



# Parish News

At a well attended meeting of the Bath Literary and Philosophical Society, held in the Library of the Institution on Friday last, the Rev. W. H. Jones, M.A., F.S.A., Vicar of Bradford-on-Avon, and Hon. Chaplain to the Lord Chancellor, read a highly interesting paper on "Names of Places in Wiltshire." The Rev. F. Kilvert presiding.

Mr Jones said – It is admitted that much care must be taken to avoid hasty conclusions as to the derivation of names of places. In searching out their meaning, we must first of all try to ascertain *their original form*. With regard, however, to the most ancient names, from the want of any written records cotemporaneous with the place which they represent, we are altogether at fault. Even in the Saxon Charters, which would naturally strike us as a reliable source of information, we meet with the names sometimes in evidently corrupt forms. To draw conclusions from the names, as written in Domesday Book, is, in many cases, but deceiving ourselves. The Norman scribes spelt the words as best they could, and the effect of their native tongue on the Anglo-Saxon is evident even in that early record. The influence of centuries too, has been at work in corrupting the form or modifying the pronunciation of a name, till at last it becomes completely disguised, with hardly a trace of its origin about it. Sometimes, *e.g.*, you have *words derived from the same source, assuming, in course of years, very different forms*, a good example of which may be given in the words *peril* and *risk*, which, though they seem to have nothing in common, are, nevertheless, from the same root – *peril* coming direct from the Latin *periculum*, *risk* from the medieval form of the same word, *viz.*, *perisculum*, through the Italian *risquo* or the French *risqué*. In like manner *Fearn-dun* becomes *Farrington* – whilst *Fearn-legh* is contracted into *Far-legh* – and *Fearn-ham* retains almost its original form in *Far-ham*. Again, *Stow-ford*, in the parish of Winfield, was originally *Stan-ford*, *i.e.* *Stone-ford*, and was at one time spelt *Sto-ford*; whereas *Sto-ford-tun* (*i.e.*, the village by the Stoneford) has, in the course of centuries, been softened down to *Sta-ver-ton*, the name of a district chapelry in the parish of Trowbridge. And *Ramsbury*, (in the north west of Wilts), the ancient seat of the Bishops of Wilton, though, no doubt, the corruption dates from a very early period, was originally *Hreafnes-byrig*, *i.e.* *Raven's-bury* (the church there being designated *Ecclesia Corvinensis*), an estate in the immediate neighbourhood still bearing the name *Crow Wood*. Sometimes, on the other hand, you have *names assuming similar forms, though derived from different sources*. Of this an illustration occurs to me in the case of two villages in Wilts, at no great distance from each other, both of which bear the name *Upton*. One of them, *Upton Scudmore*, is literally the 'Up (or the Upper) Town,' and is sometimes called the *North Town*, *i.e.* village. The other, *Upton Lovell* is, as we learn from the Wiltshire Institution, and other authorities, a contraction from *Ubba's Town*, and so a memorial of a celebrated Danish chieftain of that name. Another example is in the name *Woolley*, which, in my own parish, is now the name of a street, also of a tithing. In the former case, however, it is a corruption of *Too-ley*, which itself is a contraction of *St. Olave*, to whom a chapel was dedicated in the street – (just as *Tooley Street* in Southwark is so called from the Church of St. Olave, which is situated in it) – whilst in the latter, the name is, I cannot help thinking, derived from Ulf, an Anglo Saxon holder in the time of Domesday, from the circumstance that the place is called Ulflegh in old documents.

Although the subject was pursued in great length, Mr Jones felt it necessary to defer the conclusion of it until a future evening. He received the cordial thanks of the meeting.

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