



Berks Archæological Society.

REPORT, 1909-10.

WE have much pleasure in again submitting to the members the Report of the Society's proceedings for the year that ends with this Annual Meeting held to-day, May 4th 1911.

ROYAL PATRONAGE.

We have in the first place to congratulate ourselves on the high honour bestowed upon the Society by the gracious consent of His Majesty King George V. to act as our Patron. This is a royal favour bestowed upon few, if any, county archæological societies, and is, doubtless, only accorded us as we have the proud distinction of dwelling and working in the Royal Shire wherein the lordly castle of Windsor looks down upon the Thames Vale and imparts a dignity to which other less favoured districts can scarce aspire. The older members of the Society will not forget the encouragement which our late and beloved Queen Victoria gave our work when she graciously consented to accept the office of our first royal Patron. I need not remind you that following in her footsteps His Majesty King Edward VII. was pleased to become our Patron and by the gracious act of our new sovereign we are still permitted to place at the head of our notices "Patron—His Majesty the King." It would be within our power to bear the title of Royal, and to style ourselves "the Royal Berkshire Archæological Society," but we covet not titles, and would rather be distinguished by the extent of our archæological research and by our work for the cause which we represent than by any prefix however honourable and distinguished.

We had the honour of presenting to His Majesty a beautifully designed illuminated Address, executed by the skilful hand of Mr. W. H. Pountney. This was exhibited to the members at one of the Society's meetings, and met with their approval. That Address wherein we desired to convey to His Majesty our loyal homage, has been photographed by Mr. Marcus Adams, and a copy will be preserved in the Abbey Gate. The terms of the Address

together with the letter which the King's Private Secretary, the Right Hon. Sir William Carington, wrote signifying His Majesty's consent to our petition, may be embodied in an appendix to this Report

EXTENSION OF THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY.

In the last Report the outlines of a scheme were suggested for the extension of our work throughout the county and for some commemoration of this the fortieth year of its existence since the Reconstitution of the Berks Archæological Society in the year 1871. Suggestions were invited from the members, but as yet none have been received. The scheme of extension consisted of the establishment of Committees with a secretary in the chief towns of the county—Windsor, Maidenhead, Abingdon, Wantage and perhaps Faringdon, the Newbury and District Field Club extending its influence in that town and Hungerford. I have still some hopes that this scheme may be carried out; but it can only be done by the active co-operation of our members, and the offers of some assistance to a somewhat over-burdened honorary Secretary.

LECTURES AND EXCURSIONS.

During the past year the usual number of meetings and excursions have been held, viz., seven lectures and three excursions.

LECTURES.

On April 29th, 1910, when the last Annual Meeting took place, an interesting lecture was given by the Rev. R. S. Mylne, B.C.L., F.S.A. on "Bayeux and Norman Architecture," illustrated by lantern slides.

The work of the Winter Session commenced on November 18th, when Mr. Dodgson, of the University College, Reading, gave an excellent lecture on the history of Blewbury Church, Berks. This lecture treated of the history of the Church from a documentary as well as an architectural point of view, and was illustrated by a charming series of lantern slides. The members of the Society were entertained to tea by the kind invitation of the Rev. G. H. Gwilliam, Rector of Remenham.

On December 8th, Mr. W. G. A. Anderson gave an interesting lecture on Constantinople, Past and Present, illustrated by lantern slides. Tea was served by the kind invitation of the Rev. B. and Mrs. Littlewood.

The third lecture of the Winter Session was given by the Hon. Secretary on January 19th, on the "Preservation of Historic Monuments."

On February 17th, Mr. Gordon Hills gave an excellent lecture on "Chichester Cathedral," of which he is the Surveyor.

On March 16th, Mr. Mervyn Macartney, F.R.S., one of the chief authorities on Domestic Architecture in England, delivered a very interesting lecture on "Notes on some Berkshire Houses." This was illustrated by an admirable series of lantern slides. He described Ockwells, Ufton, Milton, Coleshill, and others.

On April 6th, the President gave one of his valuable lectures on Berkshire Churches, describing the churches of Aldermaston, Englefield, Tidmarsh and Padworth. His lecture was illustrated by about 80 lantern slides from photographs specially taken for the lecture, which was much appreciated.

The session concludes to-day with the lecture which we are all looking forward to, by Mr. Gordon Hills, who for the second time this session is kindly favouring us with the result of his researches in Cathedral history.

EXCURSIONS.

The first excursion of the Society took place on June 24th, when the members visited the interesting country of the Vale of White Horse. About 40 members and their friends were present. The country is seldom explored and little known even by Berkshire people, as the villages are secluded and inaccessible save to the motorists, and the members especially appreciated this opportunity of inspecting the old-world hamlets, interesting churches and manor houses. The President kindly provided a special train to convey the party from Didcot to Uffington and described with his accustomed skill the churches visited. Uffington Church, one of the most interesting in the county, Woolstone, Compton Beauchamp Church and Manor House (inspection having been kindly given by Judge Bacon), Ashbury Church and manor house and Little Hinton, were the places visited, owing to a heavy storm of rain and the lateness of the hour the visit to Wanborough being abandoned.

On July 25th, in conjunction with the Newbury District Field Club the Society crossed the border of the County visiting part of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Purton, Cricklade, South Cerney, Liddington and Cirencester were the chief places that offered many attractions, especially the famous Gloucestershire town, where the Roman Museum, the Church and Abbey were all inspected with profound interest by all the party.

The most attractive excursion of the season was reserved until the last when on September 30th the Society visited the eastern

portion of the county, and the members were the guests of Sir Henry and Lady Vansittart Neale at Bisham Abbey. Cookham Church was first visited, and ably described by Sir George Young, Bart., and then the party drove through Marlow to Bisham Abbey, where they were welcomed by their host and hostess. About 70 members and their friends were present. Sir Henry Vansittart Neale read a learned paper upon the history of this house, which is now being published in the "Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal." The antiquaries were then conducted through the principal chambers of the house, and partook of tea in the beautiful hall of the Abbey, It was a memorable excursion of which we shall ever retain pleasant recollections.

The grateful thanks of the Society are due to the gentlemen who delivered lectures before the Society, and whose names have already been recorded, and to those who have kindly entertained the members at the Abbey Gate during the Winter Session and on the occasion of our excursions. Among these are the President and Mrs. Keyser, Sir Henry and Lady Vansittart Neale, Sir Edmund Barry, Bart., and Lady Barry, the Rev. G. H. Gwilliam, the Rev. B. and Mrs. Littlewood, Mrs. F. E. Williams, the Rev. L. Hamerton, Vicar of Ashbury, the Rev. C. E. Perkins, Vicar of Little Hinton, Judge Bacon, for allowing us to visit his house, and the Rev. G. Hill, Vicar of Shrivenham, for his invitation to tea which we were unable to accept.

During the ensuing session the Committee hopes to arrange a series of excursions, and suggestions are cordially invited with regard to the places to be visited.

PUBLICATIONS.

The third volume of the Victoria History of Berkshire, under the editorship of Mr. W. Page, F.S.A., and the Hon. Secretary of your Society is in course of preparation.

We have to announce a very welcome volume on the history of Abingdon by Mr. James Townsend, which is a valuable addition to the list of books relating to the county. It has often been pointed out that although there is no voluminous general history of Berkshire, a want that will be supplied by the Victoria History, there are few counties about which so much has been written, Windsor, Newbury, Reading and several quite small villages in this shire having had monographs published concerning them.

Professor Skeat had added a volume on Berkshire Place Names to his numerous works on philological studies, a book that is only blemished by the learned professor's lack of local knowledge. There has also appeared at the same time Mr. Stenton's work on the same subject, which is characterised of painstaking research and careful study.

The "Little Guide to Berkshire," by Mr. Brabant may also be noted, and also the Berkshire volume of the Cambridge Geography series by our neighbour Mr. Horace Monckton.

The "Berks, Bucks and Oxford Archæological Journal" continues to be published, containing the transactions of our Society. It has now reached its 17th volume. Its pages have been enriched for some years past by the the President's architectural studies, illustrated by many plates kindly presented by him. Besides numerous Notes and Queries relating to the county the last volume contains Sir Henry Vansittart Neale's lecture on Bisham Abbey, and a complete record of the Feet of Fines, compiled by Mr. L. J. Acton Pile, to whose work Berkshire genealogists are much indebted.

OBITUARY.

We have to record with much regret the death of an old member of the Society, Sir Peter Spokes, and of Mr. Withers and Miss Amy Hissey, who took much pleasure in the work of the Society and were constant attendants at our lectures and excursions.

In conclusion we have to thank the members for their cordial support of all our undertakings. The large attendance at our meetings and excursions shows that they take a keen interest in our work, that our Society is very much "alive," and that they appreciate the arrangements that are made for their comfort and delectation. The funds of the Society are not always too prosperous, though this year fairly satisfactory, and the members can help considerably by increasing our membership, by regular attendance at our meetings, undertaking some little research work and by promoting the principles of the Society in their own town or neighbourhood. With such loyal assistance the future welfare of our Society is assured.

P. H. DITCHFIELD.