

The Old Bull and Bennetts Butts, Harpenden

BY BERNARD P. SCATTERGOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

I. EARLY ENGLISH ARCHERY.

IN medieval times, and indeed very much later, the practice of archery was general throughout England; and the prowess of the English bowmen was proverbial. This proficiency was attained by constant practice at the butts. Throughout the countryside, shooting with the long-bow was the recreation of the young men of the villages in the summer evenings, and the accurate and deadly fire of the English bowmen was responsible for the victories of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt. From the time of the Conquest the very greatest importance was attached by the Government to maintaining this superiority in the use of the bow, which (as in so many other things) could only be reached and retained by constant practice; and we find many royal edicts and Acts of Parliament promulgated from the earliest times, for the encouragement of the practice of archery. Thus, in the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) a law was enacted to free from the charge of murder anyone who in practising with arrows or darts should kill a person standing near (" si quis ludo sagittandi vel alicujus exercitii jaculo vel hujusmodi casu aliquem occidat, reddat eum ").¹ A similar provision was made in a law passed by Henry VIII, four hundred years later. The Statute of Winchester (13 Ed. I cap. 6, A.D. 1285) made it obligatory on every person who owned land producing a revenue of no more than one hundred pence, to be the possessor of a bow and arrows, with other weapons offensive and defensive. Those who owned no land, but could nevertheless afford to purchase arms, were commanded to have a bow with pointed arrows if they dwelt without the royal forests, or with round-headed arrows, if their houses were within the forests—the latter to prevent the owners from killing the King's deer.²

¹ Walter M. Moselev, *An Essay on Archery*, 1792.

² Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes* (1801), p. 43.



THE OLD BULL TNN, HARPENDEN, FROM THE SOUTH, SHOWING THE DOOR INTO THE "UPPER CHAMBER."
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ABOUT 11900.

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THE OLD BULL INN. HARPENDEN, FROM THE EAST.
FROM A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH.

OF
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH



“BENNETTS,” HARPENDEN. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1924.

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RESEAR

An interesting document in this connection is the edict issued five and a half centuries ago, in 1363, by King Edward III, seven years after the victory of Poitiers, to the Sheriffs of the different counties (the original is in Latin³) :—

" THE KING to the Sheriff of (Kent, etc.) greeting.

WHEREAS the people of Our realm, not only the nobles, but the commonalty, were used in time past to practise in their games the art of shooting with the bow, whereby it is evident that, with the help of God, no small advantage did accrue to the honour of Our whole Kingdom, and to Us in Our warlike enterprises.

" But now, the said art being totally neglected, the people amuse themselves with the throwing of missiles of stone, wood or iron; and some with games of ball struck with the hands, feet or staves; with dog-baiting and cock-fighting; some with games even less profitable, or wholly degrading.

" By which the said realm seems likely to become (which God forbid !) in a short time wholly destitute of archers.

" WE, wishing to provide a remedy for this state of affairs, straitly enjoin upon you to make public Proclamation, in such places in your county as you may think fit, that everyone of sound body in the said county shall on holidays, when he is not at work, make use in his games of the bow and arrow, whether it be shaft or bolt, and shall learn and practise himself in archery.

" Forbidding on Our part to all and everyone under pain of imprisonment, to apply themselves in any way to the games above described, of throwing missiles of stone, wood, or iron; of playing with balls struck by hand, feet or staves; of dog-baiting and cock-fighting; or other games of this nature, which are of no worth; and ordering them to discontinue the use of such games.

" Witness the King at Westminster, the first day of June.

" BY THE KING."

³ Rymer's *Foedera*.

In the reign of Richard II an Act was passed to compel all servants to shoot on Sundays and holidays. A few years later, in 1405 (7 Hen. IV) an Act complains of the negligence of the arrowsmiths, and ordains that all heads of arrows are to be well boiled and brazed and hardened at the points with steel, under pain of forfeiture and imprisonment. All arrow heads to be marked with the maker's name.

About 1420 there seems to have been a shortage of feathers for making arrows, and King Henry V ordered the Sheriffs of the several counties to procure feathers from the wings of geese, plucking six from each goose.

In the fifth year of Edward IV (1465/6) an ordinance was made, commanding every Englishman and Irishman in England to have a long-bow of his own height; and by the same Act, butts were to be set up in every township, at which the inhabitants were to shoot up and down, upon all feast days, under the penalty of one half-penny for every time they omitted to perform this exercise.⁴

An Act of 1483 (1 Ric. III) provides for 10 Bowstaves to be imported with every butt of Malmsey or Tyre wines, brought by the merchants trading from Venice into this land, under a penalty of 13s. 4d. for every butt of the said wines, in case of neglect. (This was to bring down the outrageous price of Bowstaves, which had been raised to eight pounds an hundred, " whereas they were wont to be sold at forty shillings.")

In the reign of Henry VIII three acts were passed by Parliament with the object of encouraging the use of the long-bow, the popularity of which was being threatened by the cross-bow and the hand-gun, and by many unlawful games practised in the open fields, " to the detriment of public morals, and the great decay of archery." Children from the age of seven were to have bows provided for them by their parents, and apprentices by their masters, and were to be instructed in their use, and to shoot with them on holidays and at all convenient times. The possession of a cross-bow was therefore made an offence, subject to a fine of ten pounds.

⁴ Strutt, *op. cit.* p. 44.

About this time, too, archery became very fashionable as an amusement, and Hollingshead, in his "Chronicles," reports that the King himself was remarkable for his skill at the game. At the Field of the Cloth of Gold he is recorded as having repeatedly placed his arrow in the centre of the white at the extraordinary distance of 240 yards. The Acts which he passed for the encouragement of archery had the two-fold aim of promoting a pleasant outdoor sport, while at the same time increasing the efficiency of the country's defences. Thus, the Act of 1541 orders all men (with certain exceptions) under the age of forty to have bows and arrows, and to use shooting; and in the following year a similar statute was enacted for the encouragement of archery, which goes into great detail in regard to the various classes and ages of persons who are to provide themselves with bows and arrows, and as to the conditions under which they are to use them, and the penalties imposed on defaulters. Amongst other things, it provides that the inhabitants of every city, town, and place, are to erect butts, and use shooting on holidays, and at every other convenient time. A clause was incorporated, taken from the very early law of Henry I, by which the killing of anyone on the archery range was not accounted murder. This was for the special benefit of the "Finsbury Archers," the King's favourite body of bowmen, which developed later into the Honourable Artillery Company, whose Headquarters are still at Finsbury.

In the reign of Good Queen Bess, the authorities were equally determined to discourage the youth of the country from wasting their time over these ball games which King Edward, two hundred years before, had considered "unprofitable or wholly degrading." For in 1567 one Roger Columbelle was fined⁵ "quod lusit ludos illicitos vocat bowles"—for playing an unlawful game called bowls—and probably many other similar cases could be found. It is not explicitly stated that this ban on the game of bowls was for the purpose of encouraging the game of archery, but there can be little doubt that this was its object.

⁵ Duchy of Lancaster Court Rolls, 42/444, in the Public Record Office.

One of the Acts passed in Elizabeth's reign, in 1571, recites the excessive price of bowstaves as one of the causes of the decay of archery, and orders that the Act of 12 Ed. IV (1473) (which, like that of 1483, provided for the importation of bowstaves with every tun of Malmsey or Tyre wine) should be enforced; but that half the penalty of default should go to the informer, and not, as before, the whole to the Crown.ⁱ

The number of duly equipped archers in the country was at this time very considerable. In 1559, in the county of Derbyshire, out of a total of 1,210 "able foote-men," 292 were archers and 918 billmen. During the next thirty years, however, the proportion dropped to 200 bowmen as against 1,100 other arms. In other counties the disproportion was even greater; in Lancashire there were 80 archers to 700 light musketeers; in Cheshire, the same number out of a total of over 2,000. Within a few years after the Armada, the superiority of gunpowder had asserted itself, and the long-bow had almost become extinct as a serious weapon, though it still maintained its popularity as an outdoor game. Charles I appears to have amused himself by shooting with bow and arrow, and is represented in the frontispiece of Markham's *Art of Archery* (1634) in the attitude and dress of a Bowman.

With the Restoration of the Monarchy, however, a determined effort was made, particularly in the South of England, to restore England's fame in archery; and in 1682 Charles II held a review at Tuttlefields, when more than a thousand archers manoeuvred before him, amongst them the Finsbury Archers. After the Restoration the sport lost its appeal, and in no long time became practically extinct.

The exact time at which the bow ceased to be used as a weapon of war by the English army cannot perhaps be fixed. One William Neade,⁷ in the reign of Charles I obtained a commission under the Great Seal, whereby he and his son were empowered to teach the combined management of the pike and bow : and Neade wrote and published about 1625 a book entitled *The Double*

⁶ Badminton Series, *Archery*, p. 147.

⁷ Grove, *History of Army*, Vol. I.

Armed Man, showing the proper exercise and attitudes to be used with each weapon.

We are told⁸ that bows and arrows were used by the English at the Isle of Rhé in 1627, when the Duke of Buckingham unsuccessfully attempted to relieve Rochelle. Grose informs us that in 1643 the Earl of Essex issued a precept "for stirring up all well-affected people by benevolence, towards the raising of a company of Archers for the service of the King and the Parliament." In the guerilla warfare waged by Cromwell in the Scottish Highlands, bows and arrows were still employed; and in England in 1647, a skirmish at Hathersage, in Derbyshire, it is recorded that one James Wintone was "wounded in ye right hande by an arowe." This can hardly be regarded as a solitary instance of the use of the bow. Probably many of the country gentlemen's houses were defended with these weapons; and as a very late instance, in a pamphlet printed in the year 1664,⁹ giving an account of the success of the Marquis of Montrose against the Scots, bowmen are repeatedly mentioned. But by the end of the seventeenth century we may say that bows and arrows, as military weapons, had been entirely superseded.

II. THE ARCHERY BUTTS AT HARPENDEN.

In many villages throughout the country the sites of the fields or commons where the young and middle-aged men had—in many cases for hundreds of years—practised their shooting, still retain their old name of "The Butts." At Harpenden tradition places the position of "The Old Archery Butts" between the "Institute" in the Southdown Road (the building now owned by the Society of Friends) and Leyton Road, which is the old high road between Luton and St. Albans. From the conformation of the ground, rising somewhat suddenly to a high bank at the spot

⁸ P. Daniel, Vol. I, p. 427.

⁹ Daniel, *op. cit.*

now called the "Baa-Lamb Trees,"¹⁰ it would seem likely that this would be the actual position of the targets. If a straight line, about 300 yards long, is measured off on the map in a north-westerly direction from this point, the end of it will be found to lie on the S.E. corner of Leyton Green, and the line is seen to pass just across the front of the old three-gabled house called Bennetts. And in a "Map of the Manor of Whethampsted with Harpenden prepared for the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, Lords of the Manor, in 1799" ¹¹ appear the words "Bennets Butts" very nearly in this position—*i.e.*, running north-westerly across the front of Bennetts to the corner of Leyton Green.

This map is of comparatively recent date; but in quite a number of much older maps of Hertfordshire we find "Bennetts Butts" marked in close proximity to "Harding," the old form of Harpenden. The earliest map on which I have seen Bennets or Bennits Butts marked is Seller's map of Hertfordshire, published in 1676. It is also shown on Morden's map of 1695, Moll's of 1700 and Rocquier's of 1753.

These are all small scale maps; Morden and Moll, for instance, are two miles to the inch, Rocquier five miles, and the earliest of all, Seller's, is on a scale as small as eight miles to the inch. It seems to be a very curious thing that maps drawn to such a small scale should show the position of the archery butts in a tiny village, in fact a mere hamlet, such as Harpenden then was. The inference would seem to be that for some reason or another some special importance was attached to them; but no explanation is as yet forthcoming as to why Bennetts Butts should have been given such prominence.

Besides the manorial map referred to, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have in their possession the old Court Rolls of the Manor of Wheathampstead, of which the Lords were the Dean and Chapter of West-

¹⁰Probably nothing to do with sheep. In 1653 one Richard Shepherd, in making his will, mentions "the house I now live in in Harpenden called Balams." In still earlier days this belonged no doubt to a farmer of this name.

¹¹In the possession of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at their Offices in Millbank.

minster. These Rolls have been carefully searched and the following references have been brought to light.

- A.D. 1666. (View of Frankpledge, 7 June.) Barn situated at Bennetts Butts and 3 poles of land.
1677. (Court held 7 June.) One cottage or tenement in Harpenden lying and being at Bennetts Butts.
1682. (Court held 8 June.) One cottage at Bennetts Butts. (The same property as the last.)
1683. (Court held 31 May.) One cottage with appurtenances at Bennetts Butts. (Apparently the same property.)
1685. (Court held 11 June.) One barn with 3 poles of land situated at Bennetts Butts. (Probably the same property as the 1666 entry.)
1701. (Court held 12 June.) 4 acres in 2 closes called Butts Corner.
1704. (View of Frankpledge with Court Baron held 7 June.) 2 customary messuages commonly called Bennetts Butts . . . situated in Harpenden.
1724. (Court held 28 May.) 2 messuages or tenements commonly called or known by the name of Bennetts Butts . . . in the parish of Harpenden. (The same property as the last.)
1727. (Court held 25 May.) John Hawkins presented for having lately enclosed 2 poles of land upon Bennetts Butts within this manor, and ordered to pull down the said close before the next court under a penalty of 10s.
1729. (Court held 29 May.) A cottage or tenement called Bennetts Butts with a barn and 2 garden plots with appurtenances.

It will be noted that from 1704 the name " Bennetts Butts " is applied to a house—before that date in every case it seems to be the name of a district.

We come now to the connection between Bennetts Butts and the Old Bull Inn. In the Harpenden Parish Registers the following entries occur :

- 1585/6. Feb. 20, baptized Mary and Grace daughters of Thomas Heyward of the Bull.
- 1639/40. William Cattlyn of the Bull, Chappie-warden.¹²
1642. Willyam Catline Bruer was buried October 18.
1644. Willyam the sonne of the widow Cattlin of Benetus butts, baptized July 4.
1644. Willyam Cattline of (*the* erased) beneates butes was buried May 7.
1663. William Catlin of Bennetts butts the younger was buried June 25.

There does not appear to be any other mention of the Butts, nor of the Bull, in the Registers. It will be noticed that the name Catlyn occurs in every instance except the first¹³ where the Bull or the Butts are mentioned; and further, that the entries suggest that "Bennetts Butts " was the name used for the district adjacent to the actual plot of land on which the archery practice took place—which might account for its name being included on the maps. Rather against this theory, I think, is the occurrence noted above of " Bennets Buts " in the 1799 large scale map of the Manor of Wheathampstead to which reference has been made before. This map seems to indicate the actual position of the archery ground, which appears to be somewhat to the north of that traditionally assigned to the " old archery butts."

Now at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century there would seem to have been only

¹²Name so subscribed at the foot of a page of the Burial Register, along with those of " Henry Byrde, Curat: ibidem," and Josiah Knight, the other Chapelwarden. In 1634 also William Cattlyn (with no identifying description, but no doubt the same man) and Richard Shepherd were Chapelwardens.

¹³But even here there is a close Catlyn connection. For Thomas Heyward was a brewer (Rothamsted Manor Court Book, Vol. I, fo. 40), and Edward Heyward, probably his son, had married Grace Catlyn, the widow of an earlier William Catlyn (d. 1587). And in 1594 Edward Heyward took seisin of ⁴⁴a messuage with three acres of land in the tenure of William Catlyne, brewer " (*id.*, Vol. I, fo. 7 dorso). See also for the Heyward-Catlyn connection W. Brigg's *Herts. Genealogist* II. 32 and III. 10.

three or four houses in this part of the Harpenden—St. Albans road; Gable End, the old Bull Inn, Bennetts, and perhaps Fir Tree Cottage. The Bull Inn was sold a year or two ago by the Wittewronge family, in whose possession it had been for over three hundred years.

The history of the old Bull Inn can be traced from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The following notice appears in the Report of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments (Hertfordshire section, published in 1910) :—

" HOUSE formerly ' The Bull ' inn, on the w. side of the green, about 600 yards S. of the Church. A two-storeyed building of timber with brick and plaster filling; the roofs are tiled. The original plan appears to have consisted of a small rectangular block, facing S., which contained a room on each side of the central chimney stack, and a small staircase wing at the back, built late in the 15th century; a short S. wing and a barn were added, apparently in the 17th century, and during the 19th century additions were made to the S. wing, and the barn was converted into a billiard room. At the E. end of the 15th century block the lower storey is plastered, and the projecting upper storey and gable are covered with rough-cast; at the W. end is a doorway about 4 ft.¹⁴ from the ground, now disused; the other doorways and the windows are modern. The large central chimney stack has four octagonal engaged shafts with moulded bases and caps. The S. wing has a plain 17th century stack. Both the 15th century rooms on the ground floor have wide fire places with massive moulded oak lintels; the doorways, opening from what was probably the original entrance lobby, have solid oak jambs, four-centred heads and carved spandrels, and in the ceilings there are oak beams. In the S. wing there is an open fire-place in the hall; the billiard room retains the open

14 The actual distance from ground level of the lower edge of the door is now nearly five feet than four. The floor of the lower chamber is to-day sunk below the ground level between two and three feet, giving a height of about eight feet for the lower room.

timber trusses of the barn roof and has a 17th century overmantel, brought from elsewhere. Many of the rooms have wide oak floor boards, and two trusses of the roof show in rooms on the first floor.

Condition—Good."

References to the Bull are to be found in various deeds preserved amongst the Rothamsted muniments, to which I have kindly been allowed access by the courtesy of Mr. H. Soutar, the steward of the Manor.

In 1613 the Bull, which was known at that time as the Angel, and still earlier as Woodward's, was in the possession of Edward Bardolph, the then Lord of the Manor, by whom it was sold in that year to his brother-in-law, the Rev. Robert Abbott, Rector of Hatfield, who had married in 1583 Elizabeth Bardolph, Edward's sister. The sale took place some eight or ten years before the Rothamsted Estate was bought by the Wittewronge family. In the conveyance, dated April 1st, 1613, the Bull is described as "that Messuage or Tenement called Woodward's,¹⁵ otherwise the Angell, with the Orchard, Garden, Backside, Edifices, Buyldings, Barnes, Stables and other outhouses thereunto belonging with the appurtenances."

Along with the house were sold about ten acres of land, four acres of which are described as adjoining the house on the west side. These were probably the statutory four acres necessary to conform to the law enacted by Queen Elizabeth in 1588. This law made it illegal, under a penalty of £10, "to erect and/or maintain a cottage without laying down four acres of land thereto." From the date of its enactment until its repeal in 1775 we find in the records of Quarter Sessions many instances of people being indicted and punished for breach of this law.¹⁶

In addition to the four acres immediately adjoining the Angell, or Bull, about six more acres were included in the sale by Edward Bardolph to Robert Abbott, amongst them a field called Collins Close (lying between

¹⁵ This name survived in Harpenden at any rate until 1655, when John Woodward occurs in a Rothamsted rental as a tenant of the Manor.

¹⁶ See for several such instances the *Records of the Herts. Quarter Sessions*, published by the Herts. County Council.

what is now Amenbury Lane and the avenue of limes leading from Leyton Road to Rothamsted) and a part of " the comon feild called Coleman feild " lying to the west of Collins Close.

The Bull appears to have remained in the possession of the Abbott family for nearly forty years. During this period frequent references to the house are found in the Rothamsted deeds. Thus by an indenture dated August 13th, 1639, John Abbott leased to John Benning of Berkhamsted 50 acres of land in Harpenden " lately in the tenure or occupation of William Catlyn, but since leased to one Affabel Catlyn" "together with one messuage or tenement anciently called or known by the name of the Angell and now the Black Bull . . . which said messuage and last rented premises are situate in Harpenden and were then in the tenure or occupation of the said William Catlyn."

Ten years later, by a deed dated May 7th, 1649, John Abbott demised for 1,000 years to Richard Wood the elder of Berkhamsted " all that the messuage or tenement with the appurtenances heretofore called or known by the name of the Angell but now or lately called or known by the name or sign of the Black Bull and being in the tenure or occupation of the said John Abbott his assigne or assignes"—John Abbott's assign being, there can be little doubt, the Affabel Catlyn named above as having been in the occupation of the Bull ten years before.

The last mention of the property relevant to our present subject is in 1651, when it was sold by John Abbott to Sir John Wittewronge for £400. In the deed of conveyance dated " in the year of our Lord God according to the computation of the Church of England one thousand six hundred and fifty " the house is described as " heretofore knowne by the name of the Angell and now or lately by the name or signe of the Black Bull." John Abbott's receipt for £300 " in part of £400 for the full price and purchase of a messuage in Harpenden Street called the Bull and tenne acres of land there," is in existence. The remaining

£100 was to remain on mortgage, and at the same time John Abbott took from Sir John Wittewronge a lease of the property for 21 years.

During a considerable part of the period of thirty-eight years that the Bull inn was owned by Robert Abbott and his descendants, it appears to have been in the actual occupation of members of the Catlyn family, who we must assume held the property on a leasehold tenure from the Abbots. Indeed, in the indenture of 1639, referred to above, Affabel Catlyn is explicitly stated to have held a lease of the Bull Inn, which had before this been in the occupation of William Catlyn; and in the deed of sale to Sir John Wittewronge in 1651,¹⁷ Affabel was one of the witnesses—evidence that he still had an interest in the property. Another witness was Humphrey Taylor,¹⁸ then or very shortly afterwards the owner of Bennetts. Going back still further, in a Lay Subsidy (Taxation roll) of the years 1625-6¹⁹ we find two William Catlyns taxed in Harpenden, each to the amount of 8/- on an assessment of in goods; "William Catlyn, Brewer," and "William Catlyn of the Bull." A few years later, in 1633 and 1635, the same two William Catlins occur in the Court Rolls of the Manor of Rothamsted²⁰ as tenants of the Manor: "Willmus Catlin padoxator" (the Low Latin word for brewer) and "Willmus Catlin de Bennetts Butts." It is obvious from a comparison of these entries with that in the Subsidy Roll of 1625/6 that William Catlyn of the Bull is identical with William Catlin of Bennetts Butts, and that the Bull and Bennetts Butts are alternative descriptions of the same place—the one describing the house itself, and the other its position.

¹⁷ See also in the P.R.O. Feet of Fines, Herts., Trin. 1 Wittewronge, Knt., *quer.* Affabel Catlyn and Sarah his wife *deforc.* Lands in Harpenden *alias* Hardinge.

¹⁸ Humphrey Taylor was an important man in Harpenden about this time. He was, almost certainly, the son of Richard Taylor, of Clapham, co. Beds., a Bencher of Lincolns Inn, and a J.P. for the county, by his wife Elizabeth Boteler, of Biddenham. Humphrey Taylor was born at Bedford in 1622, and lived at Harpenden at any rate from 1649. He was Steward of the Manor of Rothamstead from about 1659 to 1671, when he left Harpenden to live at Eversholt in his native county, where he died in 1704. In 1657 he, along with three others, paid the Government £5,200 a year for the privilege of farming the new impost "upon all Beere, Ale, Perry, Cyder and Mead or Metheglyn" in the County of Hertford (Domestic State Papers in the P.R.O., Interregnum, Vol 78, fo. 337).

¹⁹ In the Public Record Office, Lay Subsidies, Herts. 1 Car I (= 1625/6) 121/329.

²⁰ In the custody of Mr. H. Soutar, the Steward of the Manor. In a Calendar which I have recently compiled of a small selection of the Wittewronge muniments these two documents are indexed as Bundle 20, b. and c. respectively.

One or two other references, out of many to be found in the Wittewronge deeds, may perhaps be noted. In the Court Book of the Manor of Rothamsted, Vol. I, fo. 58, Court held 23rd July, 1635, the purchase money in a sale of property was to be paid " at the now dwelling house of Wm. Catlin called the bull in Harpenden."

A later reference occurs²¹ in the marriage settlement (1693) of Jacob Wittewronge (son of James Wittewronge of Lincoln's Inn and grandson of Sir John), and Elizabeth Coghill : " That messuage or tenement with the appurtenances in Harpenden heretofore commonly called or knowne by the name or signe of the Black Bull, now of the School House, and all those six closes of meadowe and pasture ground thereunto belonging and therewith used and enjoyed containing in all about one and twenty acres be the same more or less now in the tenure or occupation of Elizabeth Plomer."

Another interesting little piece of evidence can be adduced. William Catlyn left a will, proved in 1643 in the Archdeaconry Court of Huntingdon at Hitchin, in which, after leaving his body " to the earth to be decently buried at the discretion of his executor," he bequeaths " to Elizabeth my wife the upper Chamber over the hall during her life, with free ingress, egress and regress to and from the same, with all the linen, moveables and household stuff within my house " (with certain exceptions). The testator mentions his eldest son William, and also a grandson William Catlyn. The reversion of the upper chamber, and the house itself, goes to his son Thomas Catlin. And an important point to note is that in the " Old Bull " to-day there still exists an upper room, with the unusual feature of a door in the outside wall, which was specially noted by the Historical Monuments Commissioners in the Report I have quoted. Access to this upper chamber was formerly gained by an outside staircase, which was no doubt made of wood and has long since disappeared. The door remains, though it is now blocked up, and seems to strengthen the evidence that William Catlyn's house, a part of which he devised in this curious way to his wife, was actually the old Bull Inn " anciently known as the Angell."

²¹ Wittewronge Deeds, Bdle. 18, g., fo. 29.

The foregoing evidence seems to prove that the Bull Inn, which was in the occupation of the Catlyn family in 1625, and where William Catlyn died in 1642—and Bennetts Butts, where his son William Catlyn died in 1644, are alternative descriptions of the same property—or rather, perhaps, that the one name describes the house, and the other its position.

But why *Bennetts Butts*?—Here it may be as well to correct a misstatement frequently made, that the three-gabled Elizabethan house near the Bull, now known as Bennetts, was so called from its undoubted connection²² with the Rothamsted family of Bennet-Lawes-Wittewronge. The name Bennet, however, only came into the Wittewronge family in 1695, when Elizabeth Wittewronge, the daughter of James and the grand-daughter of Sir John Wittewronge, married Thomas Bennet, the London publisher; but the title-deeds of the house show clearly that it was known by the name of Bennetts at least as early as 1674. At this time it was owned by "Humphrey Taylor gentleman of Eversholt, co. Beds," whose name has been mentioned above as a witness to the deed by which Sir John Wittewronge became the owner of the Bull Inn property; and the name Bennetts Butts has been shown to occur in the Rothamsted Court Rolls as early as 1633. The original of the name must therefore be looked for earlier than this date.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out with the object of discovering who was the "Bennett" who gave his name to the house, and presumably to the Butts. But unfortunately the Lay Subsidy Rolls at the Public Record Office afford no trace of any Bennett family in Harpenden from the early part of the reign of Henry VIII down to the end of that of Charles II, although these early taxation rolls almost take the place of a modern directory, at any rate for the richer and more well-to-do sections of the population.

But there is in the Public Record Office a document (Feet of Fines, Herts, Hilary 1658) showing that in the

²² Bennetts was bought by Thomas Lawes, the grandfather of Sir John Bennet Lawes, in 1785, and remained in the possession of the family until 1923.

year 1658 Thomas Nicholl, Esq., bought a property in Harpenden from Solomon Sibley, the elder, Solomon Sibley the younger, William Pond and Jonathan Bennett. The deed does not enable us to identify with certainty the property which thus changed hands, which included " one messuage, one cottage, one garden, one orchard " and a considerable quantity of land; but it is at any rate possible that it included the house still known as Bennetts, and that its owner's name, as so often in those days, attached itself to the house in which he lived. Efforts to trace further details of the history or career of Jonathan Bennett have not so far yielded any results; but if this theory of the origin of the name Bennetts is correct, Jonathan, and probably his forebears, may have lived in the house at least as early as 1640.

A curious point is raised by the will, dated 8th June, 1547, and proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Huntingdon three weeks later, of Johanna Cutte,²³ of Harpenden, widow : " Item . . . I give and bequeithe to William Clerke the sonne of Thomas Clerke of Harpenden all my landys and tenements called Bennetts lyinge and beinge within the parishe of Flamystede in the countie of Hertford " . . . etc. There does not seem to be any house known as " Bennetts " in Flamstead at the present day. The original Court Rolls of the manor of Flamstead, covering a short period from 23. Eliz. to 6. Jas. I (1581-1606), are in existence (British Museum Add. MS. 6035). No " tenement called Bennetts " occurs in these rolls, but " Bennetts Lane " in Flamstede is mentioned several times at various Courts Baron held between 1590 and 1604. In the latter year " Bennetts Wood " is also mentioned. As Johanna Cutte was of Harpenden, there is just the possibility that in the registered copy of the will " my tenement called Bennetts . . . lyinge within the parish of Flamystede " may be a scribe's error for " the parish of Harpenden " ; in which case there would be no doubt as to the identity of the property, and the name Bennetts, of the Butts as

²³ Her name appears earlier in the same year in a Lay Subsidy Roll for Harpenden (P.R.O., 270/39, I Ed. VI). She is taxed £3 for her holding in land, and must have been a wealthy woman ; for this is the largest tax paid on this occasion by anyone in Harpenden, with the exception of Edmund Bardolph, the owner of Rothamsted, who paid £6.

well as of the house, would be traceable back as far as the year 1547* But the occurrence of Bennetts Lane and Bennetts Wood at Flamstead seem to put such an *ad hoc* explanation out of court; and it is safer to say that until further evidence comes to light, the question is still undecided.