

A DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF THE  
MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

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THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES  
IN  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND  
ITS BORDERS.

THIS is a simple little book about the mediaeval pigeon-cotes still left! in this county, and of a few on its borders. I only include the dovecotes standing by themselves, or, what I may term them, the pigeon-cotes proper, built for pigeons alone, not those in the ends of barns or over cables. There is no doubt the cotes are buildings which were started long years ago, and were first introduced into this country by the Romans. Dovecotes are mentioned by Ovid, in lines written by him two thousand years ago:

"Aspicias ut veniant ad Candida tecta  
columbae,  
Accipiat nullas sordida turris aves."  
"See to the whitewash'd cot what doves  
have flown!  
While that unwhitewash'd not a bird will  
own."

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

And again we find in the book "On Farming," written by "Varro," thirty-six years before Christ was born, a most delightful account of pigeons and cotes, so interesting that I do not hesitate to give it in his own words:

"Meanwhile Appius's servant came from the Consul, and said that the angurs were wanted. Appius went out from the hall and at that moment there fluttered into it a flock of pigeons, giving Merula occasion to say to Axius, "Now if ever you had set up a pigeon-house you might have imagined these birds to be yours, wild though they are." For in a pigeon-house there are usually the two kinds, one, rock-pigeons as some call them. kept in turrets and gable-ends (columen) of the farmstead—it is from Columen they get the name Columbae\*—and seeking the highest places on buildings through their inborn timidity. Hence the wild kind mostly haunt turrets, flying to them from the fields and back again as the fancy takes them. The other kind of pigeon is less shy, for it feeds contentedly at home about the doorstep. This is generally white, while the other or wilder kind is of different colours,

\* I may here say this chapter and in fact all the book, was translated from the Latin by Mr. Lloyd Storr. Best. M.A.

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but not white. From the union of these two stocks comes a third mongrel kind, which is bred for profit. These are put in a place, called by some a peristeron, by others peristerophion, in which as many as five thousand birds are confined.

The peristeron is built in the shape of a large testudo, with a vaulted roof. It has a narrow entrance, with windows latticed in the Carthaginian fashion, or wider than these, and are furnished with a double trellis, so that the whole place may be well lit, and no snakes or other noxious animals may be able to get in. Inside every part of the walls and ceilings is coated with the smoothest possible cement made from marble; outside, too, the walls in the neighbourhood of the windows are plastered over to prevent a mouse or a lizard creeping by any way into the pigeon cotes. For nothing is more timid than a pigeon. Many round niches or nesting holes are made in a row, one for each pair of pigeons, and there should be as many rows as possible from ground to ceiling. Each niche should be made so that the pigeon may have an opening just big enough for it to come in and out, and should have an inside diameter of three palms (one foot) under each row of pigeon-holes. A shelf, eight inches broad, should be attached to

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the wall, which the birds can use as a landing and walk on to it when they like. There should be water flowing in for drinking and washing, for pigeons are very clean birds. The pigeon-keeper should therefore sweep the place out several times a month, as the dirt made there is an excellent manure, so much so that some authors speak of it as the best of all. If any pigeon has come to any harm the keeper must look after it, if one has died he must remove it, and if any young birds are fit for sale he must bring them out. He must also have a fixed place which is shut off from the others by a net to which the hen birds that are sitting may be transferred, and it must be possible for the mothers to fly out of it away from the pigeon-cote. For this there are two reasons, because in case they are losing appetite, and are growing feeble in captivity, a flight into the country and the free air brings them back to their strength, and because they act as a decoy, for they themselves in any case come back to the cote because of their young ones. That pigeons do return to a place is shown by the fact that people often let them fly from their laps in the theatre, and they return home, and unless they did they would never be let loose. Food is given them in small troughs placed round the walls, which are

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filled from outside by means of pipes. They are fond of millet, wheat, barley, peas, kidney beans and vetch. These methods should be used as far as possible by those who keep wild pigeons in turrets, and also in the roofs of farm buildings.

For your pigeon-cote you must get birds of the right age, not young chicks, and not old hens, and as many cocks as hens. Nothing is more prolific than the pigeon. Thus within a space of forty days a hen bird conceives, lays, hatches, and rears its young. And this is continued all the year round, the only interval being from the winter solstice to the spring equinox. They have two young ones at a time, and when they have grown up and come to their strength these go on breeding at the same rate as their mothers. Those who fatten young pigeons to increase their market value keep them apart from the others as soon as they are covered with down. Then they stuff them with chewed white bread in winter twice a day, in summer three times. Those who are starting to get their feathers have their legs broken, and, left in the nest, are given over to their mothers' care, so she feeds them and herself all day long. Birds thus reared fattened more quickly than the others.

At Rome, if a pair are handsome, of good



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colour, without blemish, and of good breed, they sell quite commonly for 200 sesterces (£1 12s. 0d.), while a pair of exceptional merit will fetch 1,000 sesterces (£8.) Lately, when a trader wanted to buy them at that price from L. Axius, a Roman eques, the latter refused to part with them for less than 400 denarii (12 guineas). Said Axius, "If I could have bought a ready-made pigeon-house, just as I bought earthenware pigeon-boxes, I should by this time have gone to buy it and have it sent on to my villa." "Just as though," said Pica, "there were not at this moment plenty of pigeon-houses in Rome, as well as in the country, or do you consider that people who have dove-cotes under tiles do not possess pigeon-houses, though some of these have plant worth more than 100,000 sesterces (£800). Now I should advise you to buy the whole plant belonging to one of them, and before building /in the country, to learn thoroughly here in Rome, how to pocket the big gain of fifty per cent every day." Thus writes Varro, the greatest book writer of his or any other day, for it is said he wrote 490 books. Thus we know there were a lot of pigeon-cotes in Rome, and also in Italy, before the birth of Christ.

Now I give what Charles Waterton, of

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Walton Hall, near Wakefield, Yorks., says about dovecote pigeons, their habits, and how best to keep them. Waterton was one of the keenest lovers and protectors of birds of his or any other time, an eminent field 'naturalist, and, for the times he lived in, a great traveller. He wrote three volumes called "Essays on Natural History." They were published in 1839, 1844 and 1858, mostly about birds, and are delightful reading, and clearly show what an accurate observer he was. He was also the first Englishman who made a sanctuary for birds, which consisted of his beautiful park of 268 acres, well wooded, and having in it a lake of 26 acres. This he surrounded by a great stone wall running from 8 feet to fourteen in height. It 'cost him 9,000 pounds, even ;in those days when a pound went as far, or further, than two do now. No gun was ever fired inside his fortification as he called it. He also had bird boxes put up on many trees, and built a tower for starlings and owls, and cut holes in decayed trees for the latter, for he loved them and knew their value. Here he lived to a good old age, and when he died was buried in his loved park.

He writes in 1837, the following, which gives his idea why the keeping of great quantities of pigeons is dying out, and I think

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in a way he is right: "Our common dove-cotes pigeon is only a half-reclaimed bird, not being sufficiently domesticated to be deemed private property in the strictest sense of the word. Thus I may rise any quantity of these pigeons, but if they should forsake my dovecot and retire to that of my neighbour I cannot claim them. However, in order that dovecot pigeons may not fall into the hands of those who contribute nothing to their support the legislature has enacted a fine of forty shillings, to be paid by him who has been convicted of having shot a dovecot pigeon. This Act, till of late years, was of great use to the farmer, for it enabled him to raise this useful bird in vast quantities, but now the times are changed. The owners of dovecots have to complain not only of bargemen, who shoot their pigeons along the whole line of canals whenever an opportunity offers, but also of a plundering set of land vagabonds, who attack the dovecots in the dead of night, and sometimes actually rob them of their last remaining bird. The origin of this novel species of depredation can be clearly traced to the modern amusement known by the name of a pigeon-shooting match. A purveyor is usually engaged by the members, and he offers a tempting price to poachers and other loose characters, and they

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agree to supply him with any quantity of pigeons. Generally under the cover of a dark night these thieves go to the place where they have previously seen a long ladder and carry it to the cote, then they mount, and over the glover, or aperture on the top of the building they put a net. Then they descend from the roof and try to force the door. If this is too strong to force, then they send a man back to the roof, and another taps on the door. This causes the pigeons to try to-escape, and they rush into the net and are taken out by the man there and are handed to others below him and placed in hampers, and in this way numbers are taken, and in some cases cotes are cleared to the last bird."

"No farmyard can be considered complete without a well stocked dovecote, the contents of which make the owner an ample return and repay him abundantly for the depredations which pigeons are wont to make upon his ripening, corn. He has a goodly supply of delicious young birds, for his table, and the tillage from the cote which is of great advantage to his barley land. Moreover, the pigeons render him an essential service by consuming millions of seeds that fall in the autumn, which, if allowed to remain on the ground, would rise

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up the following year and take time and money to destroy. A dovecot ought to be well lighted, and it should be white-washed inside once every year, and cleaned out twice. The barn owl and starling are harmless visitors. They repair to it merely for shelter, or for a breeding-place. I always like to see them in mine, which is a lofty and spacious building, and last season (1836) it furnished seventy-three dozens of young pigeons. The dovecot pigeons, like the rest of the genus, are remarkable for retiring to their roost at an early hour, and leaving it late in the morning. Nothing can surpass the attachment of these birds to the cot of their choice, and provided you do not absolutely molest them by repeated discharges of firearms they can' scarcely be driven from it. Our ancestors generally built their dovecots in an open field apart from the farmyard, fearing, probably, that the noise and bustle might interrupt the process of incubation. Our pigeons may be divided into two classes, viz., dovecot pigeons, which are destined for the use of the table, and fancy birds which are carefully kept apart so as to keep the breed pure, and are kept by pigeon fanciers, whilst the farmer confines his attentions to the more profitable class, which is usually known by the name of dovecote pigeons, and

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also by some are called blue rocks. They feed in all parts of the country, often quite a' distance from their home. There existed a law, namely, that if anybody should kill old dovecot pigeons (no matter when) he was fined one guinea for every old bird wilfully destroyed, and even the Lord of the Manor himself could not transgress with impunity this useful law, and in order to encourage fair play it was deemed fit by common consent to prohibit the placing of what was called a saltcat in any dovecot. Now a saltcat was understood to be a composition of barley meal, salt and corn, forming a most tempting repast to the whole race of dovecot pigeons. When I was a boy, I have heard my father say the owner was not allowed to whitewash the outside of it, lest too great a number of other people's pigeons might forsake their own ordinary cot, and be tempted to take up their abode in it. Nothing can be more attractive to the pigeon family than a dovecot well whitewashed inside and out. There were pigeon cots to be seen in every village, or near it, in this part of Yorkshire, generally in a croft at a proper distance from the farm establishment for fear that dogs barking, or the sound of the flail, or the passing of the labourers would disturb the incubating pigeons and thus lessen the profits of the cote.

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But my father, who was a keen observer of Nature, knew better, and he erected his modern dovecote nearly in the centre of his buildings. The very first season proved that he had acted wisely, and I, myself, in latter times, have known ninety-three dozens of. young pigeons to have been taken out of this cote in the course of one year. Whilst the owner could protect his pigeons, numerous. square cotes of handsome architecture, embellished the sylvan scenery of the adjacent country, and as old pigeons were not in request for the table these dovecotes were sure to have a plentiful supply of breeding birds, and the farmers vied with each other in keeping theirs in thorough repair. These buildings contained separate holes for each pair of pigeons, and in front of these holes Was a row of bricks, from wall to wall, jutting out like a terrace, so that the birds could alight and walk on. A window, sometimes two, gave light to the interior of the building, and there was a large square, glazed frame on the top of the roof, supported by four short legs, just giving room enough betwixt the roof and the frame to allow of the ingress and egress of the pigeons. It was called a Glover, supposed to be a corruption of the French word onvert, that is, an opening. Inside the cot there was an upright shaft working in a

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socket on the floor, and also on the top by means of a pivot, which was let into a crossbeam. A frame forming steps from the • bottom to the top, and joined here and there into the upright shaft afforded an easy ascent to the climber in quest of young pigeons. Up this he used to mount, step by step, and with one foot on it and the other on the jutting bricks, already mentioned, he could go round the dovecot searching every hole in the place with perfect safety to himself. This ladder is called a potence, A well-planned dovecote ought to have solid walls for a couple of yards from the foundation to prevent vermin from making their way upwards, and there ought to be light from a window independent from that which enters at the Glover. My new dovecote has two large windows, and six hundred and sixty-six holes or recesses for the purpose of incubation. It is cleaned out and whitewashed inside once a year. As dovecot pigeons are considered a kind of common stock throughout the country, no farmer ever takes umbrage • when he sees a flight of strangers' pigeons alight at his barn door, because he is quite aware that the pigeons that incubate in his own cote have a similar privilege in other premises at any distance from home. Whilst I was in Italy, my dovecot was robbed twice



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of its old birds, so being determined to put a stop to the plunder I pulled my old cote down and I have erected another in a safer place, which I have made so high that no ladder can be found of sufficient length to reach the roof. Dovecots are now much diminished in numbers (written in 1857). Those which formerly stood in paddocks have either been pulled down or left to remain without any hopes on the part of their owners that they will ever again become productive, whilst those in the villages exhibit an appearance of manifest neglect on the part of the farmers. In fact, the modern amusement of pigeon-shooting entails poverty on the pigeon-cot. The village of Walton •bears ample testimony to this."

I have drawn largely on Varro, because he tells us something of pigeons and pigeon-cotes in ancient times, as far back as before Christ was born, and on Charles Waterton, of Walton Hall, Yorks., because he gives us an interesting and clear account of these birds and their houses in his time.

After giving so full an account of what Varro writes, nearly two thousand years ago, and also what Charles Waterton says about them in the earlier part of the last century, . it leaves little for me to add. Why were they built? To house and breed pigeons, so as to

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provide fresh meat at a time when fresh beef and mutton could not be had. In days gone by, I might say in mediaeval days, it was customary for the Lord of the Manor and other persons of position to have a dovecote in order to supply their tables with fresh meat and thus relieve the monotony of eating salted food all through the winter, for it was necessary to reduce the live stock at the end of each summer, when the 'pastures became bare and it was difficult to provide provender wherewith to fatten cattle and sheep during the winter months. All animals which were to be kept for breeding purposes, or young store stock, were turned out in the grass fields and were fed on hay or straw, and, you will notice, the grass fields about the old villages and farms had hedges growing in any way but straight. They were planted on banks and had curves here and there. This was to shelter the cattle during the storms of snow and from the bitter winds. All the other animals that were fit for the butcher were killed and salted down. This food got very monotonous, and from time to time pigeon pies and pigeons boiled and roasted were a nice change. During these times pigeon-cotes were dotted about here and there, and vast quantities of pigeons were kept, for I have seen it stated that in those times there were

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understood to be about twenty-six thousand of these cotes about in England and Scotland, and if we say they would in each cote average five hundred birds, and this would be a very small average, we have over 13,000,000 pigeons. I have it on high authority there would be nearly twice as many. At any rate there was an enormous quantity of doves kept.

Now why did this keeping of pigeons die out? Well, it was in this way. Early in the seventeenth century turnips were introduced into England, from Holland, and soon after this clovers and grasses were grown, being sown with the corn on the fields which had grown turnips. These were mown the following year in some of the fields and made into hay, and with the turnips, which were now a general crop, provided abundant food for beasts and sheep. This not only carried them over the winter months, but fattened them better than simple hay could have done, and altered the whole system of farming, bringing a great quantity of wild land under cultivation, for even the light, poor, sandy soils if well manured will produce a fair crop of roots, and if you get a fair crop and eat it off with sheep and give them cake, that field will grow not only a fair crop of corn, but a good crop of seeds, so that

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thousands of acres which had been poor, wild grass fields, now provided roots and seeds, and fresh meat could be procured all the year round. It was in those times the dovecotes began to be neglected, and now have almost died out. For seventy years back it was quite the exception not to find on every farm of any size a dovecote with pigeons in it. Now it is the exception to find one that has pigeons in it. This is the great reason they have died out, the growth of turnips and seeds. Charles Waterton gave his reason, stating that because the price offered for pigeons for shooting matches was so high that thieves were tempted to steal them, and owners were tempted to sell the old birds. That, in a very small way, was one of causes, but it was the turnips that did it, say I and others. Even now when tame pigeon shooting matches have been made illegal there is no sign that the cotes that still stand are being again re-stocked.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE ROCK DOVE.

SOME of the readers of this little book may not know what the pigeons which were kept in the days past were like. The following account of them may be of interest. It is now universally admitted that it is from the stock of the wild rock doves that all the varieties of our pigeons have sprung, and that the dove-cote pigeon of to-day is the descendant of those birds that our ancestors stocked their pigeon cotes with, viz., the wild rock dove, and this is a description of the bird.

The male is from a foot to fourteen inches in length, his head and neck are dark slate blue, glossed all round with green, which shines a steely blue when held in certain positions and in different lights. Below, on the forepart and sides of the neck, it is richly shot with coppery purple. The back and lesser wing coverts are a pale dove blue, the lower part of the back, just above the tail, is . white, below this white patch the upper tail coverts are slate blue. The tail has the top part slate blue, and the end of it is black, the breast is greyish-blue, there are twelve feathers in the tail, iris pale orange, the eyelids reddish, and the legs and toes are carmine red. The wings expand to the width of two

## THE ROCK DOVE.

feet one inch to two feet three inches, have the first feather shorter than the second and third, which are about the same length, the fourth is much shorter than the first. There are two bars of black across the wings, the second, the shorter one, ends near the body with a black patch. The female is slightly smaller than the male, and her plumage is not so bright. The young when hatched are covered with a yellow down. We find the rock pigeons living and nesting on the Eastern side of England, where the cliffs are high, more commonly than on the Western, still they occur sparingly in Somerset, Devonshire and Cornwall, and in scattered colonies along the Welsh coast, but it is on the Yorkshire coast, about Flamborough, that they abound, also between Filey and Scarborough. Some few inhabit the cliffs in Northumberland and Berwickshire, and here and there along the East coast of Scotland, and I have seen a goodly number in the cliffs of Orkney and Shetland, but never any in St. Kilda, though I have steamed round that lone Western isle several times. No doubt it is that there would be little food for them. No bird gets on the wing quicker, and the way they rush out of the sea cliffs over the boat is an eye-opener. Thus they offer a severe test of skill to the gunner, even to that crack

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performer, the late Lord Ripon, who, when staying with Lord Londesborough, at Scarborough, made several expeditions to the Speeton Cliffs and found if he could kill four out of six it was about a fair average, as he was handicapped by the rocking of the boat and not being able to turn round as quickly as he wanted.

## THE ROCK DOVE OR BLUE ROCK. FROM THIS PIGEON ALL OUR PIGEONS HAVE SPRUNG.

ALONG the coast where beetling cliffs o'er  
    hang the surging foam,  
'Tis in these cliffs, in caverns deep, the Blue  
    Rocks make their home.  
At daybreak and at evening time they swiftly  
    come and go,  
On whistling pinions, through the air, in sun,  
    in rain and snow.  
Way inland to the stubble fields in companies  
    they fly,  
And feed on corn and other seeds their sharp  
    eyes quickly spy.  
Starting directly daylight breaks, and back  
    at close of day,

## THE ROCK DOVE OR BLUE ROCK.

Be the home Journey short or long, they never light or  
stay;  
And when the winds are very 'rough their' flight is always  
low,  
Just clearing the trees and hedges, a dove blue crowd they  
go.  
Then skimming o'er the frowning cliff, they wheel in  
circling flight,  
And sweeping round above the sea, upon the. ledges  
light.  
Here, if the eve is still and calm, they strut about and coo,  
Their few and simple notes are these, Coo-ru; Coo-ru;  
Coo-ru.  
Then when the dusky shadows fall on rock and sea and  
wave,  
They pass into their sleeping place, in fissure and in cave;  
And here they spend a restful night, whether its short or  
long,  
Sitting in pairs in peaceful sleep, lulled by the wild  
waves' song.

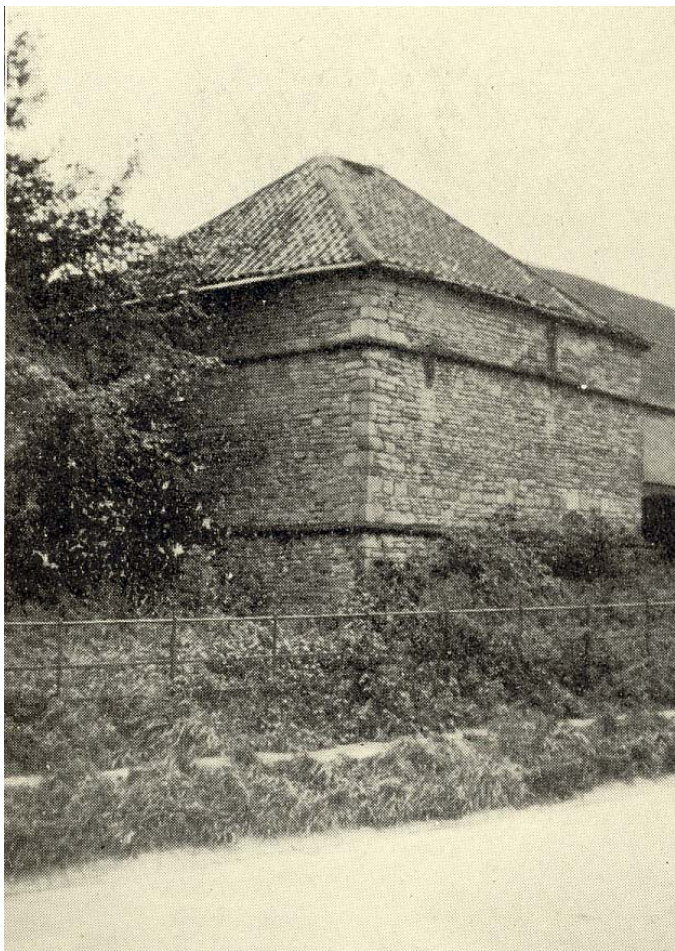
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### THE CHURCH WARSOP DOVECOTE.

INSTEAD of having the dovecotes in alphabetical order, I shall give a description of them in the order I saw them, and the first one I visited was at Church Warsop, which is about five miles from Mansfield, and it was on February the 3rd, 1927. It stands just outside the farm buildings to the North-west of the Church, and is a very substantial building. The material used is limestone, quarried in the neighbourhood, a stone that wears well and looks well. The roof now is tiled, but I should say when it was first built it had a thatched one, and the date would be in the Tudor days, probably when the Church was built. It is now the property of Sir Hugo FitzHerbert, Bart. It is twenty-four feet high to the square of the walls, which are two feet nine inches thick, and the door into it is five feet three inches high and two feet six inches wide. In size the cote is nearly a square, being twenty-four feet from west to east, and twenty-two feet from north to south. The stones in the walls vary a lot in size; some are quite small, others of large dimensions, they are roughly dressed on the outside. and on the inside. In these walls are six hundred and



CHURCH WARSOP COTE.

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## CHURCH WARSOP.

fifty nesting places, each one having a separate slab of stone for the pigeon to alight on. They stand out from the wall about six inches, and are oval in shape. The entrance to each nesting place is eight inches high and six inches wide, and the passage is fourteen inches in length. On the left, near the end, is a circular space for the nest. These were made as the walls were built up, and must have taken a lot of time as they are smoothly dressed. On the outside of the walls are two string courses. These are to prevent rats and other vermin from getting up to the roof. One is just above the door, five feet up, and the other about twelve feet above the ground. In cotes of square shape, with well built walls, they are not so wide as in tower or round shaped ones. These latter have the tops smaller than at the ground level, so slant somewhat, and though very gradual they would be much easier for rats to get up than on a plumb wall. These vermin, however, are wonderful climbers and very persevering and succeed in getting up places that one would think it quite impossible for anything without wings to do so. Old as this building is, the walls are in very good condition, and look like lasting for many years yet. The cost of this cote must have been considerable, though money

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

in those days went much further than in these times, and the mortar was very different and set as hard as cement does now. Very little sand was used, and more time given to the mixing than in these times of rush and contract. Of course, all cote walls that had nesting places in them had to be thick ones, but where the walls were only double brick the boxes were placed in wooden frames, and each compartment was of wood, or wattle, and in the latter the nests were made of clay or lime, and hair. This fine cote is now used for storing farm implements, a dull silent place, and very different from the days when it was inhabited by hundreds of pigeons. During spring and summer, and deep into the autumn, they would be coming and going, bringing food for their nestlings, and returning for more, and scores of others would be sunning themselves on its roof, and the place would resound with their cooings. These notes are soft and low when the birds are making love to each other, but short and gruff when angry. When they fight they do not use their beaks as much as some birds do, but side Up to each other and slap with their wings. During the winter they go further afield for food, and feed on the grain that has been left from the harvest, and on the small seeds growing amongst the stubble, thus they do

## CHURCH WARSOP.

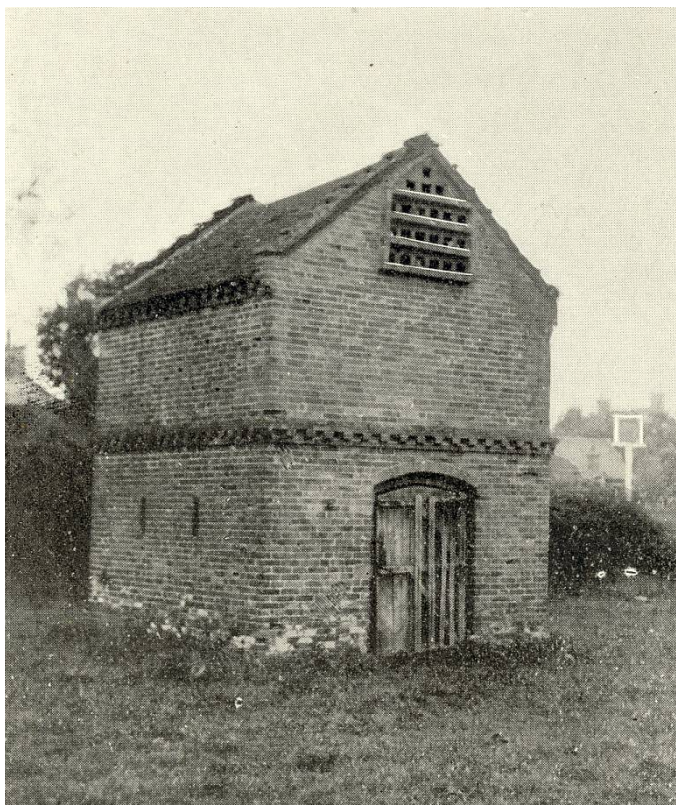
much good. Then when "evening shadows" are falling they rush homewards on swift pinions, for evening is the time they are fed, not in the morning, because 'their owners well know they will certainly return then, and if one fed and another did not many pigeons would be lost, especially when cotes are not very far apart, so it was a wise policy not to spare the corn in the evening. After feeding they pass into the cote, some into their nesting holes, others roost on the tops of the walls and on the beams. Here they enjoy a peaceful rest which they have well earned, for it is known that with the pies they provide and the money for those sold, a dovecote is a good investment, to say nothing the wonderful fertilizing power of the cleanings of the cotes, which should be done at least twice a year.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE DOVECOTE AT EPPERSTONE.

#### MAJOR T. HUSKINSON'S.

ON the 9th of February, I motored over to Epperstone to see Mr. Huskinson's cote. It was a typical winter's day, with a keen north-easterly wind which would have shaved the beard off an oyster. We passed through Oxtan, a pretty village, and then along the road below Epperstone and Oxtan Park Woods, where in days long past I have seen many a fox found. They are large and beautiful pieces of woodland, where I have shot. This cote stands in a grass paddock at the lower end of the village. It is a small one, but pretty in shape, and is built of bricks, and is the following size:—Thirteen feet nine inches on the front, and thirteen feet nine deep—a square. It is fifteen feet high, with a tiled roof. The ends of the two gables have elaborate sort of crow steps. The bricks stand out in every other step, about three inches, the result being a very pretty bit of brick work. and speaks clearly of the time when bricklayers laid many more bricks in a day's work than they do now, and also took a greater pride in their work. The bottom part



EPPERSTONE COTE

Face p. 26

## EPPERSTONE.

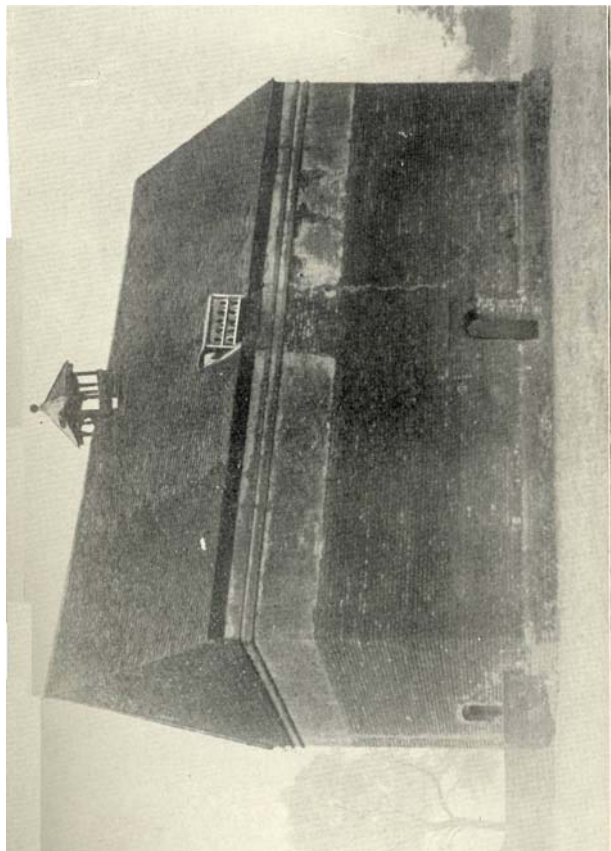
of the cote forms a shed for horses or cattle. This shed is ten feet high, so the walls of the cote are five feet up to the square, and with ' the gable ends provide room for a good few nesting places, but the brick walls are only nine inches thick there, for the nesting boxes must have been fitted against them and probably were wooden squares on legs and lined with clay. These have now disappeared and the few pigeons that still are about must nest on the top of the walls. There is a string course just under the top, but it is not a very deep one, and another about the middle. The bricks have mellowed to a beautiful tint, and whole building is a very pleasing object. Major T. Huskinson says the date when it was built would be about the end of the seventeenth century. It forms a pretty object, and I must own to the soft impeachment that I envied the owner of it.



## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE WOLLATON DOVECOTE.

It was on April 1st that I visited this dovecote. The wind blew cold, and from the east, and dull and grey was the sky. Buses took me all the way, changing in Nottingham. During the last few years this means of conveyance has increased to a wonderful extent, and now must be a serious drawback to railway dividends. But they are wonderfully convenient for getting about the country at a very moderate cost. After passing through Nottingham we soon came to the Park at Wollaton. It is over seven hundred acres in extent, with a lake of over twenty acres, well timbered, and with one of the grandest Tudor houses in England. Formerly there was a herd of white wild park cattle in it, and there still is a herd of deer. A great brick wall surrounds it, several miles in length, and as roads ran on two sides of it the late Lord Middleton had it seven feet high so that no one could when walking look over it. A short time after, when he was walking in it on the Wollaton road side, he saw some one looking over and could for some distance see his head above it. He was very much put out and gave orders that several more rows of bricks should at once be built on that part.



WOLLATON COTE,

## WOLLATON

This was done, and shortly after he was told that the head and shoulders he had seen were those of a giant of over seven feet who was being shown at the Goose Fair at Nottingham, and who had that one morning been for a walk from Nottingham to Wollaton. This walk had caused his Lordship to spend a goodly number of pounds, which, if he had not been in the Park on that one morning, or sooner or later by a few minutes only, would have been saved—a pure bit of bad luck. The bus took me close to the cote which stands by itself in a fair sized grass paddock about the centre of the village and hard-by the interesting old Church, where I met Mr. Jordan, the late school master at Wollaton, who most kindly showed me the cote, and told me many interesting things pertaining to the village. There is no doubt about the time this pigeon cote was built, for on either side of the door are the initials F.W., and the bricks stand without doubt for Francis Willughby, who built the Hall in 1580. The bricks forming the initials are darker than the others in the wall, and still show clearly some distance away. The cote is nearly square, being fifteen feet from east to west, and seventeen feet six inches from north to south. The walls are twenty feet up to the square, and the roof is tiled. I was

## THE MEDI/EVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

much struck with the door, which is only four feet high and two feet five inches wide. Most of the old cotes have small doors, so that if pigeons were stolen big hampers could not be used as the doors being small prevented large ones going through them. Over this door was a half circle of two rows of bricks standing proud of the wall, so making it a very ornamental entrance. In the days when it was built the name of the owner was spelt Willughby, without the "o," and when that letter slipped in I know not, neither did the late Lady Middleton when I asked her. The walls are three feet three inches thick, and in the four are built five hundred and ninety nesting holes. These holes all have an entrance five inches high by five inches wide and go in thirteen inches and then have a roundish place on the left for the nest. Each row of nesting places has a course of bricks standing out below them for the pigeons to land on. Nesting places of this shape are called "L" shaped nests, but to me it looks as if that letter was the wrong way up. A short distance from the top of the wall are two string courses quite close together. This was perhaps to make sure of safety so that if the Vermin succeeded in getting over one he would fail to survive the second, but I have doubts whether any sort of vermin could ever

## WOLLATON

get up over the first one, for the walls are almost as smooth as the day when the bricks were laid, and the mortar is as hard as the bricks, but time has rotted the boards, so that I could not tell how many holes there were, but the one below it is still fairly sound, and there are ten entrance holes. There are no signs of an inside ladder, called a "potence," which was used to get to the nesting places, but the wonderful oak beams are still sound and in good order and fit to carry another roof when it is wanted. The cote is still inhabited by a few pigeons, and of what I saw of their plumage they are descendants of the rock doves, which birds are known to be the ancestors of the dovecote race. There are many places on the rocky coasts of England, Ireland and Scotland where they live and breed in large quantities. These dovecote-bred birds in years past were the ones used for pigeon shooting matches, and were often called "blue rocks." This trap-shooting is not now lawful, and I cannot say I am sorry it has been stopped.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

### UPTON, NEAR SOUTHWELL, COTE IN CHURCH TOWER.

April 9th. Another wet morning, after a pouring night, but the old saying came true once more, "Rain before seven, fine before eleven," and though it still poured hard at 10 a.m., by half-past it was lighter, and shortly after 11 a.m., though dull, grey, and cold, it ceased. So catching the eleven-thirty bus at Rainworth, I reached Upton at 12.25 a.m. I called at the Vicarage, and the Vicar, Rev. A. T. Randle, most kindly took me to the Church. It is of fair size, stands on the brow of the hill and overlooks the vale of Trent, a beautiful prospect. To the south-east I could see the tall spire of the fine Church at Newark-on-Trent, two hundred and sixty-eight feet high. There are, I think, only seven spires higher in England. I was much impressed with this grand sweep of country, a vale of rich pastures and rolling hills, through which the Trent winds like a silver ribbon. The tower is a most substantial one, and has withstood the storms of centuries, having been built in the reign of Henry III. It is beautifully topped with eight pinnacles, and a short spire rises in the centre of the square

## UPTON.

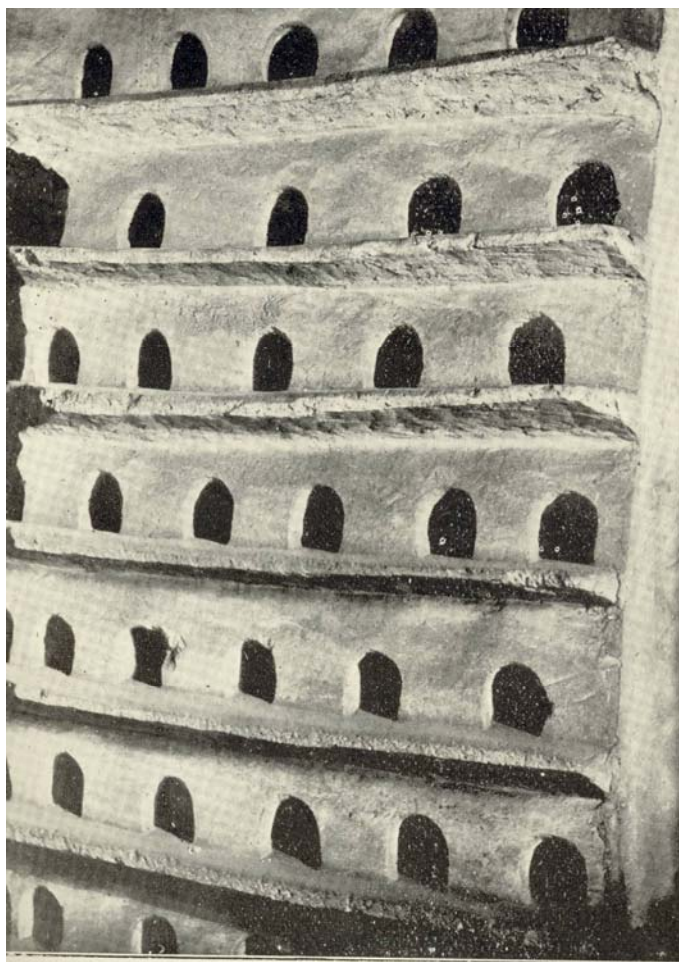
about twice as high as the outer ones. Passing through the Church, I came to the stairs, which are of stone, and on the south side of the tower and wind round a column. I counted thirty-six steps before I arrived and entered a squarish room about thirty feet above the Church floor. It measured nine feet from west to east, and twelve feet six inches from north to south. Its walls are three feet thick, and in it was the pigeon cote, or rather what had been the pigeon cote. On the walls were the nesting places that are now left, these numbering eighty-six. They are made of cement, and are fixed on the inside walls. Portions of those broken off show here and there, and I judged there must have been a good many more, they were well made, and varied little in size or shape. Under each row ran a ledge of three inches wide, these were for the pigeons to alight on. The entrance holes were about five inches and a half square and went in fifteen inches deep, but had no circular hole at end or side to nest in, still there was plenty of room, but none too much. The landing ledge ran under them from end to end of the wall, so there was not a separate landing step as in some cotes. Pigeon cotes in Church towers are rare, and Mr. Cooke, in his book on "Dovecotes," only mentions a few, one in Gloucestershire and one in

## THE MEDI/EVAL DOVECOTES W NOTTS

Herefordshire, and three or four others. I was pleased to think we had one in Nottinghamshire, and that I had seen it. I have to thank Mr. Summers, of South-well, for the capital photograph of this cote. The nesting places being fixed on the walls, would lead us to suppose that they had been placed there after the tower was built, but there is nothing to prove this was so, but from the look of the mortar I should certainly say that they have been there for very many years, for there is a great difference between the mortar of Tudor days and that of these times; the mortar of that period is as hard, or harder, than the bricks of to-day. The Vicar, the Rev. A. T. Randle, has most kindly lent me a small account of the Church at Upton, written by the late Mr. Harry Gill, who was a great authority on archaeology, and who took much interest in the Churches of Notts. He gives in this notice an interesting account of the dovecote in the tower.

"A flight of thirty-six steps leads to a chamber occupying the full dimensions of the tower (ten feet square or so). This was evidently intended to be permanently occupied, for it contained a fireplace, and a hagioscope, so arranged that the recluse could see the altar while lying on his couch. It is worthy of note that the chamber at





UPTON CHURCH TOWER COTE.

## UPTON.

Upton has also been used as a "columbarium," or dovecote. So far as I am aware, it is the only instance in the county of a Church tower being used for such a purpose. The fireplace and the hagioscope have been built up, and nesting holes composed chiefly of stucco were ranged round the walls in tiers twelve inches high. The vertical divisions fifteen inches from back to front are formed of thin, red bricks, or tiles, set on edge, and upon these divisions oak 'laths are laid to 'carry the stucco, of which each succeeding floor and ledge is made. The front of each compartment is pierced with an opening five inches wide and five inches high. Many of the nesting places were smashed when one of the bells fell some years back, and only eighty-seven complete ones remain. Several fine examples are to be found in Notts, but why a Church tower should come to be used for such a purpose is matter for conjecture."

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

### THE DOVECOTE AT EPPERSTONE MANOR.

It was not till some little time after seeing Major Huskinson's dovecote that I heard there was a second in the village. I wrote at once to the owner, Mr. Stanley Bourne, who very kindly gave me permission to see it. So on April 1 9th, I motored over to Epperstone on a bright spring-like day. I found, as we got nearer the village, that hedges and trees were much greener than with us, and the grass and seed fields had much more keep in them. This spring is a late one, especially with the arrival of spring birds. So far, I have not seen a single migrant. During the sixty years that I have been a keen observer of nature, I have always seen one of numerous spring birds before this date. We drove up to the Manor House and Mr. Bourne kindly took me to the dovecote. It stands on the west side of the entrance gate, and was built "Circa," 1 690. It is square in shape, and now covered with ivy. The roof covering has been renewed in late years. On measuring it I found it to be thirteen feet six inches from west to east, and fourteen feet six Inches from north to

## EPPERSTONE MANOR.

south, the walls being about eighteen feet high to the square. They are of brick, and two feet eight inches thick. The building is now used for storing fruit, and vegetables. The cote, in which the pigeons were, is nine feet above the ground, and is nine feet to the square. There are ten rows of nesting places of nine nests in a row on the north and south walls, and ten rows of eight nests on the east and west walls. I was sorry to see all the entrances to the nests were bricked up. This takes away a great deal of interest from the cote, and as the walls are not used to hang things on, they would not have interfered in any way with its present use. There is a landing ledge, running from wall to wall, under each row of nesting holes. It is just over two inches wide, and the narrowest landing place I have ever seen, but as pigeons for their size have small feet, they don't require much space to settle on. I was much struck with the two grand oak beams which support the roof. They were only roughly trimmed with the axe, and looked as sound and as good as when they were fixed there over two hundred years ago.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

### THE DOVECOTE AT HALAM, NEAR SOUTHWELL.

On April 23rd, I went to see the dovecote at Halam. It blew half a gale from the north-west, and great masses of dark clouds were drifting overhead, and the wind was-bitter cold. I arrived at Halam near on twelve by the clock. It- is a quiet village, lying in a vale of rich land, through which the Greet wanders. This capital trout stream rises in the hills to the south-west. There are many pretty cottages, with good gardens, a goodly few having orchards, now showing signs of spring, for the hedges were green, and the pear and plum trees were white with bloom. The village is sheltered from the winds, and catches a goodly amount of sun, and it is still a quiet and peaceful spot, even in these days of motors and rush. A short distance from the main road, on the left hand side, stands the Church, a quaint old structure, with a clock in its low tower. This clock has a face much too large for its surroundings. Directly after passing the churchyard, I spotted the dovecote, a tall, square building, standing alone at the end of a large garden. I called at the house and asked permission to see it, which was at once



HALAM COTE.

Facing page 38

## HALAM.

granted, and Mr. Ricketts, the owner, came with me and most kindly helped me to get all particulars. The cote is a large structure, built of bricks, and contains by far the greatest number of nesting places that I have so far seen in this country. I first took the outside measure and found it stood almost four square, for the 'tape told me it was twenty-seven feet from north to south, and. twenty-four feet from east to west, and was about thirty feet high to the square, with a tiled roof, and a weather cock on the top. Here was an entrance place, and there were three other small ones just under the roof on the north, south and east. That on the south is now replaced by a window. On the west side were a pair of doors. These were used when old pigeons were to be caught, when nets were fixed over them. Then the doors were opened and the pigeons were driven out with them, the other openings having previously been closed when it was dark. This way of catching the birds is rare, for in most places they are caught by nets being placed over the principal entrance place, but these doors are a much better plan and do not frighten the birds so much. I now measured the walls and found them to be two feet thick, and from the size of the bricks I should say they were of Tudor date. I much

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

admired the beautiful mason-work of those days. These bricks were beautifully made, as hard as stone, and had mellowed to a charming colour. The old entrance door had been replaced by a larger one in order to get farm implements in, and store other things, for now it is used for such purposes. Inside I at once noticed that a wooden floor had been put in just half-way up the walls in late times after the keeping of pigeons in it had died out. This was done in order to make more room for storing things. There was also a stair of wood made to get up to it. This has, of course, done much to take away the interest of the building, when all the large number of nesting holes could be seen at once, but has added largely to the storing capacity. I found that in each half there were on three walls ten rows of nesting holes of 17 places, and on the other wall twenty rows of twelve nesting places. This was on the side of the double doors, which took up part of this wall, so that altogether there were over twelve hundred nesting places on the four walls. These entrance holes were five and a half inches wide, and six inches high. They went in straight for fifteen inches, and then on the left end was more space for the nest. It is the first cote where I have seen a square nesting end, it is generally an



## HALAM.

oval one, and all have had the nesting end on the left side. Running along the entrance holes under every row was a landing ledge three inches wide, for the birds to alight on, and the distance between one ledge and the next above it was eleven inches, and between each entrance hole about the same. When outside again I saw there was only one string course, formed of two rows of bricks, standing out from the wall about three inches more for show than use, for it would have been quite impossible for any vermin to have climbed so beautifully built a wall. I need hardly add I was much impressed with this fine and most interesting structure, and I sincerely trust that every care will be taken of it, and that it will never go the way that so many other fine pigeon cotes have, both in Notts and other parts of Great Britain. To-day, May 25th, I have again been to get a photograph of the inside, and on feeling into several holes I now found that the nest holes varied. All on one row had the enlargement on the right side, then on the next row they were all on the left side, and so on, row after row. I also measured the bricks and found they were nine inches long by four inches wide, and two inches and a half thick, and the inside ones were just as smooth and clean as when put in in the long

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

past years. If I were building to-day, and had the chance, I would much rather buy those bricks than modern ones, for they would look better, and wear better than any of the present time ones.

### DOVECOTE AT HALAM, NOTTS.

It stands four square to all the winds that  
blow,  
Now washed by rain storms, now all white  
with snow;  
T'was builded in the far past Tudor times, Hard by the  
Church, and echoes with its  
chimes.  
Its walls of brick are well and truly laid, By masons who  
to work were not afraid;  
Twelve hundred nesting places line its walls, Inside the  
cote resounds with cooing calls. A gentle south wind  
turns the gilded vane, So soft you'd think it comes from  
sunny  
Spain;  
'Tis early morn and with a hurried rush, The doves pour  
out and startle wren and  
thrush.  
Off to the stubble fields they straight-way fly, Which  
show in silvery light neath sunny sky;

## HADDINGTON.

They feed on scattered corn and many seeds, Cast from  
the brown pods of obnoxious weeds. By this they do a  
great amount of good, helping the farmer to provide more  
food;

Then when the twilight falls they quickly hie, Back to  
their cote because the eve is nigh;

And there they bill and coo till soft night  
falls,

Then sleep their well-earned sleep till daylight calls;  
Long may it stand as in these latter days, With better pens  
than mine to sing its praise.

J. WHITAKER.

## THREE BORDER DOVECOTES ON LINCOLNSHIRE SIDE.

### THE HADDINGTON COTE.

On May 7th, owing to the kindness of my old friend.  
Captain Walter Need, I saw three dovecotes which just lie  
over the border of Nottinghamshire, all in the county of  
Lincoln. He most kindly met me at Newark, where I  
arrived by motor bus, at eleven by the clock. After we  
made a start I asked him where we found the first one,  
and he replied at the village of Haddington. I was

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

astonished at the name, for it is only seldom we find two villages of the same name, which, if we consider, is rather wonderful knowing the many thousands there are in England and Scotland, and amongst the few, Sutton may be perhaps the most common one, but this name is more often qualified by a second name tacked on to it, as Sutton-in-Ashfield, Sutton-Coldfield, and Sutton-on-Trent. But I cannot ever remember having met with a village called after the capital of any shire, which Haddington is. It is a Royal borough, of small size, but very ancient, and is the capital of Haddingtonshire, or East Lothian, a county in the south east of Scotland, celebrated for its fertile soil and for its well-known agricultural productions.

The tenants of these lands are the finest farmers to be found in the United Kingdom, or, perhaps I may venture to say, the world. I know it well, for I first, as a small boy, in

1858 went there to school, and year after year I have been since. I caught my first trout in the River Tyne, which flows through it, and is celebrated for its yellow trout, in

1859 and hope to catch others during this summer. Last September I saw one which was taken in the part of the river running through the borough itself, which weighed just over 83lbs. and a splendid specimen it

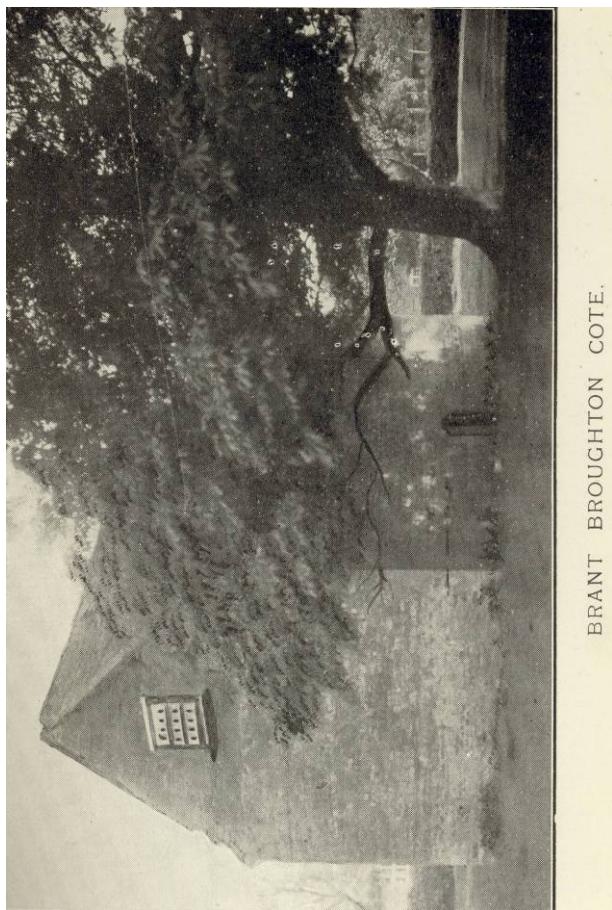
## HADDINGTON

was. Well, we soon arrived at the Lincolnshire Haddington, which is little more than a mile out of Notts. Directly I got out of the motor I was much struck by a grand witch elm standing on a patch of grass where four roads meet. It was a particularly fine shaped tree and girthed at four feet up just over fifteen feet, and close by it, in a small grass paddock, stood the old dovecote. It was built of stone, and from all appearances was a very old one, the top is tiled, and, like many others. It is nearly square in size, measuring twenty-four feet from north to south, and twenty feet from east to west. . The walls are three feet six inches thick, and are about twenty feet up to the square in height. There was only one string course, 'fairly high up, which stood out about three and a half inches, but above it, on each corner of the walls, was a piece of stone hollowed out and of the shape of a leaf. It was built in the wall and was about three feet below the tiles and hung over about a foot or so, but as a method of preventing vermin getting up the edge of the walls I have never seen these edge protections on the outside of pigeon-cote walls before. The entrance place for the pigeons was on the south roof, and there were two rows of holes, six in each row. The entrance door was five feet high, by three feet wide, this is

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS

larger than usual in most of the older cotes, but it was on the side, within twenty yards of two cottages, which looked about the same date, and could be easily seen from them. Inside there were fourteen rows of nesting places in the walls on the east and west walls, and each row had ten nesting places in it, and fourteen rows on the north and south walls, each row having twelve nesting places, making six hundred and sixteen nests. These had entrance holes five inches wide and five and a half high. They went in fourteen inches, and then had a square shaped place at the left side of the passage. So far I have never come across any nesting holes which were enlarged for the nest on the right side of the passage. Under each row was a landing stage of three inches and a half wide.

I might add that Haddington is a meeting place of the Blankney Hounds, and so is Brant Broughton, the next place where I saw another dovecote. Starting afresh, we bore to the right and soon crossed the Witham, a small river passing through land which my friend said was quite a good partridge country, and it looked it. We turned to the south west and passed through part of the vale, a pretty country of low-lying land, well farmed, and where a good variety of game and wild fowl are found. Plantations of firs



BRANT BROUGHTON COTE.

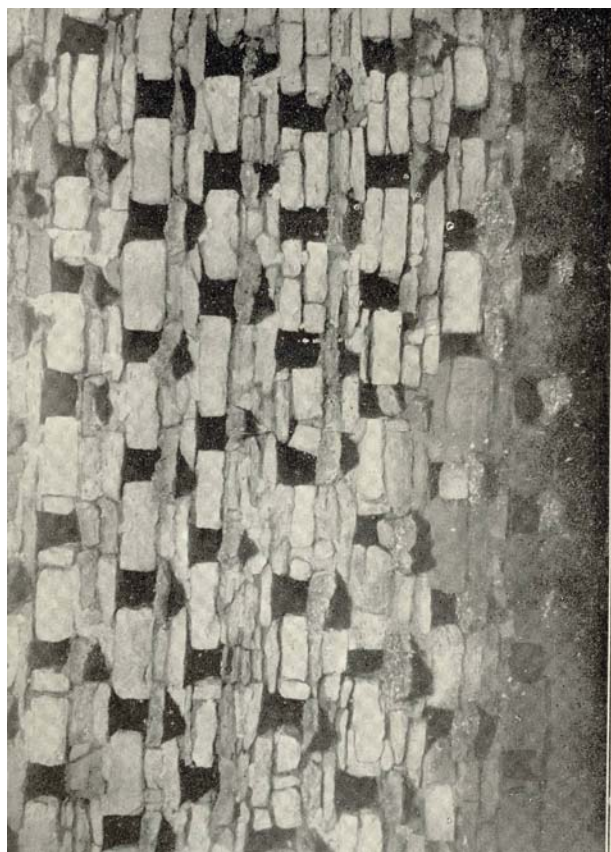
## HADDINGTON.

are dotted here and there, and the wolds were on our left hand. These beautiful rolling hills run from near the Humber to the south of Grantham, and have on them many nice estates of varied extent. After a run of about eight miles we arrived at the pretty village of Brant Broughton, and, calling at "The Gables," asked permission to see the dovecote, which was at once kindly given, and Miss Hind, after getting the key, came with us. This dovecote stands in the paddock, hard by the house, and a line of nice chestnuts run from the pretty lawn to the cote. It is a perfect place for one, and both Captain Need and myself were at once much struck with the size and shape of the door, for it was a miniature Church door in appearance. I at once took its dimensions, three feet high and two feet wide. The top was of an oval shape, and the door itself stood well into the wall, which was three feet thick, and of stone. Miss Hind asked why it was so small, and I told her it was to prevent the thieves, if they robbed it, taking in a large basket to put the pigeons in. She was pleased to know this, for she had often wondered why it was so. She had from time to time been asked by people the reason. This cote was just a square in size, and measured twenty three feet each way, and on the south side



## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

was a landing place with twelve holes to enter by for the birds. There was no string course, the first cote I have seen to be without one. On one side there were twelve rows of ten boxes. This was on the door side, the south, and on the north side the same number, but on the east and west sides there were thirteen rows of ten boxes, so in all walls there would be five hundred boxes. The roof was tiled, and the woodwork in it of oak, the larger beams being axe-cut, so they were those put in when it was built. The west gable end was brick. Evidently a tree in old days had blown down and knocked part of the wall down, and it was renewed with bricks of early Georgian date. The small window on that side had probably been built up at that time, for the bricks are the same. The entering holes to the nests were six inches wide and six inches high, and went in fourteen inches, but had no larger places at the end for nesting in. Still there would be room enough. A landing strip ran under each row of holes, and varied from three to three and a half inches wide. This was a fair sized cote, beautifully placed, with pretty surroundings, and of a goodly age, I was much pleased to have seen it, and thank Miss Hind for all her kindly trouble.



STONEWORK, INTERIOR OF BRANT BROUGHTON.

BRANT BROUGHTON.

THE DOVECOTE AT "THE GABLES," BRANT  
BROUGHTON.

It stands hard-by a spreading chestnut tree, The sun  
throws dappled shadows on its  
wall;

And all who see it will agree with roe, How charming 'tis  
to hear the pigeons call, Coo-Ru, Coo-Ru, these are the  
mellow notes, Which pleasing sounds come from a score  
of throats.

The swallows just arrived from o'er the sea, Pass by its  
oaken door on tireless wing, And fly around beneath the  
spreading tree, Within whose boughs at morn the  
throstles

sing. The men have gone who built this ancient  
cote,

Dead and forgotten, as the leaves which fall In golden  
showers to the ground they float, Where plovers come  
and go with plaintive  
call

The ruddy kine chew cud beneath its walls, The white  
fowls pick about amongst the grass, And from the tall  
elm tops the black rook  
calls, Watching the laughing children as they pass.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

Long may it stand for other folk to see, This grey stone  
cote hard-by the chestnut tree.

J. WHITAKER. May, 1927.

I forgot to say that the floor of this cote was about  
eighteen inches below the level of the ground outside.

## THE BECKINGHAM DOVECOTE.

A short distance, we motored about two miles, and  
arrived at Beckingham, a village hardly as large as Brant,  
and the dovecote is built about the middle of it. It stands  
close to the other farm buildings, and is of stone, with a  
tiled roof, and from the look of the outer walls appeared  
about the same period as the one we had just left. I taped  
it, and from east to west found it to be twenty feet six  
inches, and from north to south nineteen feet, so it was  
not quite a square. There was one string course, which  
overhung about six inches. The door was four feet six  
high, and three feet wide, on two walls were thirteen rows  
of nesting places, with eleven holes in each row, and on  
the other two walls thirteen rows with ten in each row.  
Five



BECKINGHAM COTE.

## BECKINGHAM.

hundred and forty-six nesting places. These places were fifteen inches in depth, six inches wide, and seven inches high from entrance to end, but had no larger space at the end. The landing slabs of stone were six inches wide. The south wall had at some time been repaired with bricks, and under each hole four bricks projected about five inches to make landing places. These bricks were put in the wall lengthways on. This dovecote is interesting, though not with the pretty surroundings of the Brant Broughton one. This ended a delightful drive, and the seeing of three dovecotes of much interest, and as the day was a perfect spring one, sunny and warm, and as the country passed through, with its orchards full of blossoms, white and pink, of many shades, was at its best, I felt much indebted to my old friend for all his kindness and hospitality. On my way home I passed through Southwell, and though I have seen its glorious minster often, I think I never saw it look more beautiful. The rooks were busy with their young ones in the tall elms, swallows were flitting about, and the great Church was flooded with golden sunlight, a delightful finish to a delightful day. I find by looking again at the map that this cote is on the very boundary of Notts. It is of great age, probably thirteenth century.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE BARNBY DOVECOTE.

On May the 18<sup>th</sup>, I took the very useful bus at Rainworth for Newark. It was a typical May day, bright of sun, with a warm wind from the south-west, a perfect fisherman's wind, but, as an old friend used to say, "one never knows when fish will rise, or hounds run." The rain which had fallen on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> plainly showed on the freshened grass and seed fields that much good had been done to them, and more so on the leaves of the later trees, especially the oaks, some which a week ago only were in bud, now were in half-leaf. In the orchards though the pear blossom had fallen and most of the early apple, still some, of the later ones were quite beautiful, and lilacs were full out and here and there a laburnum was showing its yellow flowers. I arrived at Newark at two by the clock, and within a minute Captain Need drove up in his motor. He was kindly taking me to see the two dovecotes I had heard of, and away we went to the first one, Barnby. It is situated about the centre of this pretty village. Hard by it lives Mrs. Aldred, who had kindly promised to take me to it, and I now thank her for the trouble and kindness she has taken for me.



BARNBY COTE.

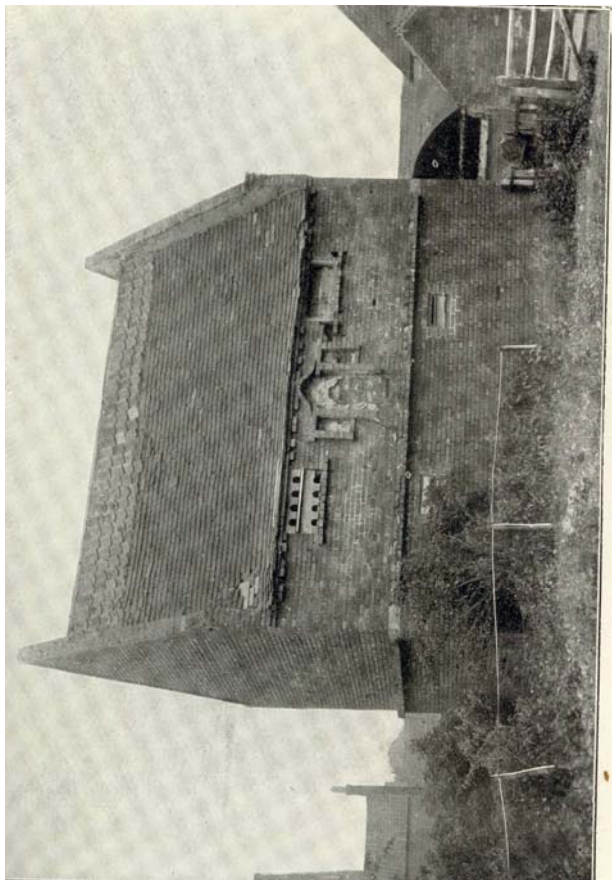


## BARNBY.

This cote stands in a grass paddock by itself, and fairly close to the farmhouse and buildings. It is a circular one, and built of stone, but has been patched here and there with bricks laid the flat side out. I taped the circle and found the circumference of it was sixty-three feet. It was fifteen feet up to the roof, which was of tiles, the lower part old ones, the upper part new, flat ones. This difference no doubt was because the farmer, Mr. Vasseys, who kindly came with us, said that some time back the roof fell in and was renewed, and the old tiles were put back as far as they would go, and the flat ones were fresh ones to finish. I may here say the woodwork was new, except the two old large beams which were axe trimmed, and being sound, were used again. On the top of the wall below the roof were two entrance places, one on the south and one on the east, each having twelve holes. Just under these entrances was a string course of stone, which stood out about; six inches, and on the wall tops was another of flat stones, standing out about the same distance. The door was two feet seven inches wide, and five feet high, and the walls were twenty-six inches thick. On the side which was broken down when the roof fell, and which had been rebuilt, there were entirely different nesting places, for tiles had been laid

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

into the wall as it was built, one forming the bottom with a brick on each side, and another tile resting on them formed the top; two inches of the bottom one was proud of the wall, leaving the rest for the nest. These tiled nesting places started about three feet from the floor, this part had not been broken and had two rows of nesting places in the original stone wall. The tiles measured thirteen inches, and as two inches or a little more served as a landing ridge, there was about eleven inches to nest on. The tiled holes numbered one hundred and twenty-one. In the old walls the nesting places ran into the wall sixteen inches, and the entrance places were six inches wide and six high. Under each row were landing places of four inches in width. Some of these holes had no enlargements at the end, some had a small square piece on the left side, some on the right. These are the first on the right I have yet seen. This is the first round cote I have seen in Notts., so I was naturally much interested. I may say that a boarded floor had been put in about six feet up, and the bottom part was used for calves to be in. The rows of nesting places went down to within two feet of the ground, and in the part not repaired, numbered six hundred and seven, so altogether there were 728 nesting holes.



CODDINGTON COTE.

CODDINGTON.  
THE CODDINGTON DOVECOTE.

WE now made for Coddington, where I had been told by Mr. Littler that there was a large cote. After a run of two miles or so we entered this place, a rather large village on the border of Newark. When we got to the middle of it we asked a man where the pigeon-cote was, and he replied, "I don't know of one." I said "I have been told there is one," and he answered, "Well, I have lived here all my life and I am sure there is no such building." I then produced Mr. Littler's letter, so Captain Need said, "We will go to Newark and ask him." So away we went. We found the M.R.C.V.S. at home, and told him what the man had said, and he replied "That is nonsense, I will go and show it you." So we went till we neared the very house we had asked at. We turned up a lane for a couple of hundred yards or so, and saw the cote at once, a large brick one standing just away from the house and other farm buildings, a beautiful piece of brick work. The bricks were narrow, and of that dark red purple colour which speaks so plainly of the days of Queen Anne. The cote was eighteen feet

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

from east to west, and twenty-four feet from north to south; the door was three feet wide and five feet high. This is often the size of dovecotes which are near the house, and under pretty close observation, as this door was. There was one string course of two bricks ' thick, standing out about six inches. The walls were eighteen inches wide, the nesting holes in them were fourteen inches deep, so that the back was only one brick thick, but the walls were solid between each nest, which were about a foot apart. The entrance holes to the nesting places were five inches high by six across. At the end of some were enlarged about four inches on the right, and the same on the left in others, while here and there was only a straight end. Directly I entered the door I was much struck by seeing a partition which, after leaving a space near the door, ran across the bottom of the cote. This measured nine feet nine inches in length, and was two feet nine inches wide, with five rows of nine nesting places on either side. Never have I seen a cote with this sort of partition before. The nesting places ran from the top level of the end walls right up to the gable roof and ended in two nest places. It was most difficult to count the number of nesting places, but we did as nearly as possible, and there were about twelve hundred and fifty of

## BALDERTON.

them. The landing ledges under nest holes were five inches wide. On the south side, and about the middle of the wall, were three recesses, a large one and a smaller one on either side. The centre one showed some part of a design which we took to be a coat-of-arms, as the plaster, which was left on the top, still showed a heraldic sort of design. The roof was tiled, the top rows, were large pan tiles, the lower portion flat,, small dark ones. This was in olden days one of the larger cotes, and in summer and early autumn would contain many hundreds of pigeons.

## THE BALDERTON DOVECOTE.

I WENT to see this cote on May 28th, and I have to thank Mr. Smithson for kindly letting me know about it. A nice day it was. The wind was still in the north-east, but the run down to Newark, though the country had lost the apple bloom, was still charming, for in the place of picture orchards the hedges and hawthorn trees were whitened with may, which not only delighted the eye, but told of great food prospects for the birds during the coming winter. This reminds me how often we hear people say when hedges and trees

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

are red with hips, "We shall have a severe winter, just see what vast quantities of berries there are." But it is no sign of a bad winter, but is the result of a good warm summer the year before, when the young growths of thorns have matured well, for it is on this new wood that the bloom grows and the berries ripen. After a cold wet summer these growths bring forth few or no flowers the following spring, and I have often seen a severe winter follow when there was a poverty of berries, but if it does happen to come a severe one, with plenty of hedge food, the wise ones say, "What did I tell you?" They are remarkably quiet when a bad winter comes and there is little or no fruit. Writing about this reminds me how very few fieldfares we have had about for the last dozen or more years, and I miss them. I well remember the great numbers which I often saw pass over in chattering flocks, and watched them crowd on the high hedges to feed, and very cheery birds they were, and very wide awake, and took a lot of staling, but when bagged made a remarkable good pie, with a beef steak foundation. I called on Mr. Smithson, and we walked to the farm hard by. The owner, Mr. Atter, was at home, and to the cote we went. It stands near the barn and other buildings in a grass croft, and is of brick, with



BALDERTON COTE.  
Showing Sunning Boards on Barn End.

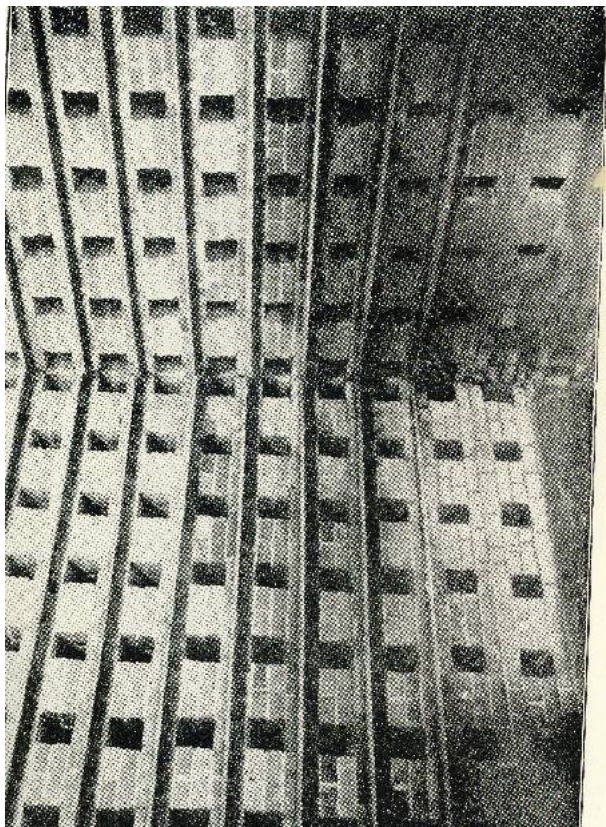


## BALDERTON.

a tiled roof. I measured it and found it was sixteen feet six inches to the square of the walls. From north to south the wall was seventeen feet six inches, and from east to west it was sixteen feet. The door was four feet six inches high and two feet six inches wide, and there were three locks, and the walls were eighteen inches thick. There were two sets of holes for the birds to go in and out of. The one on the east side had fifteen holes, and the one on the south side twelve. On the top of the roof was a weather vane. We now entered, and I saw the floor was fairly new. Mr. Alter said that it had been done just before the war, and was raised a foot or more above the old one, and the bottom rows of nests were filled up. The roof was partly done at the same time. I looked up and saw the spars and laths were new and had not been drawn, and on the north side part of the old plaster had fallen, and I could plainly see it had been put on reeds. In the top bedrooms in the house here (Rainworth Lodge) the ceilings are all drawn on reeds, so the cote must have been built in the Tudor days, and the bricks which measured eight and a half inches long, three and a quarter wide and two inches thick, proved this. The ones inside were as fresh looking as the day they were put in. This bit of old roofing interested me much; the larger beams had

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

Been again used, being as good, or better, than new ones, and were axe trimmed. On each of the four walls were seventeen rows of thirteen nesting places in a row, they went in thirteen inches, and then were enlarged at the end on the left. I tried several rows and all turned to the left. The entrance to them measured five inches wide and five inches high. The seventeen rows of thirteen of these nesting places on each of the four walls, taking off for the door and window, there would be about 870 nesting places. I fancy the window was put in when the roof was repaired, and was before that a wall, as the panes of glass are fairly large and modern looking. The landing rims in front of each row of nests were of wood, the first I have seen, and were three inches wide. The owner told me that when the floor was raised, in the middle of it was a square of bricks about a yard wide on each of the four sides, and an old man told him that there used to be a pillar on it going up to the top of the walls, and that there were nesting places in it. It had been done away with some time ago, but a person who remembered it told him there were still a few pigeons in it, and all were the colour of the old blue rocks, no doubt descended from those which stocked it in the long past days. On coming out of this most interesting cote, the



BRICK INTERIOR OF BALDERTON COTE.

## BALDERTON.

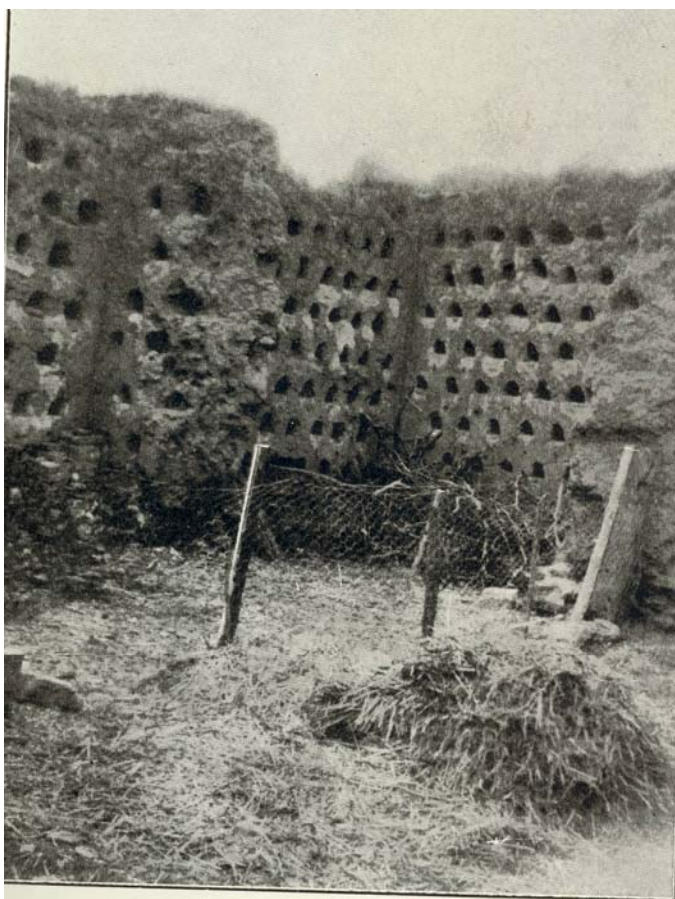
owner showed me on the barn end six rows of boards, one above the other, fastened on iron rods, let into the wall. They were about a foot or more wide, and about twelve feet long, they faced the east and were for the pigeons to sit on in the morning sun. He called them sunning-boards, and shelter in the wet weather. Never have I seen or heard of any such before. I was also struck with the dog kennel. The hole the dog went in was two feet up the wall of brick, above the ground, and at the back inside was a large sort of box, here he was as dry as a bone and comfortable. I may add this snug place for a dog, the sunning-boards for the pigeons, the fine cote and the kindly owner impressed me much. I forgot to say there was one string course about half-way up the wall, and on the outside three bricks standing out of the wall about four inches.

The pictures, inside and out of this cote, also those of Barnby, Coddington and South Scarle, are from photographs taken by Mr. Littler, of Newark, and I sincerely thank him for his kindness.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE SCARRINGTON DOVECOTES.

June 11<sup>th</sup> was a great day for me in the way of seeing dove-cotes, for I visited five I had not previously seen, and photographed two others I had been to before. When starting, at 9.30 a.m., it looked anything but promising, a dull sky, cold N.E. wind, and a light powder rain, but by the time we arrived at Epperstone it had improved and the light was much better. We drew up by Major Huskinson's small cote and took a photograph. Though, perhaps, the least in size, it is the prettiest building for a cote in Notts. Leaving here we ran on to Lowdham, and there crossed the railway and were soon at Gunthorpe Bridge. When I had paid my shilling I said to the collector. "It is just fifty-nine years since I last crossed over here." He at once said it had not been very long open at that time, and it would soon be done with as the new one would not be long before it was ready to take its place. Having crossed, we ran up the hill and through the village of East Bridgford and then on to Car Colston. Here we found a gate on the road, and passing through it, ran over the village green and found another gate.



SCARRINGTON MUD COTE.

## SCARRINGTON.

These are two of the very few instances of gates across roads to be now found in Nottinghamshire. A short run brought us to Scarrington. Mr. Stafford was not at home, but he had most kindly given his man orders to take us to the two dovecotes which were both hard by. The first was one of great interest to me, because it was made of mud, and evidently of great age. Many might think a building made of this material would not last any length of time, but it is not so, for as long as they have a sound roof the weather seems to have little effect on their wearing powers, but this cote had some few years back lost its roof and was showing signs of decay, and sorry I was to see it. The following is a description as it is now. On the west side only ten feet of the wall was standing. This piece was twelve feet high, the other walls being the same height, and the end walls were fifteen feet wide. The east wall was all standing and was twenty-six feet. So the whole building when perfect was twenty-six feet long by fifteen feet wide. Across the middle of the floor was a partition of mud, three feet wide, with nesting places on each side. On the perfect wall were seven rows of nests with nineteen in a row at each end, seven rows with each row containing eight nests. The partition had eight nests in a row,

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

but as it was broken down we could not tell how many there had been, over four hundred in cote. These nesting holes went into the wall twelve inches, and had rounded ends, and the entrance into them was six inches high and seven inches wide, and the man who remembered the roof before it fell in said it was thatched with straw. As I looked at it I felt I should like to have seen it in those far back early days, probably many years before Prince Rupert galloped along the Fosse way or Roman Road, with his Cavaliers behind him. The cote stands in the stackyard of the farm, and Mr. Johnson is the present tenant.

## SCARRINGTON DOVECOTE.

### MR. RICHARDSON'S, THE MANOR HOUSE.

THIS cote stands close to the mud one, and is round,- built of stone, with patches of bricks here and there, but the inside is all stone. There is no doubt this is a very old rote, probably a Norman one. It stands in the farmyard, and has a newer building of early Georgian brick running up to a small portion of one side, if a round cote can be





SCARRINGTON MANOR COTE.

## SCARRINGTON.

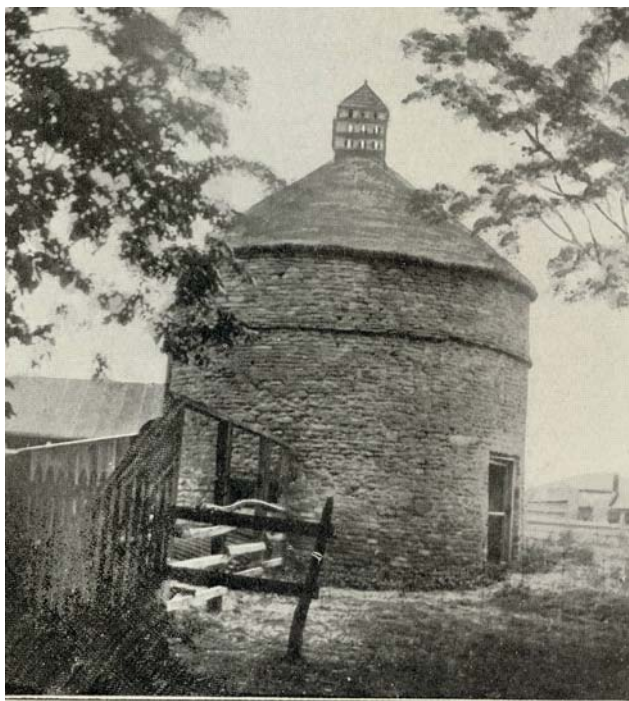
said to have more than outside and an inside. It is twenty feet high to wall top. The roof is covered by old small flat tiles of Queen Anne colour. It measures seventy-six feet round, fourteen feet six inches up. Its walls are three feet six inches thick, and the door, a small one, though in sight of the house. It measures three feet in height, and is only two feet wide. Round its walls are fourteen rows of nesting places, nine of thirty-four holes, five of thirty-one in them, four hundred and sixty-one in all. The entrance places are outside on the top of the wall under the roof and number ten. On the top point is a square wooden landing with sixteen holes on two sides of it. This is a quaint looking old structure, but badly placed. The wood in the roof is very strong, and axe cut, and the door is a thick one of oak, with a wonderful block of wood over the top, and as in most of those old cotes one has to step down some distance to the floor inside. This is so far the only old cote I have seen in the farm manure-yard. It is well worthy of a better situation. It has no string course. This is curious, for there are few tower cotes without one. They have generally two, and now and again three. The nesting holes run sixteen inches into the wall and have no enlarged ends, the entrance is seven inches high and six wide, and there are

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

stone slabs at each entrance for the birds to land. They are of oval shape. Very little light enters, and it is dull and dark inside even on a summer's day. This is a fourteenth century cote. Mrs. Richardson most kindly gave me permission to see this old cote, which interested me much.

## THE THOROTON DOVECOTE.

ABOUT two miles from Scarrington, on the Newark road, stands in the Hall grounds the Thoroton dove-cote. It belongs to Mrs. Ransom Rawson, and I thank her kindly for granting me permission to see it. In going from Scarrington we passed not far from Orston, and saw the Church, and was struck with its tower. Round the top was a wall about four feet or more high, beautifully pierced with carving. In the centre rose the spire. One so often sees this wall plain, or with embattled tops, and this was the only carved one I ever remember seeing. I noticed that the land on either side of the road was well farmed, and the crops good, especially the wheat fields. Thoroton is a quaint little village. The cote stands in the paddock next the Hall, and on



THOROTON COTE.

## THOROTON.

the fringe of the stackyard, and is round, and smaller than the Scarrington one, being fifty-seven feet round. The wall is sixteen feet six inches high, and three feet thick. There is a string course ten feet up, about three inches wide. The door is four feet high and two feet six inches wide. There is a square wooden place on the top with nine entrance holes in it, and there are twenty rows of nesting holes with thirty holes in each row, six hundred in number. They go into the wall ten inches, and are six inches wide and six high at their entrance, and each has a stone landing slab. The ends are square, some a little larger than others. The top has been newly thatched, and the whole cote put in thorough repair. The floor inside is a foot or more lower than the ground outside. I was much struck with the wood in the top of the roof, it was of oak of great size, even for so old a building. Though a smaller cote than the one at the Manor Farm at Scarrington, there are more nesting places, but they are placed nearer to each other, and a smaller space is between the rows. This cote is also probably a fourteenth century one.

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### SIBTHORPE DOVECOTE.

LEAVING Thoroton, we ran some distance through a flatish country, with low hedges, and principally plough land. Away to the right were the Lincolnshire Wolds, which run from the Humber nearby, to Grantham, Belvoir Castle could be clearly seen crowning the end of a jutting portion of them. I was much struck with the quantity of greater white throats which rose from the roadside hedges, going well up, then fluttering down, singing their hurried song till they lit on the far side of the hedge. Larks were in numbers, and the cuckoo's call was loud in the land, but never a corn crake did we hear, though one would have thought the many clover fields would have been tenanted by several. Where have they gone ? Twenty years back there was hardly a single mowing meadow, or seed field, but from which came their raucous calls. Now they are gone, but why ? I know not. When I was in Orkney, in 1898, I heard them calling in almost every strip of corn, and I asked Professor Newton, who was a guest on the yacht with me, if they were called corncrakes from being so fond of being in the corn. Again it was the same when I was there in 1900, but when visiting the same



SIBTHORPE COTE.

## SIBTHORPE.

place in 1914,<sup>1</sup> was told that they were gone, and John Gunn, the naturalist, at Kirkwall, told me he did not believe there were more than two pairs in all the Orkney Isles. It is the same in Notts., and many other parts of England, and it saddens me.

We drew up the motor on the side of the road. A willow holt was on the right, a perfect place for a nightingale to nest in, also for sedge and grass-hopper warblers. Finishing lunch, we went on, and shortly after we ran into a valley, through which a small stream wandered, and there on our right, well away from the farm buildings, stood the great Sibthorpe dovecote, by far the largest and most striking in our shire, for whether coming from the north or going from the south along this road the most unobservant traveller must be struck by this great circular pigeon cote. We went round by the Church, a dark, heavy looking structure, to the farm, where Mr. and Mrs. Flower, the tenants, gave us a welcome, and away we went to the cote, which I was most anxious to see. It stands in a grass paddock by the stream, well out in the open, and can be clearly seen from all points of the compass. It looks big in the distance, but grows larger and larger as you approach it, and I took the following notes of its size:— Forty-five feet to the top of the wall, and



## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

then another fifteen to the weather vane, which stands on a square wooden glover, and has five entrances on each of the four sides. When the birds enter they fly round a flat board below, which is larger than the square hole above it so they cannot get out this way when it is pulled up. On either side, south and north, fairly high up are two openings. These have sliding doors, which have cords fastened to them, and are within reach of a man below. These are kept open for the birds to come out and go in, but if pigeons are wanted they are lowered at night so that what number is wanted can be caught in the morning. There is no potence, or ladder, fitted in the centre as in some round cotes, nor could I see any signs of there having been one. The walls are three feet thick, and the size of the only door is three feet nine inches high and two feet three wide. The cote measures ninety-eight feet round at four feet from the ground. There is one string course about halfway up, standing six inches out from the wall. There are twenty-eight rows of forty-five nesting places, in all 1,260. There are a grand lot of beams in the roof, great oak ones, put there when the cote was built, which is stated to have been early in the thirteenth century, probably in King John's time. Nesting places vary from sixteen to

## SIBTHORPE.

eighteen inches deep, entrances four and a half inches by four and a half, landing slabs three and a half inches wide, eighteen inches between holes, and ten between rows.

The following very interesting notes have been sent me by Mr. Richard Goulding, who is librarian to the Duke of Portland, and taken from old documents:—

"Dear Mr. Whitaker,—In answer to your letter, I have the pleasure of stating that I have consulted our old documents relating to Sibthorpe, and I find that the Manor of Sibthorpe was purchased by the Duke of Portland's ancestor, Sir Charles Cavendish, from Sir Edward Stanhope, who had acquired it from Richard Whalley, of Screveton. There are several references to the dovecote. "June 23rd, 1601, Indenture of Bargain and sale: Richard Whalley, of Screveton, Esquire, and Francis, his wife, sell to Sir Edward Stanhope, of Gray's Inn, all that the Manor and Lordship of Sibthorpe, with all its rights, members and appurtenances, and the capital, messuage, tenement and Manor House of Sibthorpe, aforesaid, wherein the said Richard Whalley did lately dwell, called and known by the name of the Chauntry, or Colledge House, to her, with the Dovecote, and all the outhouses thereto belonging.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

1604 called the Pygeon Howse in Rental. 1626 called Pidgeon House in Rental. "1685, June 13th, Indenture of mortgage, Henry, Duke of Newcastle, mortgages to Sir Hervey, of Bury St. Edmunds, Knight, the Manor and Lordship of Sibthorpe, and the capital, messuage, tenement and Manor House of Sibthorpe, called or known by the name of the Chantry or Colledge House, together with the Dovecoate and all the out-houses thereunto belonging.

"1799, valuation of Sibthorpe, Reuben Lee was tenant of 1 74ac. 3r. 6 perches, including Homestead, etc., with Dovecoat in Hall yard. An early thirteenth century cote, about the time of King John."



SYERSTON HALL COTE.

## SYERSTON HALL. THE SYERSTON HALL COTE.

From Sibthorpe we went to Syerston Hall, where Mr. Fillingham most kindly showed me their dovecote. It stands in a grass paddock near the back of the house, and is of brick. The lower part is a shed, and it is ten feet high above the shed to the roof, sixteen feet square, with an ornamental band of brick-work on top of the walls, with a tile roof. The old nesting boxes of wood have been taken out except about a dozen, and there are still a few pigeons using them. It was built in 1702, and is a good piece of brickwork, with two arches built one brick deep in each of the four walls, with one string course over them.

## THE DOVECOTE AT CODNOR CASTLE.

On Tuesday, June 23rd, I visited the fine old

Norman dovecote at the Codnor Castle Farm, and I have to thank Mr. I. H. Wallis, of Crow Hill, Mansfield, for kindly motoring me over to see it. It was a wild, blustering day, and though the wind was from the west

## THE MEDI/EVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

it was by no means a warm one. After a run of three miles or more we passed the well-known golf course of Hollinwell, then running on we dipped down by Selston and under the L.N.E. line, and shortly after the L.M. and Scottish main line to the north was crossed. Here we had to pay a shilling toll, the only time I remember having done such a thing. Hard by we crossed over the Erewash, which stream divides the two counties, Notts, and Derby, then climbing a fair sized hill we arrived at the Castle Farm. After getting out of the motor we had a look round, and the view on all four sides was a fine one, and of great distances. Away to the south Charnwood Hills, in Leicestershire could be clearly seen, and to the south-east those on which Belvoir Castle stands, to the east the big lump of Ramsdale Hill with its two plantations on the top showed well, while to the west were many hills, about Matlock and beyond. These great hills, several of which are over one thousand feet in height, formed a fine background. The cote, which is a round one, stands in a small grass paddock about a hundred yards or so from the road, and near the stackyard and the house. It is of stone, which shows great age, and the top is covered with flat, small dark tiles, but there is no



CODNOR CASTLE FARM COTE.

## CODNOR CASTLE.

doubt it is not the original one, as the woodwork inside is sawn and not cut by the axe. There is a small wooden square top with only eight holes for the pigeons to get in and out, two holes on each face. I taped the outer wall at four feet up and found it to be seventy-seven feet in circumference, the wall is twenty-two feet high, and the cote stands clear from any other buildings, and was no doubt built when the Castle existed, which must have been early in the thirteenth century, and, from the height of the Castle walls (part of them still stand) and their thickness, a building of great strength. We read that it stood in a park of three thousand acres. The walls of the dovecote are four feet thick. The door is three feet six inches high and two feet wide. There is one string course, which is three feet below the roof. I should have expected to have seen at least two, as the stones are only rough dressed, but the brown rat was not here when this aged cote was built, and the old English black rat was not such a determined climber as the pest of to-day. Passing inside the cote one has to step down a foot or more, which is nearly always the case, especially in round ones. Some I have seen are two feet below the ground outside. Of course, during the many years that have passed since the cote was built the ground



## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

outside has accumulated to an appreciable extent. The floor was of cement, and as there was only one small opening on the west side, about halfway up, the light was poor and the inside gloomy. The block of wood over the door was axe cut and very thick. There were twenty rows of nesting places, and a few rows at the bottom had twenty nesting holes, the last one at the top having fifteen. Counting them separately we made out there were 350 altogether, not a big lot for a cote of this size, but I noticed they were wider between each other than is general. We measured several of them, and they varied, some going into the wall twenty-three inches, others only sixteen. The entrances were six inches wide and six high, and the ends turned in one row to the right, and the next one to the left. The landing slabs were of stone, one for each hole. Inside there is a thirty-stave iron ladder, aged and worn, to get to all the nesting places, and under the wooden top, where the pigeons enter and leave the cote, is a board larger than the bottom of it, and a runner is fixed on each side, and a cord hangs down into the cote so that when pigeons are to be caught this board is pulled up. It covers the outlet till after the birds are caught, and that accounts for the small number of entrances. There are only eight. The square hole on the north side was

## CRANKWELL FARM.

probably for placing a net there in olden times before the board was put in. This is one of the few dovecotes just out of Notts. I am describing. It only stands a bare mile from the county boundary. It is an interesting one of great age, and stands in a fine position. On looking round again before leaving, the beautiful hilly country reminded me of a day long past when I was standing on a hill not far away with my old friend, the late Thomas Barber, of Lamb Close House. He remarked, "What a beautiful country this must have been before the coal pits were started, and what a charming country it will be again when they are all worked out." I agreed, because I am sure he was right. I thank Mr. Leyman, of Nottingham, for this capital photograph.

## THE DOVECOTE AT CRANKWELL FARM, NEAR LANGAR.

On Tuesday, June 28th, I left home to visit the dovecote at Crankwell. It was one of those dull, cold mornings that we have experienced so often this year, a powder rain was falling, and the outlook was anything but

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

promising, but by the time the train left the old Great Northern Station at Nottingham, there was a better outlook, and the morning improved as it grew older. The Trent was running bank full, and its colour showed that a fair quantity of rain had fallen in other parts. Where the railway crosses it, near Radcliffe, it seems to be of no great width, in fact it always looks to me to be of a greater breadth near Burton, many miles nearer its source. The lands near Bingham clearly showed what a benefit the rains had been, and the corn was much improved, especially the wheat, for it looked as our old bailiff used to say, "of a good sour colour." When I arrived at Barnstone, I found Mr. Harry Goodwin had most kindly sent to meet me, and when we reached his house he took the place of his man and we at once started for the dove cote he had sent me the notice of. After about a mile we passed Langar, a pretty little village with a most beautiful Church, called by the people in these parts "The Cathedral of the Vale." About two miles beyond, we arrived at Crankwell Farm, and I was disappointed to find the cote was not an independent one as I had expected, but was built over a stable in one side of the farm buildings, but after I had seen it I quite altered my mind. With the help of the lady of the house and a servant,

## CRANKWELL FARM.

we got 'a ladder and mounted into the cote, and I was at once much struck by its size and the large quantity of nesting places, and its internal arrangement, for it had two walls built across the cote with a pass-way through them, making three separate parts of the whole. The cote, measured in its entire length, was twenty-eight feet six inches inside measurement, and ten feet six inches wide inside from wall to wall. The walls from floor to top were thirteen feet high, and the two cross walls were the same height and three feet thick, with nesting places on each side of them; the pass-way through these crossing walls was about two feet six inches wide. The two end places were smaller than the centre one. From the floor to wall top were eleven lines of nesting places in all of them. These we counted most carefully and found that in the east compartment there were 286, in the middle one 472, and in the west one 348, so that the whole cote contained one thousand one hundred and six nesting places, a truly large number, especially for a cote built over a stable as this was, and not entirely built for Pigeons. These nesting places went in sixteen inches, and were larger at the ends, in one row on the right side, and the next row on the left they were placed nine inches from each other, and were nine inches between each

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

row. The entrance holes were six inches wide and six high. The landing edges were two inches and a half wide. The roof was tiled, and there were two windows, one in each end, east and west. One was out and was boarded up. The other had the original window, leaded, and the green colour of the glass spoke of Stuart days. The holes for the pigeons to go in and out were on the east side, three rows of five holes in a row. The outer walls of the cote were two feet thick. The inside of the roof over the nesting walls was open and drawn, and there were two wooden glovers on the top, but no holes in them for birds to go in and out, probably only for ventilation. One seldom sees two of these—generally only one—on the top. These in past days had entrance holes in them, because fifteen holes would not have let the pigeons out for quite a long time when there would have been well over 2,000 birds in it, even in the winter, and twice as many in summer and early autumn. The owner of this large cote is Mr. Harwood. I should say this cote was built about 1760, when many sets of farm buildings were enlarged. This is not a cote proper, but I give it as a very large one of a later period.

NORWELL.  
THE NORWELL COTE.

QN Saturday, July 16th, in dull and cold weather, we started at 9.30 a.m. to visit the dovecote at Norwell. The wind was still in the east, where it had been during the greater part of the so-called spring. We ran down through Southwell and on to Upton, where we stopped to take another photograph of the inside of the Church tower, where a dovecote was in the past days. The previous picture was a failure, the only one so far. After this was done we went by Kelham, and turning sharp to the left, just this side of the Trent, which was running bank full, we soon reached the Great North Road. Here we found the usual large number of motor cars of varied size and colour rushing north and south, and now and again we passed or met a horse drawn vehicle plodding along at one fourth of the speed of its more popular opponents. The country is more level, and the land cooler in these parts, and the crops were quite good, especially the seed fields, many of which were mown and in cocks. Bearing away from the river to the left we soon reached the quaint little village of Norwell, which is probably a contraction from Northwell. About the middle of this village, on the right hand side of the road, are the

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

farm buildings of Mr. Hopkinson, and in the yard hard by the back door stands this most interesting dovecote. It speaks so plainly of days long past, and is built of mud, wood and plaster. Large pieces of the latter in course of time have fallen off and show plainly how it was put together. First a foundation of bricks was laid, then oaken posts were fixed, one at each corner and one between on each side. The bricks were continued to two feet high, then slabs of wood were nailed, or pegged, to the posts and filled up with clay, in which was a certain quantity of chopped straw, and so on to the top of the square walls. The side walls are thirteen feet six inches long, and the end ones are thirteen feet, so it is nearly a square building. These walls are sixteen inches wide, and on the east side and south side they have on the outside had a single brick wall added in later days. The roof is now tiled, but when first built would probably be thatched with reeds from the dykes hard by. The door-way, which is only twelve or fifteen yards from the house and well under observation, is a large one, being six feet high and three feet wide, one of the largest into any cote I have seen in Notts, so far. I now went inside. The walls were all mud, smoothed down, and the nesting holes were of oval shape. They measured seven



NORWELL COTE.



## NORWELL.

inches across and five from top to bottom. They went in fourteen inches, and had no enlarged ends. Each nest had had a wooden peg for pigeons to alight on. Mr.

Hopkinson told me, up to four or five years ago there was a ladder, or potence, fixed on a post which stood in the centre of the cote. Each end of the post had an iron spike. One end went into a hole in a stone at the bottom, and the other into an oak beam at the top. The ladder was held by three or four pieces of wood, which were fastened into the post, and also formed steps in the ladder, which, when young pigeons were wanted from the upper holes, could be turned round so that the man could get the birds out of the nesting holes, a simple and easy contrivance. There were five hundred and sixty-five nesting places. The original oak posts, rafters and beams were still in good order, and were axe cut. I may add there were two separate entrance sets of holes for pigeons to go in and out of on the top of the square. The one on the south side had ten holes and the one on the west six. Mr. and Mrs. Hopkinson were most kind in every way, helping me to give an account of this most quaint and interesting dovecote, and I take this opportunity of thanking them. The beautiful photograph of this cote was specially taken by Mr. Summers, of Southwell, for this book, and I sincerely thank him.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### SKEGBY MANOR DOVECOTE.

AFTER seeing Norwell, we went on again, passing the Church, and a very fine village Church it is, then on to Carlton-on-Trent. Here I was much struck with several big, beautiful horse chestnut trees on either side of the road. This is a tree which we do not often come across in Notts., that is of any great size, though the Spanish chestnut does well at Thoresby and some other places. After passing Grassthorpe, we ran down several twisting smaller roads and arrived at Skegby Manor. Mr. R. Wade is Lord of the Manor, and I had a hearty welcome from Mr. Poole, who is the tenant, and discovered that he was the son of Mr. Poole, of Grims Moor, who farmed a place which ran up to my father's property at Ramsdale, and over which we shot in the days long past. We had a great chat of old people and places we both knew. The dovecote is a fine one, built of bricks, now mellowed with age, and stands near the house in a grass paddock. The door is nearly as large as that at Norwell, being three feet three inches wide, and five feet six inches high. The walls are two feet thick and eighteen feet high up to the square. The roof is tiled and has a weather vane with a



SKEGBY MANOR COTE  
(North Notts.)

## SKEGBY MANOR.

fox on it. There are two entrance sets of holes just under the roof, the one on the west wall has two rows of five in a row, the one on the south wall has three rows of four in a row. This entrance is protected by four strong iron rods sticking out from the wall, one on either side, and each rod on its end has four twisted sharp spikes. These are to protect the cote and to prevent nets being placed over the holes so that that the birds could be driven into them.

Many cotes had such protections, but time has worn them away. Mr. Poole said these were the original ones. There are two string courses on the outer walls, each three bricks wide, one just above the door, the other just under the top of the walls. They stand out about four inches. The lower part of the cote is now made for fowls. There are no signs of any pigeon nesting holes. This is nine feet high, and a ladder ascends up into the cote proper. In it there are five hundred and thirty nesting places. These go into the walls fourteen inches, and at entrance are six inches wide and six high, and all turn to the left. They are ten inches between each hole and ten between every row. The landing ledges are three inches wide, and the size of the cote, outside measurement, is twenty feet from east to west and eighteen feet from north to south.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

This is a fine cote, and is in good order, standing well away from the buildings which are large. The house also is a fine piece of brick work. I was very pleased to have seen it.

Leaving Skegby, we ran to the four cross roads near the railway (east to west) and stopping on a pretty side road had our lunch. By now the dull sky had become blue and the sun was out. I had said to Mr. Cartwright I would be at Darlton about 2 p.m., and we ran into his yard at 2.10 by the clock. He was obliged to be away from home, but had left his man to show me the cotes. I found them to be erected in the farm buildings, and not independent ones I had hoped to find, so they are not included in this little book. These cotes are not nearly as old as the ones standing by themselves. They were built about the middle of the eighteenth century, about 1730, or so. Turnips were then being generally grown, and farm buildings were being added to in order to make room for feeding cattle during the winter, and many pigeon-cotes were made then in the new buildings. More land was farmed, as more stock, sheep, and especially cattle, were wintered. Sand lands which had been open rough grass fields were now ploughed, seeds were grown, also mangolds and swedes, and

## SKEGBY MANOR.

white turnips. This entirely altered the old way of salting down all the sheep and beasts that were fat in the autumn, and leaving the store beasts out all the winter to bringing them into open yards and covered cowsheds. Now was the period when the great dovecotes began to lose their pigeon population. Many were pulled down, and the material used for other buildings, and those that were left turned into store houses for other things. This went on until now there is only a small remnant left, and I fear the time is not far off when they will be things of the past and their history forgotten. This is why I am writing this simple account of those we still have in this county, hoping it may interest those alive now and be of some value to those who come after, when the old dovecotes are gone and forgotten. I had arranged to return home after leaving Darlton, but as the afternoon was still young we turned the motor, round and were soon at Dunham Bridge, where I had the privilege of paying two shillings toll.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE SOUTH SCARLE COTE.

We made for South Scarle in order to see the cote in that village which I had not as yet seen, and this would complete all the cotes I know north of Rainworth. A six mile run through a not very interesting country brought us to Besthorpe, and turning to the left we were shortly in South Scarle, where I at once spotted the cote which stands in a grass croft near the farm house. It is built of stone, which on the north side is considerably perished. The soft parts are washed away, showing the harder portion running like veins on the stones. It is sixteen feet square, and the walls are fifteen feet to the square, the roof is tiled. The walls are two feet nine inches thick. The door, well in sight of the house, is three feet six inches wide, and is not quite six feet high, but this is not the original one which was some foot lower. The lower part is a poultry house, nine feet to the floor above. The dovecote is from floor to wall top seven feet. There is a window on the west side. On the ceiling is cut in the cement which was drawn on it when the roof was repaired: "The shortest day, December 21st, 1829. W.G." When this repair was done the five rows of nesting places were filled



SOUTH SCARLE COTE.



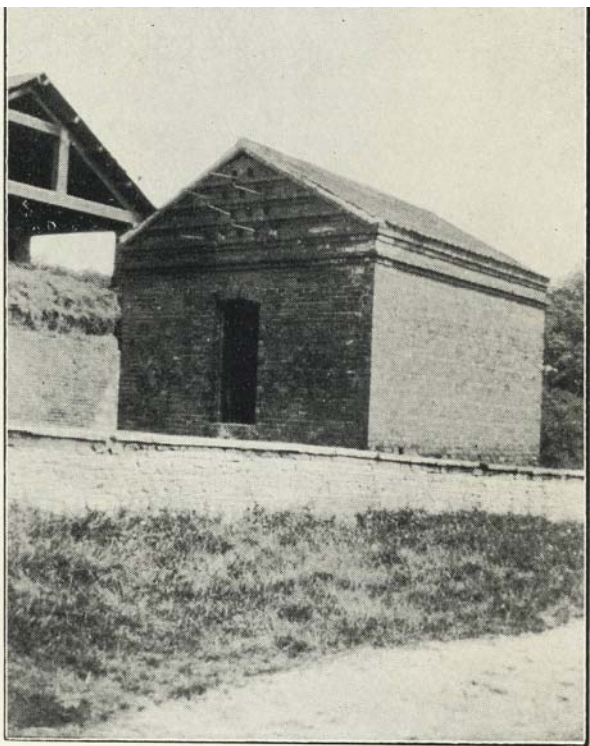
## SOUTH SCARLE.

up, why, I cannot understand. The others were left and number one hundred and forty-six, so when the five rows were open there would have been one hundred and seventy-five more of them, three hundred and twenty-one in all. There are several perches across the top. This you do not often see. The nesting holes go in fifteen inches and are five inches square at the opening and have straight ends. There are stone slabs for alighting places in front of each nest hole. The distance between each opening is thirteen inches, and eight inches between each row. On the outside wall is a stone string course about seven feet up. This is a very interesting cote. It belongs to Mr. Pate, of Lincoln, and the tenant is Mr. Clarke, who I thank for kindly help to me when seeing it. There are some nice beech trees about the house and cote, and the village is a quiet and pretty one. There is only one set of egress and ingress holes, and they number twenty-one. The lower board of holes has fallen down and has been nailed over the door on the stone wall, and in the picture looks like another entrance place, but is not.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE PAPPLEWICK FOREST FARM COTE

On Saturday, July 30th, I left home soon after 9 a.m. on a wide round to see five dovecotes in Notts., and two just over the border. It was another of those dull, dark, depressing days that we have had more than our share of this spring and part of early summer, and there was every sign of wet, in fact within a few minutes we had a sharp shower and I stopped to put up the hood of the small motor. We ran through Blidworth and on to the Mansfield and Nottingham Road at Larch Farm. Then for a mile or so along the wall of Newstead Abbey Park, and it made me sad to see the number of beautiful trees which had been cut down. It was a sorrowful sight, and I thought of the many times I had walked amongst them when cover-shooting with the late Mr. Webb, who took the greatest interest and care of the beautiful woods he had planted, and this beat along by the wall was always a certain find for woodcocks in the winter, and where a few pairs nested in the early spring. We soon arrived at the Forest Farm and found the cote standing by itself in the stackyard. It is of



PAPPLEWICK FOREST FARM COTE.

## PAPPLEWICK FOREST FARM.

brick, and was built by the late Mr. Curtis Machen, who farmed this fine farm for years in the 60's and 70's of the last century, and a capital farmer he was, a grower of fine crops and a rearer of first-class stock. He built this cote at his own expense, and he also always had a good show of game, especially hares, on the farm, and many a tramp I have had in the large turnip fields in the days when the late Henry Frazer Walter lived at Papplewick Hall, and had the shooting. This cote is of moderate size, being twenty feet from north to south, and seventeen from east to west. It is fifteen feet up to the top of the walls, which are eighteen inches thick. There are two string courses, the lower one thirteen feet up and the other a foot above it. The roof is tiled and has a glass one here and there. The door, which is seen from the house, is six feet high and two feet six inches wide. There are fourteen entrance holes on the west side, and they have eight iron rods standing well out round them to prevent the pigeons being netted. Inside there are three hundred and seventy nesting holes, they are five inches wide and six high, and go into the wall one foot and turn to the right. The ledges for birds to alight on are five inches wide. The nesting entrances are fourteen inches apart and nine inches between rows.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

This cote in size and shape reminds me of the one at Epperstone, Colonel Huskinson's, but is not so ornate in the brick work. Sir Hugh Seely is the owner of the cote. This Papplewick cote is of special interest, because it is certainly the last great pigeon cote built in Nottinghamshire, and probably the last in England.

## THE CLIFTON DOVECOTE.

HAD I been asked before I started to get a list of the Nottinghamshire dovecotes which was the most likely place to find one, I should have said Clifton, because Clifton . belongs to one of the very oldest of our county families. It was purchased by a Sir Gervase de Clifton from a certain De Rhodes about the end of the reign of Henry the Third, circa 1260. The said Sir Gervase was Sheriff of Nottingham in 1279, so it would be almost certain to find a cote there, and there it is standing on the pretty village green near to the beautiful Clifton Grove and hard by the Queen of English rivers, the Trent. The beauties of Clifton have been sung in poetry, and upheld in prose, and it certainly is one of the beauty spots of this shire. I had



CLIFTON COTE.

## CLIFTON.

written to Colonel Clifton, saying I should be there about eleven by the clock, and we arrived alongside the cote within ten minutes of our time. Colonel Clifton kindly met me there and helped me in every way to get particulars of this very fine cote. After walking round it, he unlocked the door, and as it was very dark sent for a candle, which, when lit, showed up in a faint way the rows upon rows of nesting places. I will describe the inside first. The door is four feet six high and two feet six wide, and directly you get in you see there is a partition in the middle which runs up to the square of the walls which are about twenty-four feet high. This partition is two feet nine inches wide, and has nesting places on either side. The outer walls are two feet thick. I saw at once we were among the largest lot of nesting places in any cote in Notts. I told my man (a son of my old servant, William Franks) who has driven me to most of the cotes and taken excellent photographs of many of them, to make a most careful count of the nesting places. This he did twice over, and found there were eleven hundred and fifty in each part, 2,300 in all. This is by far the greatest number in any cote in Nottinghamshire, and is one of the largest in England. These nesting places go into the walls fourteen inches, and all turn

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

to the left. The entrance holes are five and a half inches high and six inches wide, and the landing ledges are about two and a half inches wide. The pigeons enter through two wooden glovers in the top ridge, over the middle of each part of the cote, and cords come down, which, when pulled, close up the outlet, so that any pigeons that are wanted can be caught. Outside the cote measures thirty-eight feet from east to west, and eighteen feet from north to south. There are no windows, but light in small quantity comes in through a ventilator at each end, well up to the square. The roof is covered with flat slabs of a dark brown colour. There are two string courses, one about eight feet up, and the other just under the roof. This is a fine cote, of great age, and one that not only Colonel Clifton, but all Notts, people, should be proud of.



## BARTON. THE BARTON COTE.

\A/E, got into our motors, and Colonel Clifton gave me a lead to the Barton cote. This part of the property came into the Clifton family by a marriage of one of them with a Sacheverell. It is about two miles from Clifton. This is a pretty cote, octagonal in shape, and stands in a corner of the stable-yard. It is built of bricks, early Tudor in size, which stand on a few feet of stone above the ground. It is sixteen feet high to the top of the walls, and there are two string courses, one about twelve feet up, the other just under the roof. This is a narrow one, but the lower one stands out about five inches. The door is the original one, of thick oak, and is still strong and sound. The cote measures eighty-two feet in girth. The walls are two feet six inches thick. The nesting places are of plaster, as hard as stone, and look almost as fresh as the day they were put in. They start on a brick foundation and number 1,200. The entrance holes to nests are arched four and a half inches wide and six inches high, and they go in sixteen inches. One row turns to right, the next to the left, and the landing slabs are five inches wide. These are also of cement, or as called in old days, plaster. Several of the

## THE MEDI/EVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

Tudor bedrooms here have these Boors. There are two windows in the roof, east and west, of small, green coloured glass in lead settings. These speak of Tudor times. The nesting holes are seven inches apart, and ten and a half inches between each row. The entrance is through a glover at the top, and there is a cord to close it up when pigeons are to be caught. On the south side is a plaster coat-of-arms, but whose they are I could not make out, probably the Sacheverells, who, no doubt, built this pretty and interesting cote. Colonel Clifton is to be congratulated on the possession of two such cotes, for to own two ancient cotes is as great a rarity as to own two deer parks. I, who have known four owners of Clifton, thank him for kind permission to see these cotes. They have greatly delighted me. I have to thank Mr. Summers, of Southwell, for giving me the photograph of the Clifton one.



BARTON COTE.

## ORSTON. THE ORSTON COTE.

WE now started on about a twenty mile run, going back to Wilford, nearly to the Bridge, but turned to the right just short of it and ran along one side of the famous Trent Bridge cricket ground, where so many great matches have been played from the days of George Parr to the present time. I attend many matches and thoroughly enjoy watching them. We ran through Bingham, and on to Orston, where in a paddock stands the Orston cote, and hard by the owner of it lives, Mr. Henry Brown. It is a brick built one. The colour of these bricks is curious, for I can only describe them as of a yellowish pink. The cote is eighteen feet from north to south, and twenty-two feet from east to west. The lower part is for fowls, and there are no pigeon nesting places in it. The door into the pigeon cote is about eight feet from the ground, not large, and of a square shape. The cote part for pigeons has walls about eight or nine feet to the square, and there are nest places to the top of the gable ends. They number in all five hundred and sixty, and go in fourteen inches. The entrances are five inches wide and six inches high, and turn to right and left in alternate rows, which are a foot between

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

each row and about the same from each entrance. There is one string course of three bricks wide, and it stands out about four inches. It is just above the lower door. The outer walls are one foot eight inches thick. On the west side are nine entrance holes, and there are twelve in the wooden Glover on the top of the roof. The outside walls in the gable have shallow crow feet about half a brick, standing edgeway between two laid flat. The roof inside is of oak, and a very primitive one. The great beam across bends much and is axe cut. The wood, however, is in good preservation, showing the roof covering, which is of tiles, has been looked after. This cote is quite one to be proud of, speaking as it plainly does of long past times. I have to thank Mr. Brown for kind permission to see it.



ORSTON COTE.

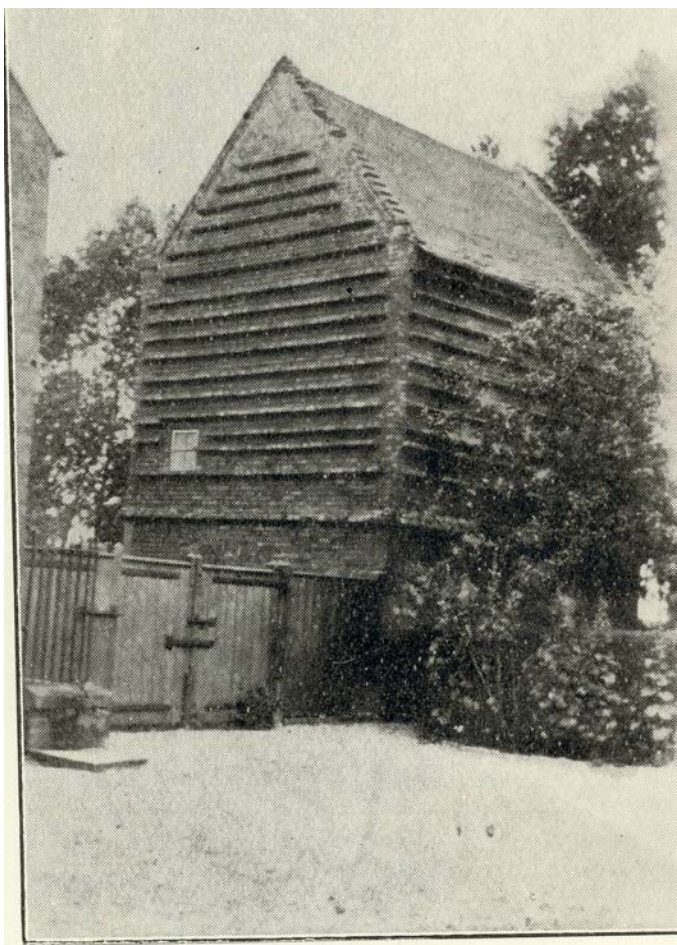
STAUNTON GRANGE.  
THE STAUNTON GRANGE COTE.

AFTER leaving Orston, we felt it was time for a bit of "snap," as the colliers term it, so when about a mile away we came to a lane running from the main road. Here the hedges were thick and high. We backed into it, out of the wind, which now blew fairly strong. The sides of this lane were thick with black thorn, and when in Rower I am certain the sulphur butterfly would be found here. This is one of the most local of our large butterflies. It is a very conspicuous insect, and one I always feel bound to stop and watch. It is seen here and there all over this county fairly plentiful in one place or another. When this striking insect is about in the spring the greater and lesser whites are here, there and everywhere. At this time of the year the majority of wild flowers are white and yellow, so we see that Nature has provided the flowers they most frequent should assimilate in colour with them. So it is in the autumn, when the purple loosestrife, scabious, dahlia, and other gaudy flowers are out. The red admirals, peacocks, and painted ladies, and other brilliant butterflies are about, and when on such flowers do not show them as whites or

## THE MEDI/EVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

sulphur ones would. I have often wondered why the beautiful scented flowers which appeal to us do not seem to do so to butterflies. One rarely sees them on honeysuckle, . hawthorn, beans or violets, but we often see them on flowers that do not appeal to us for their scents, such as ivy, Michaelmas daisies, asters, and others that are more attractive to the eye than to the nose. It was a perfect place to lunch in, with a fine view of the vale of Belvoir. The fields are of moderate size, and short of hedgerow timber, but one tree close to us was very noticable, being a well grown Lombardy Poplar, and from forty to fifty feet high. What wonderful root power this kind of tree must have, for it stands in a spot where it gets every gale, and the wind does at times blow very hard and often in this fine vale. A short run took us to the entrance drive of Mr. Player's house at Staunton, and in days to come these nicely growing trees will make a good approach. I found Mr. Player at home, and he came with me to the cote, which stands just over the wall of the entrance yard, and a very striking cote it is, brick built and mellowed with age, and higher than is usual with this sized cote. The first thing that struck me was the sunning ledges, fifteen in number, standing out from the wall about six or more inches wide. They





STAUNTON GRANGE COTE.

## STAUNTON GRANGE.

are on three sides, south-east and west. Never have I seen any of brick before, and only one other of wood, at Balderton, in this county. The walls are 25 feet up to the square, and are one foot six inches thick. The cote measures seventeen feet eight inches from east to west, and seventeen feet from north to south, so is almost a square, and is supposed to have been built, Circa 1590. There is one string course eight feet up over-hanging about four inches, and it is two bricks thick. The gable end walls are shallow, crow-footed. This always seems to me to add much to the appearance of the roof, which is tiled. Inside there are two small windows with the old green glass panes in them. There are 1,100 nesting places. They go into the wall thirteen inches, and are five and a half inches wide and five high. The landing ledges are about three and a half inches wide, and the holes turn alternately right and left, and are about ten inches apart and a foot between the rows. The entrance holes are on the top of the south wall and number fourteen. This is not only a very pretty building, but a most interesting one, standing by itself, and near the house. Mr. Player is to be congratulated on owning such a relic of the past. I may add there were in it about two hundred pigeons of the old blue rock breed.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

### THE FOSTON MUD COTE.

Mr. Littler, M.R.C.V.S., of Newark, who has been most kind in getting to know where the dovecotes are, has done much to help me, and has taken some capital photographs of several of them, which has added a lot of interest to this little book. I sincerely thank him. He has sent me word of this ancient cote, which, alas, is now on its last legs. It is only a short distance over the county boundary, so I include it in my list. Mud buildings, if well protected from wet, last a great number of years, but as the roof of this one has been gone for some time it is only a matter of a few years before it will have disappeared. It is in the village of Foston, and no great distance from Staunton. Mrs. Dickinson, who showed it to me, told me the roof was a thatched one, and had been off some time. I found there had been two compartments. The walls had been ten feet high in their original state, now only two are left. They are two feet six inches thick. The nesting places left now number about one hundred and seventy. They are nine inches deep, and eight inches high, and ten wide at entrance, so the nests and eggs would be easily seen by anyone standing inside. To me it was sad to see the decay of a once inhabited dovecote.

DRY DODDINGTON.  
THE DRY DODDINGTON COTE.

This cote is just over the boundary of Nottinghamshire. Leaving Foston, which is on the Great North Road, we ran through Long Bennington, a large village with some nice houses in it, and after a short distance, twisted to the right, and in a few minutes we arrived at Dry Doddington. The Church spire leans considerably towards the northwest, quite a perceivable lean, and close by it in an orchard stands the dovecote. It is a square building of stone, and measures twenty feet by twenty, and is fifteen feet up to the top of the walls. The string course is nine feet up, and is cut hollow on the lower side, making it impossible for vermin to get over it, and the only one that I have seen so shaped. This runs only on two sides of the cote, viz., on the north and east. Why not all round I know not. There are nine entrance holes, and also eight in the Glover on the top, which has a rope inside to close it up when pigeons are to be caught. The roof is tiled, and the inside is rather dark. The walls are three feet thick, and very solid. The door is a large one, six feet high and three wide, a

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

quite exceptional size, as it cannot be seen from the house, but probably it has been renewed and is larger than the original one. The nesting places go in fifteen inches deep. They are eight inches wide and six and a half high, and each has a tongue-shaped stone landing place. The nesting places at the end in one row turn to the right, and the next row to the left. There is fourteen inches space between each entrance and ten inches between each row. There are five hundred and thirty-seven nests. The wood in the roof is oak, axe cut, and is the original. This cote is no doubt of a goodly age, and as the walls are wonderfully stout, will, if the roof is kept in order, stand for many generations. It reminds me much of the one at South Scarle, near Newark. The Dry Doddington cote is on Mr. Grammit's Farm, and I thank him for showing it to me.

MORTON MANOR.  
THE COTE AT MORTON MANOR.

On August the 6th, I started about 1.20 p.m., to see the last of the dovecotes on my list, and I have tried in every way to get a complete one, thanks to several newspapers and many friends, whom I most sincerely thank. I hope that I have not missed a single one. I may truly add I felt sorry that this was the last of the great dovecotes that I was on my way to see, for I have most thoroughly enjoyed these pleasant outings. They have enabled me to see many parts of Nottinghamshire where I had never been before, and all of them had their own special beauty, whether in a hilly part or in a sweeping vale, and as the weather up to now has been showery the fields and trees have retained their vernal colours later than usual, and looked more like late spring than mid-summer. The kindness of the owners and tenants of each cote has enabled me to give a clear and true account of them, which will, I hope, interest my readers, and be of value to those who come after us, for I am quite sure it is only a matter of time, and not a very long time, before they will be things of the past, or have

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

been put to a different use. It is perfectly clear that farmers and owners of land would never permit hundreds of pigeons to frequent their fields as was the case a hundred years ago, and it will only be buildings like Clifton that will survive and be a home for a few blue rocks, pigeons, which in a very small way will give our descendants a slight idea of what things looked like when great dovecotes in scores were scattered about this country and pigeons in their hundreds inhabited them.

It was a very hot day, about the warmest of the few we have had this year, and the way was pretty. We ran through Oxton and lunched on the roadside at the top of the hill. Here was a beautiful view to the south and north-west. Then on to Halam, where we got a photograph of the large cote which I have before described. Next through Southwell, to Morton Manor, where Mr. Richard Wright, the owner of the cote, gave me a hearty welcome, and took me to the cote which stands near the house on one end of the lawn. It is a structure of interest, of Tudor times, of pretty brick work, and of a square, seventeen feet, and fifteen feet high to the top of the walls. The roof is covered with small, flat, brown tiles. On the top is a Glover with eight entrance holes, and below



MORTON MANOR COTE.



## MORTON MANOR.

are nine more on the top of the wall. There is one string course of three rows of bricks standing out about three inches. The middle row has the bricks laid in slanting sort of steps, edgeways on, which gives to the course a smarter appearance. The door, a fairly new one, is two feet nine inches wide and five feet six high, and is in sight of the house. The old door is near, and has the very old lock and key on it. The key is a very curious one, short, with a big bell-like mouth. On entering, I was much struck with the wall. It is only one brick thick. Most cotes are eighteen inches, and many three feet or more, but to add to the strength each corner of the wall is eighteen inches. This acts as four strong pillars to support the roof. These corners have inside a strong post, of oak, axe cut, which at the bottom go into the cement floor and to the top of the walls above, and not only act as strengtheners to the walls, but permit the nesting boxes which are all of wood, being fastened on to rails which are nailed to them. These boxes are in square frames of thirty, on all the walls. Now only a few squares are left just to show what they were like. The cote has lately been turned into a place to hold the machine for the electric lighting of the house and buildings. These wooden nesting places,

## THE MEDIEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

when it was a dovecote, numbered six hundred, and are of the following size:— Eleven inches deep, the holes are eight inches wide and seven and a half inches high, and the alighting ledges are three inches wide, and, like the nesting boxes, are of wood. The rows are about a foot apart. The holes in the glover at the top can be closed by pulling a cord which hangs down. This was done when pigeons were to be caught. I may add the foundations of the walls are of stone up to about two feet, and on the outside the corners have a column-looking appearance, as, after four courses of bricks being flat, the next two stand out about two inches. This breaks the flat look and improves the outline of the ends. The inside of the roof has been repaired in later days, as part of the wood is deal, saw cut, and part of oak, cut with the axe. A nice cote, and from the front door looks well. On the side of the lawn stands an elm tree, one of the finest in the vale. Its girth at four feet from the ground is twenty-feet six inches. I know of no finer one in Notts., and there are few bigger anywhere else I should say. It is an English elm, not a witch elm. I congratulate Mr. Wright on having such a tree, and such an interesting dovecote.

WORKSOP MANOR.  
THE WORKSOP MANOR COTE.

WHEN I visited the Morton Manor cote, on August the 6th, I felt certain it was the last one in this shire I should see, because I had done all I could possibly think of to get a complete list. But shortly after the date named I had a letter from Lady Robinson, stating she thought they had one. It struck me at once that Worksop Manor was a very likely place, so I wrote saying I would certainly come, but engagements prevented my doing so till September the 24th. I motored over, received a hearty welcome, and was delighted to see my old friend. Sir John, looking so fit and well. He is in his eighty-ninth year, and still takes the greatest interest in his estate and stud of thorough-breds. He is up in a morning early, and has a ride round before breakfast, and if I was going to enter anyone for the hundred year old stakes, he would be my nomination. After lunch we motored to Blyth, as Lady Robinson thought she had seen two likely-looking buildings, but though they each had a pigeon-cote on the top, they were not dovescotes proper, as the lower parts were stables,

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

the middle, corn chambers, and had not been built for pigeons alone. They probably had been erected early in the 18th century, and each contained over eight hundred nesting places. We now started for the Hawk's Nest Farm, where the Worksop Manor cote was. This farm is mentioned in Doomsday book, and in those times would be deep in Sherwood Forest. I saw at once, on arrival, that this was a true dovecote. It stands away from the other buildings in a grass paddock, and is of brick, which bricks plainly tell its age. They are two inches thick, nine long and four wide, and are still hard, or harder than stone. The roof is now tiled, probably thatched when first built. The cote measures eighteen feet from east to west, and twenty feet from north to south. There is one string course of two bricks thick, eight feet up, and there are two entrance places, one on the east and the other on the west. Each have eight holes. The entrance holes to the nests are six inches wide by six high, and the landing ledges are three inches wide. The nesting holes go in sixteen inches deep, and the ends turn to the right in one row and to the left in the next, and are nine inches between each row. The walls are two feet thick, and are about eighteen feet to the square. The lower part of the cote has been turned into a loose box for mares, and



WORKSOP MANOR COTE.

## WORKSOP MANOR.

the floor over it is about ten feet from the • ground. The number of nesting boxes now are four hundred and forty-eight, and Sir John told me, when he bought the estate in 1890, that the whole of the walls had nesting places in them, so then there would have been quite one thousand or more. This cote was most probably built when the Tudor house was erected. This great house contained five hundred rooms, and was completely burned down in 1761. It had been built in 1530— 1570, and no doubt the dovecote was built during those years. The old oak beams are in the roof, and are still sound and good. It is a plain, but well-built cote, and I congratulate its owner on his possession of so interesting an object.

## THE MEDIAEVAL DOVECOTES IN NOTTS.

JV^Y pleasant task is over,  
My little book is done;  
I've passed by fields of clover,  
'Neath spring and summer's sun. I've heard the corncrake  
calling,  
In meadows wet with dew;  
I've felt the soft rain falling,  
And seen how corn crops grew. I've loved these country  
rambles,  
In April, May and June;  
Now fruit is on the brambles,  
From birds we have no tune. I certainly have striven,  
A clear account to give;  
And thank all friends who've given,  
The dovecotes that still live.

J. WHITAKER.

September, 1927.  
Rainworth Lodge.