



Proceedings of Archaeological Societies.

NEWBURY DISTRICT FIELD CLUB.—In our last number we briefly alluded to the excursion of this Society to Salisbury, Amesbury, and Stonehenge, on 26th June. The party arrived at Salisbury at 11.15, and at the Cathedral were met by the SUB-DEAN, who acted as guide over this most beautiful Church. After luncheon at the "County Hotel" they drove to Old Sarum, Amesbury, and Stonehenge. The following interesting notes by the way were supplied by E. DORAN WEBB, F.S.A., Hon. Sec. Salisbury Field Club.

Rather more than two miles from Salisbury stands Old Sarum, the Sorbiodunum of Antoninus, and for many years previous to the Roman occupation of our country a hill fort of importance. Its strategic value was recognised by its Saxon Conquerors, and it became in the ninth century the object of contention between Saxon and Dane; Alfred in 871 gave orders for the strengthening of its fortifications; Svein is said to have captured and burnt the town A.D. 1003, and here thirty years later died Cnut, Svein's son.

Herman, Bishop of the united sees of Ramsbury and Sherborne, in consequence of the decision of the Council of London held under Archbishop Lanfranc, translated the seat of the bishopric to Old Sarum and A.D. 1078 laid the foundations of a Cathedral which was finished by Bishop Osmond, the Conqueror's nephew, who drew up the celebrated ordinary which still bears his name for its use. Old Sarum after it was deserted by its bishop, who laid the foundations of our present Cathedral A.D. 1220, and the incorporation of the new city which sprang up around it seven years later, soon began to decay; such trade as it had gradually left it; the materials of its Cathedral were in 1331 taken to build the present Close wall and possibly the spire in our city; and the old town itself seems to have afforded a convenient quarry for all those in its neighbourhood who wished to build; so that when Leland in Henry the Eighth's reign viewed the place

it was entirely deserted, "not one house, neither within or without Old Saresbyrie inhabited."

The subsequent history of Old Sarum, how, though deserted, it still returned two members to represent it in Parliament, and became famous as the rottenest of rotten boroughs until the Reform Bill swept it away, are matters of modern history: it will be sufficient to add that the property was acquired by purchase by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and that its present owners, the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury, have placed it under the protection of the Conservators of Ancient Monuments.

Amesbury Church, six miles across the downs from Old Sarum, was, previous to the dissolution, attached to a nunnery first founded here by Queen Elfrida towards the close of the tenth century; the cloisters stood on the north side of the present church which is a cruciform building with a low central tower dating from the twelfth century; the transepts and tower arches are early English in style. In the Chancel the fine Decorated south window and the more florid example facing it are worthy of notice. Portions of the chancel screen were in existence until their removal in 1852; the north windows of the nave are Perpendicular work; the font is Norman. Amesbury was famous in the seventeenth century for its manufacture of clay tobacco pipes carried on by the Gauntlett family, some of whom lived at Netherhampton House near Salisbury. Edward Earl of Hertford, to whose father the Duke of Somerset, a grant of the property of the dissolved nunnery was made by Henry VIII., was married three times, his first wife being the Lady Catherine Grey [whose effigy with that of the Earl is in the south choir aisle of Salisbury Cathedral], his third wife was Frances Pranell, a widow; a discarded suitor of this lady, Sir George Rodney, came after her marriage to Amesbury and having written with his blood a copy of verses to the Countess fell on his sword and so ended his life. While living at Amesbury under the generous protection of the third Duke of Queensbury and his Duchess [Prior's Kitty] Gay wrote his "Beggars' Opera."

Passing through Vespasian's Camp, as Stukeley fancifully named it, the next halting place is Stonehenge. Stonehenge has afforded in bygone years and will doubtless continue to do so for many years to come subject matter for endless discussion, from Geoffrey of Monmouth who gave to the world 1139 his ideas of its age, the people who erected it and the purpose it was built for, down to Mr. Rankin who writing in the year of

grace one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four gives us his opinions on the matter, which are, to do them justice, worthy of being placed alongside of the veracious Geoffrey's tales. Many and widely differing from each other have been the theories advanced to account for the presence of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain ; all that we can say for certain with regard to this mighty relic of a dim past is that it was erected during the Bronze Age of our country and probably in the early years of that period, since both Stukeley and Sir R. Colt Hoare found in some of the round barrows chippings from both the sarsen and syenite stone of which Stonehenge is formed. It would be out of place, if indeed it were desirable, in these short notes to enter into a lengthy description of Stonehenge ; it will be sufficient here to say that in its complete state it consisted of an outer circle comprised of thirty upright sarsen stones having the same number of like stones placed horizontally upon them, the total height from the ground to the top of the horizontal stone being about sixteen feet ; of these seventeen upright stones remain in position. Nine feet within this last circle stood a circle of monoliths of Diabase rock ; the few that remain to this day average some four feet in height. Enclosed by these stones stood five trilithons in plan resembling a horseshoe composed like the outer circle of sarsen stones ; two only of these remain in position, the largest being over seventeen feet in height : the central trilithon was twenty-one feet six inches high. Within the horseshoe of sarsens is a horseshoe formed of small monoliths mostly of Diabase rock ; about half of these remain in position, all evidently having been worked by hand to their present shape ; these stones enclose what has been termed the altar, a large block of sandstone broken in two by the fall of the central trilithon which according to Aubrey occurred in 1620.

Leaving behind us the plain dotted with barrows and passing Lake House, a fine specimen of Jacobean architecture, we cross the river Avon by the bridge at Woodford and reach Netton, part of the tract of land known as Natan-Leaga in the Saxon Chronicle. Beyond Netton on our right nestling among some old elms is Heale House, where Charles II. lay hid after the battle of Worcester. A charming piece of scenery, perhaps the best part of this beautiful valley, lies between Netton and Stratford ; the road cut in the side of the hill which rises abruptly on our left seems to tower above us ; down below the river Avon pursues its sinuous course at the foot of the hill ; then passing through a grove of beech trees, the rich green

tints of the foliage contrasting strongly with the burnt up grass on the down side, we catch a glimpse of the old house at Little Durnford and shortly after reach our last halting place, Stratford. The Church some two miles from Salisbury retains its 15th century rood screen, altered and added to in the eighteenth century, also a wrought iron hour glass stand of simple but good design. The tower was repaired by Thomas Pitt, the son of Governor Pitt of diamond fame in 1711; an inscription cut in large letters in the western part of the tower commemorates him as a benefactor; in 1689 he was returned as the representative of Salisbury in Parliament. The picturesque Vicarage house, on our right as we leave the Church is known as Marwarden Court from a family of that name who dwelt here in the 15th century. On the lintel over the entrance door is this inscription :—*Parva sed apta domino.*

* *
* *

On September 3rd, the Society visited East Berkshire and inspected several fine old Churches possessing many features of interest. The party was ably conducted by Mr. G. J. Watts, the Secretary, and included Mr. Mount, M.P., the President, Mr. Charles E. Keyser, F.S.A., and many other leading Members of the Society. They first visited Shottesbrooke, where the Rector, the Rev. H. M. Dyer, met the party and communicated much interesting information relating to the beautiful Church. The Rev. O. E. Slocock read a valuable paper written by Mr. W. Ravenscroft, F.S.A., on the history and architecture of the building. The next place visited was Binfield, where the party was joined by the Rector, the Rev. Canon Savory, who after luncheon conducted the party to the Church, and described its history and that of the parish. Canon Savory has made a minute study of all points relating to the important parish of which he has been so long the Rector, and his remarks were therefore especially valuable. A full account of the papers read during this excursion has appeared in the local papers and therefore need not be repeated. In the absence of the Vicar of Warfield, the Church and parish were described by the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield. The party then drove back to Reading, and a hearty vote of thanks was passed to the Secretary for his admirable arrangements.