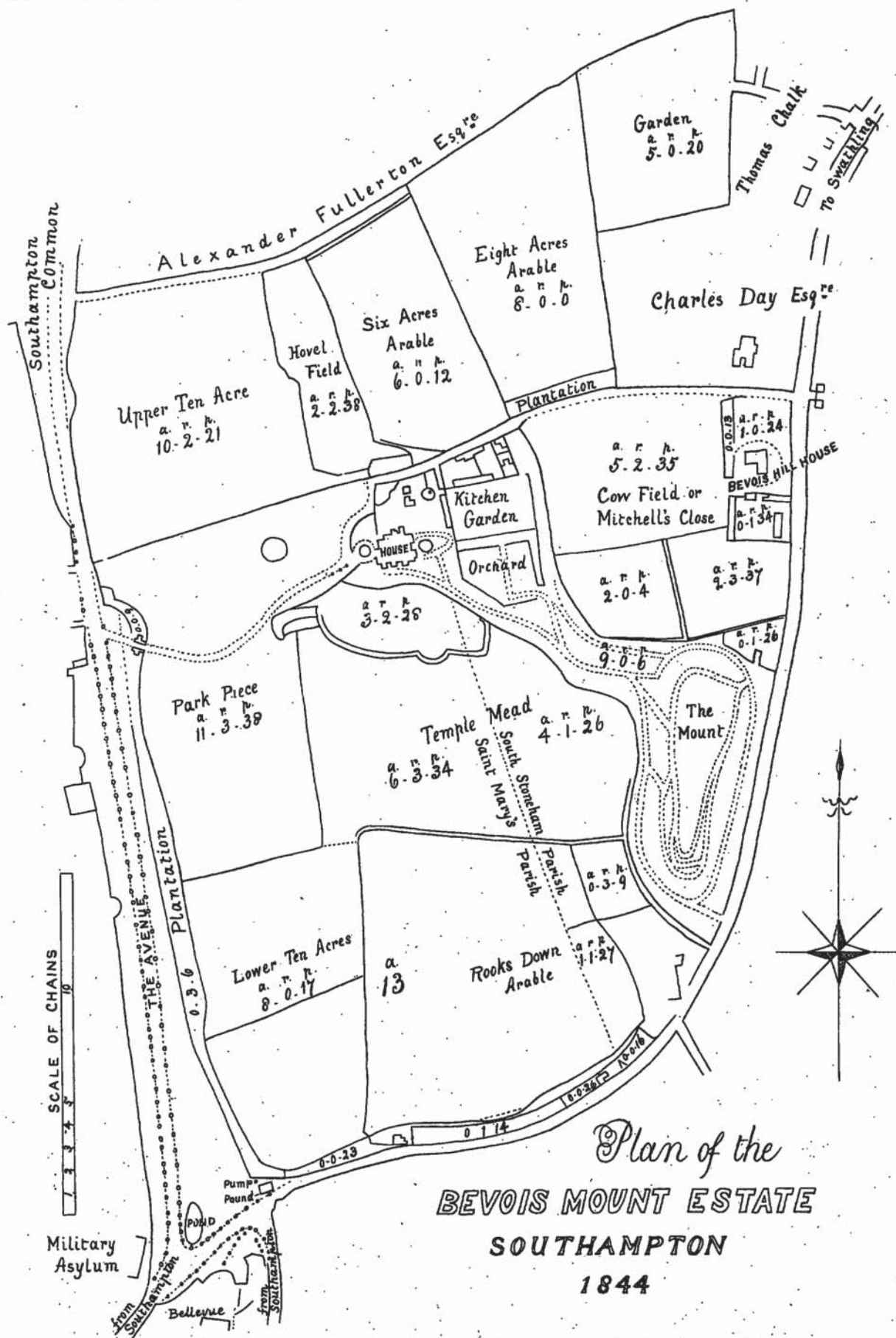




BEVIS MOUNT.

BY F. J. C. HEARNshaw, M.A., LL.M.

Those who in these degenerate days of electric trams and red-brick villas make a journey by car from Southampton to Portswood, pass through what, less than a hundred years ago, was one of the most charming estates in the south of England. They enter the former precincts of the estate from the Avenue through the "Stag Gates;"¹ they leave them when they emerge upon the Portswood Road. On their way through, they pass "Bevis Mount House" which, with the pretty grounds surrounding it, remains the sole relic of the old rich and wide-spreading domain. All the rest has been gradually captured from Nature, and has been subdued to the service of Man by being overlaid with paving-stones upon which the multitudes may walk, and with little houses in which, at convenient distance from their labour, they may dwell. Though the charm of country has for ever vanished from the scene, and the delight and glory of the landscape have become things of the past; yet there are people still living who can remember the time when the hedge and ditch which bounded the estate on its westward side stretched along the Avenue from the back of the present Westwood Road to Rockstone Lane, and when Rockstone Lane itself, the great high road to Portsmouth, was rich in the beauty of grassy banks and overhanging trees and distant views of river and wood. In those days within the estate itself were lawns and meadows, trim gardens and luxuriant groves, lakes and fountains, and wild mazes of tangled paths. Above all there was the Mount, the fabled tomb of the Saxon hero, Sir Bevis of Hamton, crowned with towering oak and ash, and commanding the whole estuary of the Itchen.

¹Erected soon after 1844 by Mr. William Betts, the then proprietor.

But though the changes of this progressive age have obliterated the land marks of the past, it is not without interest for us to gather together some of the memorials of the days of old, and to trace, as far as the records enable us to do so, the history of the estate—a history which has no unimportant connection with the history of our realm of England.

Through the kindness of Mrs. Barns, the present owner of "Bevis Mount House," and the skill of Miss E. Stevens, I have been enabled to make use of, and to reproduce as an illustration to this article a most interesting plan of the estate, as it was at the period of its greatest extent, viz., in 1844, when it was sold to Mr. William Betts. Those who will consult this plan, and who care to divert themselves by doing a sum in compound addition, will find, if they add up the various figures given in the sections; that the total area of the estate was some 103 acres. If they next turn their attention to the boundary lines within the estate they will see that the whole was made up of three parts, or groups of parts. First, there was what I may call the "Added Areas," consisting of Upper Ten Acres, Hovel Field, Six Acres Arable, Eight Acres Arable, and Garden. These together made up $32\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, and beyond them there lay the *enclave* of Mr. Charles Day, and the estate of Mr. Thomas Chalk. These "Added Areas" were divided from the older portions of the estate by a field path which followed fairly closely the line of the present Avenue Road. I have spoken to one venerable inhabitant of Southampton who can remember walking along this path, looking over the hedges into the grounds of "Bevis Mount House," and climbing over a fence into the Avenue. I find from old deeds that between 1808 and 1813, land of the value of £2,500 was added to the estate, and I am inclined to think that it was then that these $32\frac{1}{2}$ acres were annexed.

The older portions of the estate, then, if this surmise be correct, consisted of the remaining 70 odd acres. It will be noticed in the plan that down the middle of this apparently compact property runs a parish boundary. On the east lies South Stoneham parish, on the west, St. Mary's. This parish

boundary approximately represents, I believe, a very old and important dividing line—none other in fact than that which during the Middle Ages separated an estate called "Padwell," which belonged to God's House, from Bevis Mount which was among the lands of S. Denys Priory.

Let us trace in turn the histories of these two properties. First as to Padwell. This estate at the close of the twelfth century belonged to one Gervase le Riche who was a Burgess of Southampton and reeve of the town in 1185.¹ In 1196 he founded the Hospital of S. Julian or God's House, and among the noble endowments which he set apart for its maintenance was this same piece of land, "Padewell."² In 1343 the wardenship of God's House was by charter of Edward III. bestowed upon the newly-founded Queen's College, Oxford, into the hands of whose Provost and Scholars accordingly passed the custody of this and all the other properties of the Hospital.³ A succession of tenants held it from the College, which has accounts of the Padwell revenues dating back to Edward III.'s reign. A terrier of the estate in the year 1628, most kindly supplied to me by Dr. J. R. Magrath, the present Provost, contains two interesting items of information. First it gives the boundaries:—The grange of Padwille, near Southampton, it says, is bounded on East, North, and South by land belonging to S. Dionise and Northam farm, and on the West by the King's highway. Secondly it gives the area, which it appears was $42\frac{1}{2}$ acres in all, viz., the Banne close $13\frac{1}{2}$, the Barley close 6, Lee close 6, Rowth meadow 4, Greenhwayes close 3, Fox close 7, and the Parrook 3. If this area of $42\frac{1}{2}$ acres be compared with that given on the plan of 1844 for the portion of the estate in question, the two will be found to accord in a very suggestive manner. In the plan of 1844 the total acreage is about 43, viz., Park Piece $11\frac{3}{4}$, Lower Ten Acres 8, Rocksdowen 13, Temple Mead $6\frac{1}{2}$, the Paddock $3\frac{1}{2}$. The slight difference in estimate may well be due to more exact measurements of nineteenth century surveyors. I cannot

¹Vict. County Hist. II. 202.

²Hist. M. SS. Comm. IV. 451.

³Davies: Southampton 453.

but think that the "Padwille" of 1628 is almost exactly represented by the portions just enumerated, of the more extensive estate of 1844. Confirmation of this view will be obtained if we turn to examine the S. Denys part of the land, that part namely lying in 1844 in S. Stoneham parish.

The Priory of S. Denys was founded by Henry I. about 1124. Both the founder and his immediate successors made many and generous grants of land to the fortunate Black Canons of St. Augustine for whom the Priory had been established. The Canons in the long run received some 645 acres within the precincts of the borough of Southampton.¹ Among the grants must have been one which included "Sir Bevoys Hill" and its appurtenances²; for—other evidence apart—we find these pieces of land shown among the former possessions of the Priory in the map of 1658, which hangs on the walls of the Hartley College library.³

At the dissolution of the Monasteries, the S. Denys estates were transferred to one Francis Dawtrey, probably son of a certain John Dawtrey, who in 1495 represented Southampton in Parliament, and who in 1515 was one of Henry VIII.'s "custumers" in the town. The map of 1658 shows that by that date the demesne lands (431 acres out of the total of 645), had passed into the hands of a Mr. John Knight.⁴ The remainder was divided up among twenty-two tenants or purchasers: "Ser Bevoys Hill," for example, was held by a Mr. Daniel Harsint. The main point, however, to be noted in this interesting map of the S. Denys estates, is that the portions ("Ser Bevoys Hill," etc.), assigned to Mr. Harsint, together with "Mitchell's" Close (occupied by Mr. John

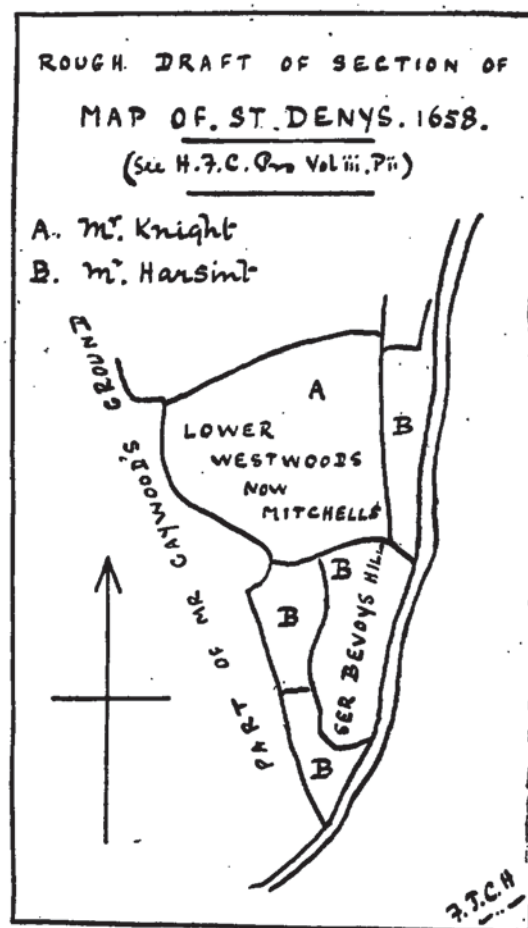
¹For particulars see Davies, Southampton 434-37, and Hants F.C. Proceedings, Vol. III. 155-169.

²It is not easy to say which of the grants conveyed this property. The most probable seems to be that of Richard I, 1189, which gave "Kingsland and the wood called Portswood with all that pertained to them."

³Reproduced fully in Hants F.C. Proceedings, Vol. iii. Part ii. For section in question see overleaf.

⁴From the Court Leet Books, I find that in 1566 Francis Dawtrey himself did suit to the court; in 1569 the heirs of Francis Dawtrey owed the suit, but did not pay it and were accordingly, fined 3d; in 1573 suit was done by "Ricardus Knight pro terra quondam Francisci Dawtrie militis."

Knight), almost exactly correspond with the portion of the Bevis Mount estate shown in the plan of 1844 as lying in South Stoneham parish. The fact that the name "Mitchell's" is attached to the same close in both the map of 1658 and the plan of 1844, helps to confirm the identity. The western boundary of this section of the old Priory lands is given as "part of Mr. Gaywood's grounds." Mr. Gaywood's grounds were, it would seem, the Padwell estate.



Thus we are led to the conclusion that during the middle ages the "Bevis Mount Estate" of later times did not exist as a unit, but that (apart from the areas added 1808-13) its westerly portion formed the Padwell estate belonging to God's House, while its easterly portion consisted of various pieces of land belonging to S. Denys Priory. In 1658, these properties appear, judging from the map already referred to, to have been divided among three occupiers, viz., Mr. Gaywood (Padwell), Mr. Harsint (Bevis Hill, etc.), Mr. Knight (Mitchell's Close).

Now comes the interesting question: when were these separate fragments first united to form one estate, and by whom? The answer to this question is, I believe, that they were joined together in the early part of the eighteenth century by Charles Mordaunt, third Earl of Peterborough. Certain it is that they were all in his hands at the time of his death, and it is the intimate association of the estate with this notable soldier and statesman that lends to it some historical importance and great romantic interest.

Of Peterborough's occupation of the Bevis Hill portions of the land we have ample evidence, but unfortunately not of the kind, so far as I am aware, which enables us to fix the precise date or the mode of acquisition. On Aug. 28th, 1728, Pope wrote a letter to Peterborough addressed to Bevis Mount: that is the earliest date concerning which I have found proof positive that Peterborough was here.¹ Peterborough may well have rented the property at first, for he speaks of its value as "£14 a year."² But sooner or later he purchased it. On the 1658 map of S. Denys Priory estate the pieces named "Mitchells" and "Sir Bevoys Hill" are marked—of course in a later hand—as "sold to Lord Peterborough." Mr. Davies in his excellent and usually most

¹I think it probable, however, that a more careful examination of the writings of Pope, Spence, Voltaire, Horace Walpole, etc. than I have been able to make, would lead to the discovery of evidence of earlier dates.

²Letter quoted in Russell's *Peterborough* II., 306.

accurate History of Southampton, says¹ that "in 1730 the Priory came with the estate of Portswood into the possession of Charles Earl of Peterborough," and though Mr. A. H. Skelton has shown² that the main statement in this extract (viz., that Peterborough acquired the Priory and the whole estate) is inexact, it is not at all improbable that 1730 was indeed the date at which Peterborough bought those parts of the estate in question which are marked as having been sold to him. At any rate when he died (1735), they formed part of the property which he left to his widow.

Of his acquisition of Padwell from Queen's College, Oxford, we have much more exact information. Though it is probable that he had held it as a tenant for several anterior years, Peterborough secured it as his own no earlier than 1735,³ that is the last year of his life, when one of his chief concerns was to make adequate provision for his wife. He obtained it in exchange for an estate in Buckinghamshire. At the date of transfer its estimated annual value was £35, while that of the Buckinghamshire property which he surrendered was £57. Since this exchange involved an interference with endowments conferred by Royal Charter, a special Act of Parliament was necessitated. This Act of 8 George II. (1735), is entitled "An Act for exchanging of lands between the Right Honourable Charles, Earl of Peterborow and Monmouth and the Provost and Scholars of the Queen's College, in the University of Oxford." In the Act the lands surrendered by the College are described as, "All that Grange or parcel of Ground called Padwell with all Closes Meadows Pastures Feedings and other commodities to the same Grange belonging or appertaining late in the tenure or occupation of Elizabeth Bowles widow situate lying and being within the liberties of the Town of Southampton that is to say on the north and west parts of the highway leading from the aforesaid Town towards Winchester."

¹History of Southampton, 442. I find, on referring to the Journal of the Brit. Arch. Assoc., Vol. XV., p. 280, that Mr. Davies is merely quoting a statement made by Rev. E. Kell in 1859—a statement for which Mr. Kell gives no reference to authority.

²H.F.C. Proceedings, Vol. iii. p. 159.

³For this information I am indebted to Dr. Magrath, Provost of the College, to whom I tender most hearty thanks.

Thus it would seem that in 1735, after so many centuries of severance, the contiguous properties of Bevis Hill and Padwell passed into the hands of one owner, and were united to form the country estate of the meteoric Peterborough. This is not the place to speak of the adventures of that strange being whom Macaulay calls "the last of the knights errant," and whom he describes as "if not the greatest yet assuredly the most extraordinary character of that age." The story of his ungovernable youth, of his restless and relentless enmity to the house of Stuart, of his share in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, of his conquest of Valencia, of his fierce quarrels with his colleagues, his superiors, his subordinates, his own party and their opponents, his foes and his friends, of his journeyings, his gallantries and his intrigues—all this is part of the history of England. His turbulent eccentricity prevented him from receiving that recognition from his country which his brilliant services would otherwise have demanded, and he felt keenly the contrast between his fortune and that of the more politic Duke of Marlborough, who, as a reward for his conquest of Bavaria, received, amid the plaudits of the nation, the Manor of Woodstock and the palace of Blenheim. Peterborough was left to provide his own rural retreat, and although he greatly loved the sweet expanse of wood and meadow land which he sought out and secured, he could not resist the temptation to contrast it in exaggerated depreciation with the splendid estate of his rival. "*My Blenheim*," he wrote to Mrs. Howard, "would not afford lodging for two maids of honour and their equipage, and yet I cannot forbear wishing that you might somehow or other see my purchase of fourteen pound a year. Though you have seen the prodigies of Norfolk the day before, I should depend upon your partiality to Bevis Mount."

Peterborough greatly improved his property—cut paths, levelled lawns, built summer-houses with vaults for storing his wines—and he was planning still more extensive schemes of building and adornment when death brought his feverish activity to an end. The house which he found on the

Padwell portion of the estate.¹ and in which he continued to live was, we are told, very small.² He himself, indeed, called it a cottage—"the wild romantic cottage where I pass my time"—and described it in affectionate mood as his "little Amoret." Peterborough's biographer, Warburton, says, "In later years this cottage became his favourite residence and he enlarged it considerably, also ornamenting the grounds. At the entrance to the lawn he had arranged several guns and flags and weapons taken by him in the War of the Succession. It is to these that Pope alludes in his first epistle to Lord Bolingbroke when he says that our Generals

'Hang their old trophies o'er the garden gate.'"

But small though his dwelling was, to this humble retreat Peterborough brought a succession of friends sufficient to lend distinction to the lowliest abode. It is said that here he entertained Swift, Arbuthnot, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Voltaire, Pope, Spence, and many other people of note in the literary society of that Augustan age.

Of all the visitors to Bevis Mount, Pope seems to have been the most frequent and the most welcome. Until the estate was broken up, one of the paths through the grove and round the mount was known as "Pope's Walk," and one of the summer-houses was pointed out as the place in which he wrote some of his most important verse. It may be that local imagination has enhanced the importance of the work he did at Bevis Mount, for certainly the enthusiast who writes that it was the beauty of Southampton scenery which inspired Pope with some of his loftiest strains, is under a misapprehension both as to the nature of Pope's poetry and the sources of his inspiration. But it is evident that Pope loved the place and that he was not insensible to its charms, for, writing to Mrs. Knight, he described it as "beautiful beyond imagination."

¹I was for some time much disposed to think that Peterborough's house was situated in the S. Denys portion of the estate, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the site of the "Bevois Hill House" marked in the 1844 plan. This supposition accords best with contemporary evidence; but the statements of the writers of 1753 and 1775 which are quoted below p. 121 and p. 123 do not admit of this view.

²Warburton in his *Life of Peterborough* 234, describes it as "Very small, but beautifully situated, overlooking Itchen Ferry and Southampton Water."

Voltaire's connection with Bevis Mount was less pleasant, if one may accept as true a doubtful story which appeared in the "Gentlemen's Magazine" for 1797. The story runs that Peterborough had commissioned Voltaire to do for him some important piece of literary work and had handed over to him considerable sums of money with which to pay the publisher. It goes on to say that Voltaire kept the money himself and that Peterborough, when he discovered the fraud in an interview with the publisher, was so furiously enraged that, on Voltaire's inopportunist appearing upon the scene, he drew his sword and would have slain the offending Frenchman there and then, had he not been forcibly restrained until Voltaire had had time to get clear of the grounds in panic-stricken flight.¹

But, though so many of Peterborough's friendships were broken through his impetuous violence, his intimacy with Pope continued firm to the end. Together they drove in 1732 from Bevis Mount to Winchester to attend the annual prize-giving and "gaudy." The occasion was an interesting one. Pope had been appointed one of the College examiners that year, and he had set as the subject for a prize poem, "The Campaign of Valencia." Then, when the award had been made, the hero of the campaign accompanied the poet-adjudicator to congratulate the winner of the prize.

Soon after this event Peterborough's fatal disease laid firm hold upon him. He spent long periods at his cottage nursed by his faithful though long unacknowledged wife, the virtuous and accomplished Anastasia Robinson. Amid severe sufferings he maintained an indomitable cheerfulness, refused to abandon hope of recovery, and persisted in framing large projects for the future. At last a surgical

¹Mr. Stebbing, Peterborough's latest biographer, rejects the story, as does Mr. Churton Collins in his "Bolingbroke and Voltaire." On the other hand Colonel Russell in his memoirs of Peterborough, published in 1887, accepts it, emphasising the improbability of its invention, the fact that it remained uncontradicted, and its agreement with authentic stories of Voltaire's conduct towards Bolingbroke and Pope. For my own part I incline towards Mr. Stebbing's view from consideration of (1) the late date of the story (1797), (2) its doubtful origin, (3) the prejudice against Voltaire in England in 1797. (4) internal evidence, especially allusions to a Mr. St. André.

operation became necessary and he left Bevis Mount to undergo the ordeal. But, though he bore the pain of the operation with heroic fortitude, his impatient spirit could not brook the delay of the slow and imperfect recovery, and, long before he ought to have moved from his bed, amid the protests of his physicians, he ordered his coach and drove back to Southampton. For a time he rallied, but he soon began to realise that his end might be near. In July, 1735, he wrote to Lady Suffolk, "I want to make an appointment with you, Mr. Pope, and a few friends more to meet me upon the summit of my Bevis Hill, whence," he continued, "after a tender farewell, I shall take my leap towards the clouds to mix among the stars."

Pope came to Bevis Mount in August, and was shocked to find his friend already on the verge of death. But Peterborough maintained unflagging vivacity and undying hope. Pope, writing of him to Miss Martha Blount, said "He talked of nothing but the great amendment of his condition, and of finishing the buildings and gardens for his 'best friend' (Anastasia) to enjoy after him," and 'he actually projected a history of the latter part of Queen Anne's reign. "He has with him" continued Pope, "day after day, not only all his relations, but every creature of the town of Southampton that pleases. He lies on his couch and receives them, though he says little. When his pains come he desires them to walk out, but invites them to stay and dine or sup." When Pope brought this last, sad visit to a close Peterborough gave him a watch which had been the gift of the King of Sicily, saying as he handed it to him "You will now have something to put you every day in mind of me."

Peterborough, however, did not die at Bevis Mount. The old passion for mere motion seized him,¹ and he was carried

¹If Pope's life was a "long disease," Peterborough's was a mad stampede. Horace Walpole said of Peterborough that he had seen "more princes and more postilions than any man of his age." Swift, also, wrote some pungent verses concerning "Mordanto's" wild pilgrimages about Europe. "In journeys he outrides the post" he says, and adds that he—

"Knows every prince in Europe's face,
Flies like a squib from place to place,
And travels not, but runs a race."

to London where he passed his days in alternations of dinner parties and bed. But London did not satisfy his restlessness. He thought that in the South of Europe he might pull through the winter. So he sailed for Portugal, the scene of some of his earliest and most romantic adventures. Lisbon was reached, but there his journey came to an end. Just a week after he landed, watched by his faithful wife, he passed away.¹

Lady Peterborough, after her husband's death and burial, returned to Bevis Mount, and there spent most of the remaining twenty years of her life. Though she was known but little to the inhabitants of Southampton, she was a singularly interesting and attractive figure in the society of her period. Before she had married Lord Peterborough, her name had been Anastasia Robinson. She was the daughter of one Thomas Robinson, a portrait painter of some repute. From her mother she inherited an excellent voice, and she received the best musical education which her times could supply. Hence she became known as an accomplished singer, and when her father's eyesight failed and he was forced to abandon his profession, she found no difficulty in turning her talents to account, and in supporting him from her earnings. At first she gave weekly concerts in Golden Square, which became highly fashionable; then later, in 1714, she went onto the stage in the opera *Creso*, and for ten years she was recognised as *Prima Donna*, and was able to earn some £2,000 a year. Peterborough saw her as Griselda in Buononcini's opera, and was fascinated by her graces and manifold charm. In 1722 he persuaded her to marry him, but he refused her the justice of public acknowledgment as his wife till the very year of his death. It has been remarked that Peterborough, in marrying Anastasia Robinson, took "perhaps the happiest and wisest step in his life"; but for his wife the step was probably not so wise or so happy, for, as a contemporary writer intimated, Peterborough was "a very awful husband." His violent temper, his restless eccentricity, to say nothing of his shameless profligacy, must have made him bad to live with. However, his wife loved,

¹ Oct. 25th, 1735, æt 77.

honoured, and obeyed him with the most exemplary devotion, and towards the end of his life he recognised her high qualities, and did her such tardy justice as was in his power.

Whilst Lady Peterborough was in possession of the estate a "Gentleman" who, as a writer, preferred to remain anonymous, made "a Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain" and published four volumes of the records of his observations. He visited Southampton in the course of his journeyings, and the following (dated 1753) is his description of Bevis Mount:—

"About a mile from this town, on the banks of the river Itching, is a waste large pile of earth, which rises in the form of a cone, from a large wide foundation of great extent and circumference, which they call Bevis Mount. It is supposed to be an ancient fortification, thrown up by the Saxons, under the command of Bevis, to oppose the passage of the Danes over the river, who lay encamped on the other side. The river is not very large, but the tide running up into it a good way beyond the town, forms a kind of bay just under this great Mount, which being contiguous to an estate belonging to the Earl of Peterborough, his Lordship purchased it and converted it into a kind of wilderness; and as it is full of trees and brambles, he cut through them divers circular walks and labyrinths, so very intricate that it is hardly possible to avoid being lost in them. His lordship used frequently to divert himself by dropping his friends in the midst of the wilderness, and stealing away, let them wander up and down till they found their way out of it. The Mount terminates above, as is feigned of Parnassus, in a kind of fork; and between the two spires is a bowling green, or parterre, adorned with fine Italian marble statues, brought by his Lordship from abroad. It lies open on the side facing the river, and when the tide is in, gives a most agreeable prospect. On one side of this parterre, declining gradually from the top of one of the spires to the green, is planted a little vineyard, exposed to the south; on the other side, on the very summit of the spire, stands a very fine summer house, very elegantly built and contrived, with a good cellar under it, where his Lordship kept his wines, having no good

cellarage at his house, which is near a quarter of a mile from the Mount, from which his Lordship called it Bevis Mount. He intended to rebuild the house, and convert all the grounds lying between it and the Mount into gardens, had he lived a little longer. The beauty of the improvements which his Lordship has made in this Mount, is hardly to be conceived. He adorned it with statues, grottoes and alcoves; and diversified it up and down with something new and surprising at every turn, peculiar to his own fine taste and genius in gardening, wherein no nobleman excelled and few equalled him in Europe. He left his little seat, and lands about it, to his Lady, who now enjoys them."

On Lady Peterborough's death in 1755, the estate passed into the hands of her husband's nephew, Sir John Mordaunt, who had had a more or less distinguished career in the army. He had commanded a brigade at Falkirk, and again at Culloden, and after the latter battle had received the gift of the defeated Pretender's coach. In 1756, when invasion threatened England, he was placed in command of the great defensive camp formed near Blandford in Dorset. Next year he led an expedition against Rochefort, having under him James Wolfe as quartermaster-general, and Admiral Hawke as commander of the fleet. The expedition returned ingloriously, having accomplished nothing, and Sir John had to go through the ordeals of Court of Enquiry and Court Martial for his failure. He was ultimately acquitted, but his active military career was closed.¹ In later life he turned his attention to politics, and sat as M.P. for Cockermouth from 1754 to 1767. He it was who put up in memory of his uncle the inscription which (moved from its original site) has been built into an inner wall of the present house. It runs as follows:—

Carolo Mordaunt,
Comiti de Peterbor.

Libertatis Patriæ Vindex,
Valentiæ Domitor,
Consiliis et Armis Inclitus,
Rebus Fortiter Celeriter,
Feliciter Gestis,
Hæc in Parva Rura secessit,
Hæc Moriens Colebat.

¹Article by H. M. Chichester in Dict. Nat. Biog.

This tablet was erected sometime between 1770, when Sir John was made a general, and 1780, when "he died a widower at Bevis Mount, aged eighty-three."¹

After Sir John Mordaunt's death the estate was sold, and its purchaser was a poet well known in his day, a man of good family, recognised social standing, and considerable intellectual power, William Sotheby by name.² He had married that very year, 1780, a wealthy heiress, Mary Isted of Ecton, and her money enabled him not only to buy Bevis Mount, but, when he had bought it, to live there the life of a scholar and a leisured man of letters. He devoted himself to the study of Greek and Latin classics, and to the production of his poems. After he had spent ten years of this delightful existence, he decided to move to the busier world of London. So he bade a regretful farewell to Bevis Mount in the following sonnet, which appears among his collected works:—

"FAREWELL TO BEVIS MOUNT."

Mary, ere yet with lingering step we leave
These bowers, the haunt of peace, where many a year
Has o'er us passed delightful, if a tear
Stray down my cheek, not for myself I grieve:
Here thou hadst fondly hoped till life's last eve
To rest. On yonder bank the flowers appear
Nurs'd by thy culture: there thy woodbines rear
Their tendrils. Thou, ah! thou unseen may'st heave
A sigh, what time we bid those groves farewell,
Yet in thy breast resides a soothing power
That sheds the sweet not found in herb or flower,
Oh Mary! what to us where doomed to dwell;
Enough that peace and thou can never part,
Beloved of me the spot where'er thou art.

¹Guide to Southampton 1775 says:—"About half a mile farther (than Bellevue, the seat of Nathanael St. André), on the right hand is Padwell, or rather Bevis Mount, at present in the possession of Sir John Mordaunt. There is an excellent garden and from thence a charming prospect. Towards the river Itching, at the back of the house, is a solemnly-gloomy wilderness through which are fine serpentine walks; here is also a bowling-green, and a fine ice house with good vaults under it which serve for cellars. The late Lord Peterborough made it an established rule to admit no stranger into his gardens except when the tide was up that the prospect might be complete."

²The poet's parents were William Sotheby, Colonel of the Coldstream Guards, and Elizabeth, daughter of William Sloane of South Stoneham, and sister of Hans Sloane who became the poet's guardian.

Thus Sotheby, in 1791, left Bevis Mount and took up his abode in London. There he had a notable career. He became a member of the famous Dilettante Society,¹ an F.R.S., and an F.S.A. He numbered among his friends Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Moore, Southey, and Byron. The last-named of these actually mentions him—a rare distinction—in one of his poems:—

Still some genuine sons 'tis hers to boast
Who, least affecting, still affect the most;
Feel as they write, and write but as they feel,
Bear witness Gifford, Sotheby, Macneil."²

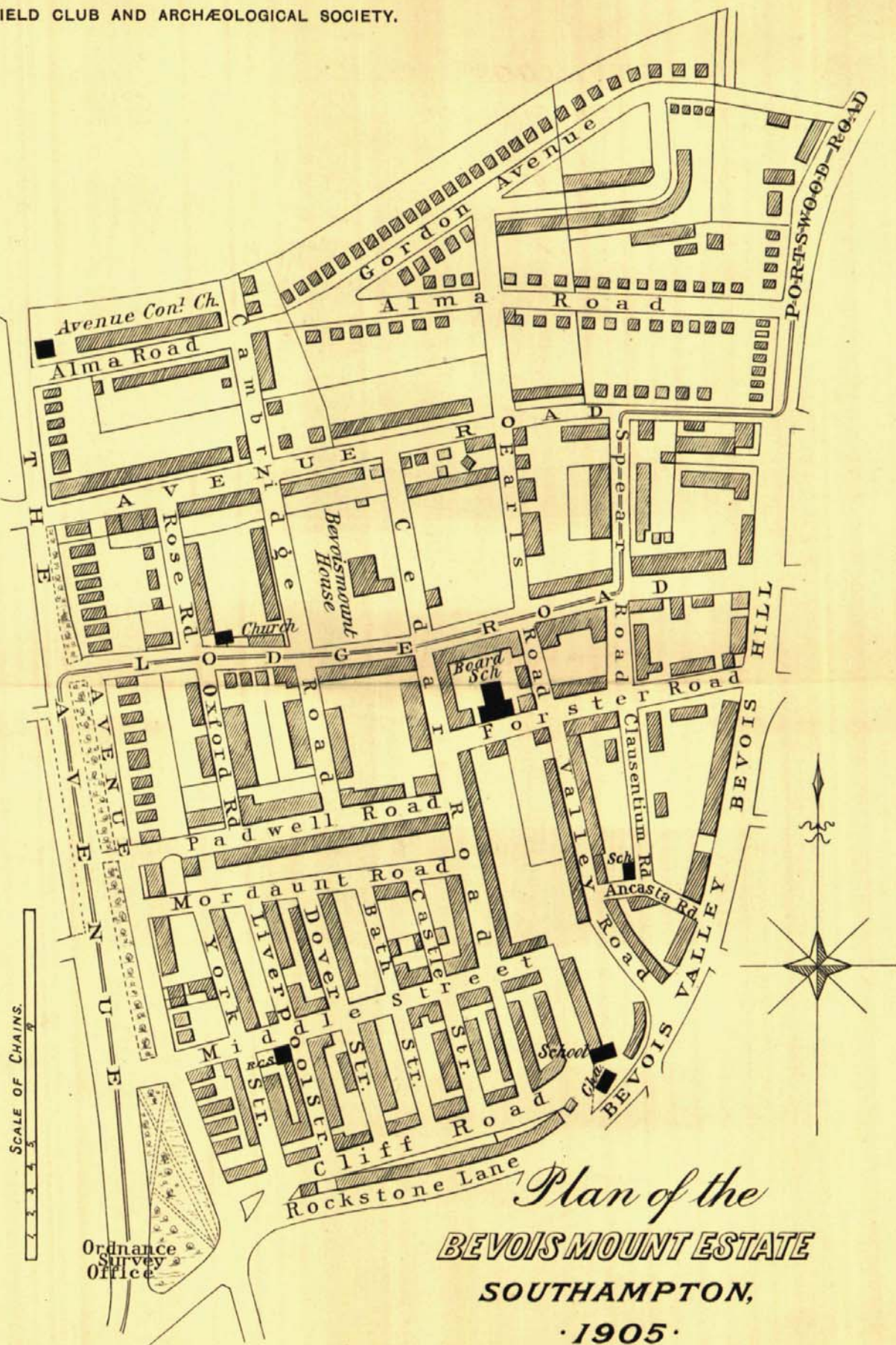
On Sotheby's departure, Bevis Mount was bought by a Mr. Edward Horne, who is stated to have come from Wargrave, in Berkshire; but of him and his antecedents I have been able to gain no information at all. He lived at Bevis Mount till his death in 1808, and then he left the estate to his widow. She did not live there, however, but let it out to a relative, Mr. Henry Hulton, a descendant of the famous Philip Henry; by profession a barrister of Lincoln's Inn. Mr. Henry Hulton, after enlarging the estate,³ died in 1820; but his widow continued to live at Bevis Mount House till her death in 1840. Then the house remained empty, and the estate lay desolate, for four years. But at last, in 1844, the *Hampshire Advertiser* was able to make the announcement that "the Bevis Mount estate which has been so long on sale is at length finally disposed of," and that "it will be divided into lots for building purposes." Its purchaser was Mr. William Betts, a contractor of Dover, a member of the well-known firm of Peto and Betts.⁴ The new proprietor soon made revolutionary changes. He sold off to the builders the portion lying south of the present Mordaunt Road, and houses soon began to spring up in what is now York Street. He procured from the Corporation the strips of plantation

¹A fellow member of the Dilettante Society and an intimate associate of Sotheby was Sir Henry Englefield, the Antiquary. On Englefield's death in 1822, Sotheby delivered before the Society an eloquent address on his friend's character and work.

²On another occasion, however, in a less generous mood, Byron said that Sotheby's works were "trash," and that he imitated everybody.

³See above p. 110.

⁴Mr. Betts had been engineer to the Royal Pier at Southampton, opened 1833 by the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria.



which divided his estate from the Avenue, built the "Stag Gates" and a new lodge, threw up a wall from the Stag Gates to the new southern boundary of his land (Mordaunt Road), and another wall along the field path which ran parallel with, and near to the line of, the present Avenue Road—the path dividing the old portion of the estate from the "Added Areas." Within the estate itself vast "improvements" were effected. Lakes, fountains, greenhouses, arbours—all the adornments which early-Victorian taste could suggest, and suddenly-acquired wealth could make practicable—all were added. Probably the present house was then built. The rateable value of the estate had been £300 per annum in Mr. Hulton's time; it speedily rose to £1,000. But this happy celerity of progress was not destined to continue. The affairs of Mr. Betts became somewhat involved, and he was forced to part with his estate at a considerable loss. It was purchased by a speculative syndicate, and the work of splitting it up and selling it off proceeded at a great pace. The house and the appurtenances thereof were secured by Mr. J. H. Woolf, a shipping agent and consul for Chili and other South American Republics. Mr. Woolf was a generous patron of the arts. The local painter, Mr. F. L. Bridell, owed much to his assistance. In fact he sold so many of his pictures to Mr. Woolf that the "Bridell Gallery" became one of the notable features of Bevis Mount House. The house contained, also, at that time thirteen musical instruments, one of them being the organ at present in use in the Kingsfield Congregational Church. In 1869 Mr. Woolf gave up possession of the house, and sold off his valuable effects. About this date, apparently, the size of the house was reduced by the removal of the west-wing containing thirteen rooms, and of a conservatory attached to the east-wing. The remaining portions of the house were secured by the present owner, Mrs. Barns, for use as a Ladies' School. The school had a prosperous and useful career for about thirty years, when Mrs. Barns retired to enjoy a well-earned rest. Bevis Mount House was then (1900) rented from Mrs. Barns by the Council of the Hartley College for use as a Hostel for women students attending the College. Here, for the present, ends its history.