

Further Notes on Shepherds' Staves

By FRANCIS W. STEER

IN a paper entitled 'Some Notes on Shepherds' Staves', which Mr L. F. Salzman contributed to this REVIEW (v, 1957, pp. 91-4), he discussed the various types of staves from the formless club to the implement now generally recognized as a shepherd's crook. Consideration was given to the 'hockey-stick' type for which Mr Salzman quoted references in illustrations from c. 1150 to the early fifteenth century with a "stray" eighteenth-century ivory carving from Goa.

In 1825, John Flaxman (1755-1826) added to his fine marble groups at Petworth House in Sussex a superb Apollo—called by the sculptor the Apollo Lagobolos—who holds in his left hand a 'hockey-stick' type of staff. Thirty years later, in 1855, a lively and learned correspondence was being carried on between John Heywood Hawkins¹ of Bignor Park, Sussex, the Reverend Thomas Sockett, rector of Petworth from 1816 to 1859,² and a Frank Walter (whom I have not been able to identify) of Maidstone. The subject of their letters, the implement that Flaxman had put in Apollo's hand, is not without interest to students of agricultural history. Although only a few of the letters have found their way into the extensive archives at Petworth House, enough remains to enable us to follow the discussion.

The first letter, from Hawkins to Sockett, is dated from Bignor Park, 15 October 1855, and is as follows:

Dear Sir

Your question would have had a better chance of solution from me some quarter

of a century ago; but I will forthwith dust the tops of such authorities as my shelves may contain, and brace up my nerves for the round-mouthed Doric—

Your explanation is most plausible—I fear our herdsman, had he been living in these days, would have been acquainted with the interior of Petworth House of Correction—That cattle-lifting thief whom Flaxman has represented nearly stripped and with a hockey-stick in his hand, was in the habit, by all account, of lounging about with a flaming white wide-awake on his head, and a cross-bow (if not an air-gun) in his pocket. How many pheasants went into it, ancient history records not; but with such a stick in his hand, I should be sorry for any hare that crossed his path, even at thirty or forty yards. I believe this is a favourite method of poaching in some places; and I have seen it practised in the vicinity of Eton.

If I can give you no help from books, I can, when I go to Town, ascertain what Flaxman's notions were on the subject from his Sister, Miss Denman, and for what Theocritus meant,³ the Provost of Eton⁴ is the best living authority that I know. But I will try my own hand first—You and I, from our residence among the bold peasantry, have lights on these subjects perhaps hidden from Flaxman & Hawtrey.

Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

J. HEYWOOD HAWKINS

Hawkins was true to his word and on 7 November 1855 sent Sockett another letter "in

¹ Son of John Hawkins of Trewithen, Cornwall, and Bignor Park. See F. W. Steer, *I am, my dear Sir...* (1959) and *The Hawkins Papers* [in West Sussex Record Office]: *A Catalogue* (1962).

² See K. Povey, 'The Rise of Thomas Sockett', *Sussex County Magazine*, 11, 1928, pp. 38-40.

³ See below, pp. 48, 49.

⁴ Edward Craven Hawtrey (1789-1862), provost of Eton from 1853 until his death. See *D.N.B.*

reply to your question about the habits and manners of the pastoral Apollo." Before dealing with this however, we must turn to an undated note¹ by Sockett in which he says: "The Sculptor gave the epithet *Lagobolos* to this figure, from the *lagobolon*, which he is represented as bearing in his left hand.

"This weapon (a sort of bent club, which shepherds and herdsmen were accustomed to carry) bears some analogy both in its shape, and the uses to which it was applied, to the Boomarang,² used by the Aborigines of Australia, *for purposes of the chase, and also in war, and was a formidable instrument of offence, in well practiced hands—the word is derived from *λαγώς* a hare & *βάλλω* to throw at—*³

"In the 4th Idyll of Theocritus, a herdsman is introduced, as complaining of a heifer, who, notwithstanding his continued efforts to drive her away, perseveres in browsing upon the tender shoots of an olive, & at length he exclaims [*here Sockett quotes the Greek, but I give a translation by Fawkes⁴ of line 49 of the Idyll quoted by Sockett*]—

Oh that I had my pike
I'd give the beast a blow she would not like."

Sockett says that *pike* does not appear to be a good translation of *λαγωβόλον* and goes on, "It appears to me that they used to throw (or spin so as to give it a rotatory motion) the *λαγωβόλον* horizontally, and thus to strike the legs of the hare (as it ran along) from under it."

Now to return to Hawkins's letter of November 7th. In it he quotes a translation of *λαγωβόλον* as *pedum quo lepores fugientes petuntur* and refers to the definition in Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon: "a staff or stick

for flinging at hares, also used as a shepherd's staff or crook, Lat. *pedum*."⁵

He then proceeds to cite the description of a herdsman in Theocritus, Idyll VII, which, in translation,⁶ is: "an old cloak was fastened by a broad belt about his breast; whilst in his right hand he held a crooked club of wild-olive." The Greek words in this passage are *βοικός*—crooked and *κορύνη* meaning (i) a club, often shod with iron for fighting, and (ii) a shepherd's staff. Later, in the same Idyll:⁷ "and he . . . presented me with his crook to be a friendly gift . . .", but here the Greek word is *λαγωβόλον*.

Hawkins continues to give proof of his further inquiries but this need not detain us. Between the dates of the two letters from Hawkins, Sockett received a long one from Frank Walter, dated from Maidstone, 26 October 1855, which gives some additional references. Among them is William Smith's edition of *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (1842) where there is an article on the word *pedum*, synonymous with *κορύνη* and *λαγωβόλος*, but the author says that the curved extremity of this crook "was used by shepherds to lay hold of the sheep or goats, principally by their legs, so as to preserve them from running into danger or to rescue them when they were in want of assistance." The article is illustrated by a woodcut from a painting found at Civita Vecchia: it shows the 'hockey-stick', head downwards, in the hand of a shepherdess, who sits on a rock, tending sheep and other cattle. The implement she holds, says Walter, "is exactly like the one Flaxman has placed in the hand of his statue, and might very well have served for his model." The article in Smith continues: "The herdsman also used a crook, but less curved, with a heavy head, and hence

¹ There are two almost identical copies.

² The original spelling and punctuation in all the documents here transcribed have been preserved as far as is reasonably possible.

³ The words between the asterisks are omitted in the other version of the notes and the words "and to have been thrown at hares or other animals" substituted.

⁴ Francis Fawkes (1720-77) translated Theocritus, 1767.

⁵ I have confirmed this in the 1869 edition of Liddell and Scott.

⁶ *The Idylls of Theocritus* . . . by J. Banks (Bohn's Classical Library, 1853), p. 38.

⁷ Banks, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

called *καλαῦροψ*:¹ he threw it at any of the herd which strayed from the rest."

It seems that *κορύνη* and *λαγωβόλον*, at least in their original acceptation, signified something that was thrown, and belonged more properly to the shepherd than to the herdsman, although Walter, perhaps wrongly in the light of Hawkins's second letter, suggests "that the term *λαγωβόλον* came in a great measure to lose its original signification, and that as Apollo was especially the God of Shepherds and was himself once a shepherd or herdsman, he carries it rather for the purpose of controlling unruly cattle, than for cutting over unfortunate hares, as the passage in Theocritus seems to show." Walter also refers to the *καλαῦροψ* and says that Polupætēs, who threw the discus far beyond all other competitors at the funeral games in honour of Patroclus, is compared to a herdsman throwing his *καλαῦροψ* among his cattle.² Paley, in his notes to this passage in the *Iliad* says: "*καλαῦροψ*, a herdsman's crook. This seems to have been used as a missile for driving cattle." He then quotes the passage from Theocritus, iv. 49, with the translation, "I only wish my staff had a crook to it, for then I would strike you!"³ Paley continues, in parentheses, to say that the *straight* stick, *λαγωβόλον*, was used for killing hares, etc.; but offers the view that *καλαῦροψ* may not be an ancient word.

We are left, as so often happens when a *precise* definition is wanted, with differing opinions, but the evidence seems to indicate that the 'hockey-stick' as so finely carved by Flaxman in Apollo's hand, as defined by Hawkins and by Liddell and Scott, and as shown in an early thirteenth-century painting of shepherds in the Sussex Downland church of Cocking, was part of a shepherd's equipment and, perhaps, in a slightly different form, an implement used by other herdsmen. In addition to the Cocking representation (and what better proof could one have for the English use?) which Mr Salzman mentioned among many others, we must accept the essentially practical observation made by Hawkins that "from our residence amongst the bold peasantry, [we] have lights on these subjects perhaps hidden from Flaxman & Hawtrey." He could well have included some of the learned commentators whose opinions I have given. There is also some evidence to support the theory that the 'long straight staff with an iron spud at one end', described by Mr Salzman (his types C 1-3 on p. 92), derived from the *κορύνη*.

It was typical of Sockett's generation to inquire into such problems merely for amusement; the writers little thought that their letters would arouse interest among historians over a century later.

¹ Liddell and Scott define this word as a shepherd's staff or crook, which was thrown so as to drive back the cattle to the herd.

² F. A. Paley, *The Iliad of Homer*, II, 1871, xxiii, 844-7.

³ Cf. Banks's version quoted on p. 48.