ODIHAM.

[From the *Hampshire Independent.*]

By invitation of Mr. P. L. Sclater, F.R.S., a visit was made to the "Priory," where there are some remains of medieval buildings. A portion of the house was restored by the first Lord Basing, and is now the dwelling-house of his brother, Mr. Sclater, whilst another part has been allowed to lapse into a picturesque ruin. The ancient remains appear to be of the Perpendicular period. The ruined portion is generally called the "chapel," but as it had an upper floor this is evidently incorrect. Lord Basing acting as chaperon, pointed out the features of interest. The building, he said, was formerly the old rectory of Greywell; but when it was dissevered from the church it was thought needful to change the name, and that of "Priory" (without any apparent reason, for the place does not appear to have been built as a priory) was chosen.

ODIHAM MANOR.

Probably no town in Hampshire of its size has a longer or more eventful history than Odiham. I cannot undertake even to mention all the main points in that history in a short paper. So far as I am aware its history has not yet been written, although there are short summaries of events connected with the town in various publications. It is much to be desired that some one of sufficient leisure should undertake to write a history of this town. The national records contain much unpublished information about it.

The visit of the Field Club to Odiham brings us into touch with local illustrations and examples of early and medieval life such as few towns in this county, or, indeed, in England, could bring before us in a more forcible way. As regards its origin, the place in Hampshire which most resembles it is perhaps Kingsclere. Clere, whether the king's clere or the people's clere at Burghclere, was a settlement in the northern Forest of Hampshire, and Odiham was also a forest settlement, as its name implies. I have heard a wood spoken of by country people as a ood, and in Doomsday book the name of a neighbouring parish, now

called Hoddington, was known as Odingeton, and gave its name to the Hundred in which it was situated, and well it might, for it was, like Odiham, a place in the great forest land of Northern Hampshire, which was known centuries later as the Forest of Odiham or Forest of Eversley. That the original settlement at Odiham was a British settlement is probable, although there is no direct proof as there is at Burghclere by the remains of the great British camps on Beacon and Ladle Hills, but circumstantial evidence points strongly towards a British settlement here, for Odiham, like Burghclere or Kingsclere, is situated near the limit which nature must have placed on the extent of the great northern forest, or, at least, where its character was somewhat changed. In both localities the outcrop of the chalk occurs, and this must of necessity have produced a difference in the tree growth, and have caused open spaces to have existed near at hand.

Within the town of Odiham itself the place-name of the Bury which survives tells us that earth-work, either of British or Saxon origin, must have existed here, and in the record of an inquisition, held at Odiham in the 2nd year of Richard II., there is mention made of William Dobbs (who appears to have been the head man, or head borough) and other men of Odiham holding twelve acres of land, and a messuage called Dunton in Odiham. This looks very much as if the men of Odiham held here their ancient fortification or Dun in common.

The origin and growth of the town and large villages of Hampshire are subjects of the greatest historical interest. It is my opinion that many of our towns and villiages are so surrounded with circumstances pointing to British occupation, as to leave no reasonable doubt of their extreme antiquity, but whatever mists of antiquity enshroud their origin, none whatever obscures the history of their growth. Some of our towns and villages, like Alresford and Micheldever, grew through being important episcopal or monastic manors, and others such as Odiham grew to importance through being royal manors. Odiham appears to have been a royal manor as far back as Anglo-Saxon history goes—a royal ville of the kingdom of Wessex.

The antiquities of Odiham bring us into touch with the sacred Folkland of the early Anglo-Saxons, and this folkland was none other than the great forest land, which as centuries passed became vested in the king, and known as the King's Forest, and beeame gradually less and less even in Saxon time, as new manors and villages arose, and the population increased.

The Doomsday account of Odiham, which is as follows, gives us some interesting information:—"King William holds Odiham in demesne, and it was held by Earl Harold. Here are 78½ hides. It was formerly assessed at 38 hides, but is not now assessed. Here are 56 ploughlands, 15 in demesne; and 137 villeins and 60 borderers with 40 ploughlands; also 50 slaves, 8 mills which pay 56s. 7d., 21 acres of meadow, and woods for 160 hogs. Its value in the time of King Edward and afterwards was £50 by toll, and now £50 in weight. Two hides of this manor belong to 2 churches situated in it, on which the priest has 1 villein with 1 ploughland, and they are worth £6. Two other priests hold 2 churches of this manor, with two yardlands and 1½ ploughlands worth 67s. 6d."

It is worthy of note that this account of Odiham in Doomsday book comes first of all the Hampshire manors mentioned in that record.

We see by this account that William the Conqueror, Harold (here described by the Norman French scribe as Earl only out of deference to William's claim to have been the rightful heir), and Edward the Confessor all held the manor, and it probably had been held by many Saxon kings before them.

This account gives us as good an illustration of a large agricultural community in the 11th century as that of any place in Hampshire. We may note that more than half the land of the manor was cultivated in common by the 137 small farmers or villeins and the 60 labourers or borderers who are mentioned These people cultivated 40 ploughlands out of the 56, and they performed probably some manorial services on the remaining 16 ploughlands which the king and his bailiff held. This shows that the servile tenants of Odiham were not at all badly off.

At the eight mills which are mentioned the tenants were all obliged to bring their corn to be ground by a general feudal custom, under which the lord of a manor had a certain toll or benefit. Probably some of the mills which still exist are on the ancient sites.

The Doomsday account also tells us of pannage in the forest for 160 hogs, and we know also that the tenants had valuable pasture privileges in the forest.

Of the churches mentioned one was in all probability on the site of the present church. Greywell Church is also probably one of them. The priest or parson had land of his own, which was a rare circumstance in Hampshire at the date of the Doomsday Survey. This land which the priest held carried with it certain pasturage privileges in the forest, and at a much later date, viz., about 1334, when these grazing rights of the parson were questioned, an Inquisition was held by order of the king to inquire into the "common pasture rights of the parson of the church of Odiham." Odiham possessed one remarkable object of antiquity which is apart from its scientific interest closely connected with its ancient system of agriculture, *i.e.*, its great chalk pit. This is, I think, the largest of the old chalk pits of the county, certainly one of the largest, and its great size tells us of its antiquity. It was one of the most ancient of agricultural privileges on such a manor as that of Odiham, for the tenants to have the right to take as much chalk as they wanted for marling their clay land or any other heavy soil. This process of marling was in use in Britain in Romano-British time, it was followed by the Anglo-Saxons, and has continued down to the present day. Odiham possesses another object of antiquity, which recalls very forcibly to our minds the ancient judicial system of this country. The old stocks of Odiham are, I suppose, no longer a terror to evil doers, but they remind us of the administration of punishment and the local courts of justice which formerly existed in this place. There can be no doubt that when the king was here in olden time, Odiham was occasionly the seat of a high court of justice, but at other times it appears to have had several courts. Like other manors it had its manor court for regulating manorial matters between the various tenants,

and it also had its Hundred Court, held by the King's Provost or Bailiff, by whom it was governed. The Hundred Court included the powers of a Court Leet, and the stocks are, I suppose, almost all that remains of the ancient judicial authority of these Courts. The Hundred Court at Odiham is mentioned in Inquisitiones post-mortem in the time of Edward II., Richard II., and Henry IV.

These local courts not only punished those who committed offences, but were the original safeguards of the liberties of the poorer people, who by appealing to Custom defended themselves against oppression, for local customs as regulated by local courts were in olden time the defence of the weak against the strong, and it must be remembered that such an official as the King's Provost or Bailiff of Odiham, could not exercise his authority contrary to the custom of the Hundred Court of which he was the presiding officer. The men of Odiham, at a very early date, appear to have improved their social condition considerably by obtaining from the King the privileges of soc-men, by which they were relieved from many customary manorial services, such as ploughing, sowing, reaping, &c., on and for the King's land, in consideration of the payment of a fee farm or rent for the land they collectively held. There is a record of the year 1205, in which the Odiham soc-men are stated as paying £35 4s. per annum for the old fee farm, and £14 16s. for the new, making £50 in all. The fee farm was at that time ancient, for it is described as "antiquam firmam," and from this payment being ancient in the time of King John, and from the similarity of the total amount to the recorded value of the King's interest in the Doomsday Survey, it is probable that the old fee farm paid by the men of Odiham was of Saxon origin.

As might have been expected, from its ancient associations with our kings and queens, Odiham has been closely connected with several leading events in English history. It was here that King John lived during the early summer of 1215, while he was making up his mind what to do in the matter in dispute with his subjects. From Odiham, as is shown by his itinerary, he set forth to meet his barons at Runnimede, where he signed Magna Charta, after which he returned to his

Castle here, and remained for some days very much out of humour.

Odiham Castle played a very conspicuous part during the invasion of England in the next year, 1216, by a French army under Prince Louis, the Dauphin of France, who took Guildford, Farnham, and Winchester, and then turned his attention to Odiham Castle, which refused to surrender. He besieged it for a week, and the garrison made some successful sallies, and obtained the honourable terms of surrender, of being allowed to march out with their arms and horses, which they did to the admiration of the French, who counted the defending force, and were amazed to find only three knights, three squires, and seven fighting men, 13 in all, and they had lost none in the defence.

During the next reign Odiham was a favourite residence of Princess Eleanor, who subsequently became Countess of Leicester. It was granted to her as Countess of Pembroke in 1237, and subsequently as Countess of Leicester. She kept a large hunting establishment of men and dogs at Odiham. In the civil war which took place in this reign her husband, De Montfort, was the leader of the popular party. Odiham Castle appears to have been held for him, and from a lawsuit in 1260 we learn that after the battle of Evesham, when the constable of the Castle gave it up to the king, he took away with him all the documents relating to the place, a convenient way probably of settling his accounts.

Odiham Castle and Manor formed part of the dower which Edward I. settled on his second wife, Margaret of France. In a succeeding reign it is said to have been part of the dower of a more famous Queen Margaret—her of Anjou—given her by her husband Henry VI. In the time of Edward III Odiham Castle was selected as the place of confinement for David Bruce, King of Scotland, who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346. He did not regain his liberty till 1357, when, on payment of the heavy ransom of 100,000 marks and giving other security, he was set free, glad no doubt to turn his back on Odiham for ever.

The National Records not only contain references to Odiham and its castle in connection with historical events and

important persons, but some entries of less importance, although of more local interest; for example, we know that the buildings on the manor and the houses in the town probably must have been allowed to fall into decay in the 15th century, for in the 39th year of Henry VI. there is the record of an Inquisition to report on the dilapidations within the manor of Odiham. There are also many records of earlier centuries relating to the conveyance of wine belonging to the king from Southampton to Odiham, to repairing the park fence, to stocking the castle ditches with fish, to hiring carts for conveying the king's wardrobe and moveable effects, to the supply of farming implements for the demesne lands, and other matters of local interest. An Inquisition was held in 1275 to report on the pasture which the men of Odiham had "in bosco de Whytmondsley."

Odiham Castle and forest had many notable custodians in successive reigns. In 1225 Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, was bailiff, afterwards the King's sister, who became Countess of Leicester, had it granted to her. Subsequently the manor was held by Gilbert de Eversley, Thomas de Warblington, John Beauchamp, Henry de Sturmy, Margaria de la Bergh, John de Foxle, John de Meriet, John atte Berwe, Robert Thorpe, Hugh le Despenser, Robert le Ewer, Nicholas Brook, Henry Esturmy, Joanna wife of John Mohun, John Berewe, William Sturmy, Thomas de Camoys, Hugh Camoys, B. Brocas, Lord Beaumont, Richard le Strange, William Warbelton, Roger Leukenore, John Lestrange, Isabella Seymour, and many others until the time of James I, when that king, being in want of money and having some financial difficulty, with his parliament, allowed the ancient royal domain of Odiham to pass into private hands, and thus was severed the direct connection of Odiham with the Crown which had lasted for so many centuries.

Some of the manors in the neighbourhood appear to have been held by the tenure of defending Odiham Castle, such as the manor of Polling, which in the 5th of Henry VI. is stated to have been held "ut de castro de Odiham," *i.e.*, by the tenure of defending the castle.

The government and town life of Odiham in the middle ages was so far peculiar as to be one of very few instances of its kind which existed in England. It had the privileges of a borough, without being incorporated, and the town is cited by Maddox in his work "Firma Burgi," as a peculiar instance of its kind, showing that the men of a town not corporate might hold their towns at fee farm as well as corporate towns.

At the conclusion of the paper Lord Basing mentioned that there was an interesting inventory of the contents of that house (the "Priory") at the time it was taken by Cromwell.