



Parish News

Britford

BRITFORD & BATTLE

An Historic Link

For many years students of the College have given much appreciated help during Lent at Britford Memorial Hall, and it may be of interest to them, and others, to glance through the following facts:-

Edward or Eadward, called the Confessor, was crowned King of the English on Easter Day, the 3rd April 1043.

Edward was much attached to Tostig, one of the sons of Earl Godwin, and in 1055 awarded him the Earldom of Northumbria. Owing to Tostig's violent methods, and frequent absence, a revolt broke out on the 3rd October 1065 at York, and Tostig was proclaimed an outlaw.

While Edward and Tostig were hunting in Forests near Wilton, Wiltshire, Harold, Earl of Wessex, brother of Tostig, and chief director of the King's Government, brought tidings of the insurrection.

Attempts at pacification failed; the rebellion spread southwards.

The Confessor then gathered together an assembly of nobles at Britford, at which Tostig accused Harold of stirring up this revolt against him. Harold cleared himself of the charge by compurgation. Edward was, however, overruled by Harold in this Council. The latter shortly after met the disgruntled nobles at Oxford, and yielded to their demands. The deposition and banishment of Tostig were, however, promulgated by the King.

On the 5th January 1066, Harold stood by the death-bed of the King. He was himself crowned in Westminster Abbey shortly afterwards. Events then moved rapidly, Tostig and Duke William making common cause.

On the 14th October 1066, within a year following the calling of the Council at Britford, Harold was slain at "Hastings" - "at Battle or Bellum, or the Battle or Bellum of Hastings."

The Coronation of Duke William of Normandy, Harold's antagonist, took place at Westminster Abbey on 25th December 1066.

The above brief facts for the most part have been recently culled by the writer from a perusal of Articles on "The Confessor," "Harold" and "Tostig," in the D. N. B., in each of which particular mention is made of the Assembly at

Britford. It is submitted, though with deference, that the parish can thus claim a real link in an outstanding event in English History, viz., "The Norman Conquest."

J. B. J.

NOTE - It may be mentioned that the traditional site of the Confessor's hunting box is now occupied by the Manor House, - "Britford Moat." And is it too much of a flight of the imagination to believe that Edward walked under the existing Saxon south porch arch to worship in the Church built about 100 years before he began his reign?

Taken from an article by John B. Jackson, Vicar of Britford, from the September 1933 Number of "The Sarum Record," the quarterly Magazine of the Salisbury Theological College