

VII. *An Extract of a Topographical* Account of Bridgnorth in the County of Salop, communicated to the ROYAL SOCIETY by the Rev. Mr. Stackhouse, Minister of St. Mary Magdalen in that Town; containing an Account of the Situation, Soil, Air, Births and Burials of that Place, and of some Tumuli Sepulchrales near it.*

Read June 3.
1742.

Bridgnorth^a is pleasantly situated upon the River *Severn*, on the West of the ancient Forest of *Morfe*, and was built, according to *Camden*, by *Edelfleda*^b, Lady of the *Mer-*

* Taken from the original Papers of the Rev. Mr. *Richard Cornes*, late Minister of the Parish of *St. Mary Magdalen* in *Bridgnorth*.

^a A softer Pronunciation only of its old Name *Brugg* or *Brugg-north*. In a Charter of King *John*, it is called *Bruges*; in another of *Edward III.* *Brugg* and *Brugg-north*, and in a Third of King *Charles I.* *Bridgnorth*, alias *Brugg-north*, alias *Bruges*. Both *Brugg* and *Bruges* signify a Bridge or Bridges, and the Termination *North*, whether it be, as some would have it, a Corruption of the Word *Morfe* or not, was doubtless added with regard to the Situation of the Place. N. B. *Bruges* in *Flanders* is so called from its many Bridges, and *Brugg-bote* is an old Word for Pontage or Bridge-toll.

^b *Edelfleda* alias *Elfleda*, eldest Daughter of *Alfred the Great*, said by some to be the first absolute Monarch over the *English*. She married *Ethelred*, to whom *Alfred* gave the Government of the City of *London*, which he had then taken from the *Danes*, and the Title of Earl of *Mercia*, an empty Title, till by his Valour he became Master of a great Part of that Province. After his Death, *Elfleda*, being a Princess of great martial Prowess, took upon her the Government of her Husband, and fortified many Towns, to keep the *Danes* out of *Mercia*:

Mercians; but encompassed with a Wall, and fortified, by *Robert de Belesme* ^c, Earl of *Shrewsbury*; and afterwards favoured by King *John*, and other Kings, with many and great Privileges granted in their respective Charters. It is governed by Two Bailiffs with the Burgeſſes in Common Hall aſſembled: The Bailiffs are annually choſen out of Twenty-four Aldermen upon *St. Matthew's Day*, after the following remarkable Manner: The Court being met, the Names of Twelve Aldermen (Seniors of thoſe that are there preſent, and who have not been Callers for three Years before) being ſeparately written upon ſmall Scrolls of Paper, all of the ſame Size, and rolled up cloſe by the Town-Clerk, are thrown into a large Purſe, which being ſhut, well ſhaken and toſſed by the two Chamberlains, ſtanding upon the Chequer ^d, is afterwards held open betwixt them, before the Bailiffs; whence each Bailiff, according to Seniority, putting in his Hand, takes a Scroll, by which the Callers are fixed, who immediately mounting the Chequer, alternately call the Jury out of ſuch

Mercia: Afterwards ſhe carried her Arms, in Conjunction with her Brother King *Edward*, againſt the *Welſh*, and obliged them to become tributary. About this time (913) ſhe is ſaid to have built and repaired ſeveral Places, as *Stafford*, *Bridgnorth*, &c. See *Rapin* from *Sax. Ann. Hunting. Horvend.* Vol. I. pag. 38.

^c *Robert de Belesme*, a Man outrageouſly cruel to his own Sons and Hoſtages, whom he caſtrated with his own Hands, and plucked out their Eyes; but being deſerted by the *Welſh*, was ſeized, and, being convicted of High-Treaſon, was afterwards impriſoned, others ſay, baniſhed for Life; and thus ſuffered condign Punishment for his notorious Wickedneſs. See *Camden*, *Baker's Chronicle*, &c.

^d A large ſquare Table in the Middle of the Court, encompassed with Seats.

Persons as are Burgesſes, and then preſent in Court, to the Number of Fourteen. Theſe being all ſworn neither to eat nor drink, till they, or Twelve of them, have made Choice of Two fit Perſons (who have not been Bailiffs for Three Years before) to ſerve the Office of Bailiffs for the Year enſuing, are locked up together, until agreed; which hath often occaſioned very long and tedious Faſtings, even to the Prejudice of their Healths: However, when they are agreed, they make Report of the Perſons they have elected, and they are ſworn into Office upon *Michaelmas-day*^e.

This Borough, as others, has a Recorder, Town-Clerk, and Two Representatives in Parliament.

The Town is divided by a ſtately Stone Bridge^f over the *Severn* into Two unequal Parts; the leſſer Part, that lies upon the Eaſt of the River, is called the low Town, and conſiſts of Two Streets, one extending from the Bridge to the very Foot of *Morfe*, and goes by the Name of *St. John's-ſtreet*, from a Religious Houſe there in Times of Popery, dedicated to *St. John* the Baptiſt.

The River abounds with divers ſorts of the moſt excellent Fiſh, as *Salmon*, *Pike*, *Shad*, *Trout*, *Greyling*, *Flounders*, *Eels*, *Club*, *Gudgeon*, and what goes here by the Name of *Samlet*, a ſmall Fiſh ſpotted with Red, not much unlike the *Trout*; only the Spots

^e The Bailiffs for the Time being are Juſtices of the Peace, and Lords of the Manor for the ſaid Town and Liberties, which are extenſive, being one way Six or Seven Miles.

^f This Bridge has Seven Arches, and formerly had a Draw, Portcullis, and other Engines of Defence: The old Gate-houſe upon it is ſtill ſtanding, and ſeveral other Houſes have been built upon its Piers.

lie in a more direct Line on its Sides. It seldom exceeds Four or Five Inches in Length, and is of a most delicious Taste, but to be taken only at certain Seasons of the Year: In Summer, when the Water is low, the Fisher goes bare-legged into the Shallows, and, having on a Pair of old Shoes, stirs up the Gravel and Sand, so as to discolour the Water; and thus, by angling there, usually takes many of them, together with *Gudgeons* and *Blays*; but they are mostly taken with an artificial Fly.

The Head of this River is on the Mountain *Plymlymon* in the County of *Montgomery*, whence it flows through this County, that of *Worcester*, and *Gloucester*, diffusing its vital Moisture as it passes, till it empties itself into the *Severn* Sea below the City of *Bristol*. It is navigable for about 140 Miles, and has a great Number of Vessels continually plying upon it.

The Soil in these Parts is of a very different Nature: Eastward of the River *Severn* lies a fine dry sandy Soil, fit for bearing *Rye*, *Barley*, &c. and is therefore commonly distinguished by the Name of the *Rye-land* from the other Parts of the Country, that lie on the West of the River; where the Soil is much upon a moist Clay, fit for *Wheat*, *Pease*, &c. yet not so peculiarly adapted to these sorts of Grain, but that several lighter Parts of this Quarter oftentimes bear very plentiful Crops of *Barley*, *Oats*, &c.

The Common Fields adjoining to the Town bear Grain of all Kinds, one of them being yearly ap-

* Most of the Vessels made use of upon this River are built here in several Dock-yards.

propriated for Corn; nay, the very Sides of the Rock upon which the Town stands, though the Soil there be but shallow, yet, when well manured, produces great and very early Crops of *Pease*, *Beans*, *Cucumbers*, *Asparagus*, and all sorts of Garden-herbs in Perfection.

The high Town lies upon the Western Bank of the River: That rises gradually to a considerable Height. The Ascent begins from the End of the Bridge, where what is first worth Notice, is, a Passage ^h for People on Foot, cut deep in the Rock, ascending with convenient Flights of Steps at proper Distances, much resembling, as Travellers have observed, the Ascent of Mount *Calvary* in *Jerusalem*. On the South of this Passage, opens a large Cave ⁱ in the Rock, remarkable here for being the Repository of excellent Beer: At the Entrance of this stands a Lion rampant, carved in Stone, and within is a large Tun containing above Five Hogheads.

The Air of this Place is exceeding healthy, and, for ought I know, may vie even with that of *Montpelier* itself. It is certain, we have very few consumptive People amongst us, so that as it is preservative to the Natives, in all Probability it might be restorative to Strangers. However, we have this Convenience from the Variety of Situation ^k, that if

^h About 160 Yards in Length.

ⁱ In Length 33, in Breadth 27 Feet.

^k Dr. *Hollins*, an eminent Physician in *Shrewsbury*, Father to the late Dr. *Hollins*, Physician to his present MAJESTY, made it his Observation, That when any Epidemical Distempers were abroad, *Bridgnorth* was sooner freed from them than any other Place that he knew. The same hath been since confirmed by the Observations of Dr. *Antony Weaver*, now an ingenious Physician in this Place.

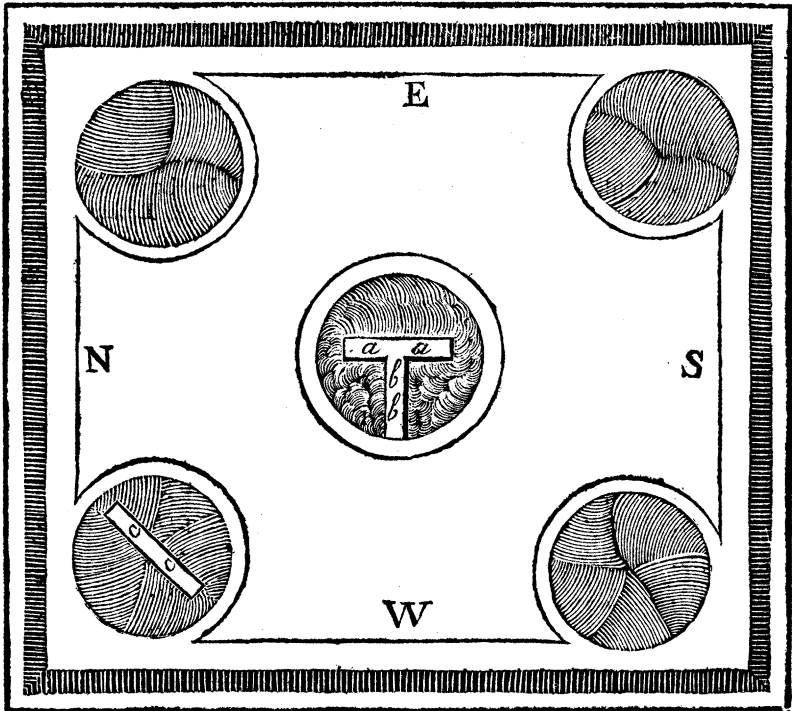
the Air in the upper Part of the Town be too fine and sharp for our Constitutions, we may soon remove into the Lower, where it is much softer, and by that means possibly find Relief, and continue till Old Age in its natural Course carries us to the Grave. In short, many of the Inhabitants here live to very advanced Years, there being many Instances of those that have exceeded an Hundred ¹.

¹ N.B. There are three old Hatters now living (1739) in the Parish of *St. Mary Magdalen*, and bidding fair for an Hundred each, whose present Ages, being computed together, make somewhat more than 257 Years.

A Table of Births and Burials for 12 Years, in the Parish of St. Mary Magdalen, which contains about 520 Families; and of St. Leonard, containing about 550 Families; which, allowing Five to each Family, amounts to 2600 Inhabitants in the Parish of St. Mary, and to 2750 in the Parish of St. Leonard; in all 5350.

In the Parish of <i>St. Mary Magdalen.</i>				In the Parish of <i>St. Leonard.</i>			
Births.	Burials.			Births.	Burials.		
54.	119.	Sm. Pox.	1727.	68.	100.	Sm. Pox.	
72.	77.	. . . . .	1728.	72.	61.		
52.	74.	. . . . .	1729.	54.	78.		
65.	78.	. . . . .	1730.	84.	65.		
75.	36.	. . . . .	1731.	70.	53.		
64.	41.	. . . . .	1732.	47.	49.		
70.	46.	. . . . .	1733.	79.	65.		
69.	77.	1734.	64.	90.		
46.	56.	1735.	72.	57.		
60.	32.	1736.	79.	39.		
67.	22.	1737.	71.	56.		
61.	53.	1738.	62.	65.		
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755.	711.			822.	778.		
Total Increase 88.							

Sepulchral Tumuli upon Morfe near Bridgnorth, in the County of Salop, supposed to be Danish.



East and West Sides
36 Yards long.

North and South Sides
33 Yards long.

In July 1740. I observed upon *Morfe* the *Tumuli* as represented above, where the Soil is a strong Gravel. *Montfaucon* in his *Antiquities* tells us, that the old *Cimbri*^m were wont to throw up Heaps of Gra-

^m Old Inhabitants of *Denmark*.

vel upon their Graves; and that the more remarkable the Persons were, the larger were the *Tumuli* over them. I therefore imagined, that this might possibly be a Burying-place of the *Danes*, who, I think, 'tis generally owned, were Descendants of those People. For Satisfaction, I caused the middle and largest *Tumulus* to be dug through from North to South (See *aa* in the Figure), supposing by that Method I must cross the Site of any Body that might have been laid there. We dug about Seven Feet deep, even to the solid Rock, without meeting with any thing remarkable, but an iron Shell, in Shape of a small Egg, with a round Hole at one End, but so cankered and decayed, that it easily broke into small Pieces; this we judged to have been the Boss of a Sword. However, upon viewing the Trench that we had dug, we perceived upon the West Side a Hollow in the Gravel, which, upon Trial, extended horizontally Four or Five Feet; and under this Hollow (See *bb* in the Figure) we found one of the large *Vertebrae* of the Loins, with its Processes pretty perfect, but throughly petrified; and, upon further Search, several Portions of Bones, all alike petrified, but so disguised, that we could not discover to what Part of the Body they belonged. We afterwards opened one of the lesser *Tumuli* (See *cc* in the Figure), and found what is thought to be the *Os Sacrum*, and many other small Pieces of Bones, in a petrified State. It was great Odds that we had found nothing at all; but Nature favoured us, by preserving some few Tokens of Antiquity. During this Search, the People were much alarmed, and flocked to the Place in great Numbers, expecting, I presume, to have seen Wonders;

but

but being disappointed, they soon spread a Report over the Country, that by a Discovery made by some antient Writings, we dug there for Treasure, by which we were greatly enriched: To prevent the further Concourse of the People, &c. we were glad to fill up the Trenches, and leave the other *Tumuli* unexamined.

N. B. The Middle *Tumulus* is about Nine Yards in Diameter, and the lesser about Eight Yards each at the Plain.

VIII. *Part of a Letter from the Right Hon^{ble} Robert James Lord Petre, F. R. S. to Martin Folkes, Esq; P. R. S. concerning some extraordinary Effects of Lightning.*

S I R, *Brook-street, June 24. 1742.*

Read June 24.
1742.

ON *Tuesday* Morning, between Three and Four o'Clock, we had at *Thorndon* some of the most terrible Thunder I ever heard; and, indeed, by the Effects of it, I have Reason to conclude, that it was very near us, as well as by the Noise, to which I really think no other Thunder I ever yet had any Notion of, could be compared. It has beat down a Chimney at a Farm-house just by, and the Lightning has also struck Two large Oaks in my Park, which stand about Forty or Fifty Feet apart. In one of them I do not observe any thing much different from other Trees which I have before seen struck with Lightning; the only thing that seems remarkable, is, that the greatest Damage appears