



# Berks Archæological Society.

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REPORT, 1897.

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IN presenting their Report for the past year, your Committee are glad to be able to record a chronicle of useful work both in the departments of Architectural study and Archæological research. The importance of the study of local history and antiquities is more fully recognised at the present time than in any other period of our national annals, and the foundation of County Archæological Societies has done much to foster this study, and to promote a truer knowledge of history and of the records of antiquity bequeathed to us by our forefathers. Among the many County Societies which now exist throughout England and Scotland our Berks Archæological Society holds an honoured place. It is a descendant of the old Berkshire Ashmolean Society founded so long ago as 1840, and was revived in 1871 by several gentlemen who are still members. During the many years of its existence it has done much to increase the knowledge of the history of the Royal County, and we trust that it has still a long career of usefulness before it.

## *(I.) General Events of the Year.*

With regard to matters of general Antiquarian interest which have occurred during the year, we have to record the completion of the buildings of the Reading Museum and Art Gallery, which provide more adequate accommodation for the splendid collection of Roman Antiquities now stored therein. Reading is indeed fortunate to possess such a valuable and interesting collection, which is second to none in the kingdom. Berkshire Archæologists owe a great debt to the Society of Antiquaries for selecting Reading as the place for the housing of the relics which the Silchester Excavations have brought to light, and also to Dr. Stevens, one of our Vice-Presidents, for the skill and ability he has shown in the arrangement of the treasures confided to his care,

The Annual Conference of Archæological Societies, in union with the Society of Antiquaries, was held in London, on December 1st, and the Secretary attended as our delegate on that occasion. Various matters of interest were discussed, relating to the Catalogue of Effigies, index forms for the transactions of Societies, National Portrait Catalogue, the Photographic Survey, the Ancient Monuments' Acts, and other matters of Antiquarian interest.

*(II.) Practical Work of the Society.*

During the winter months three meetings were held for the reading of papers and discussion, and no less than three excursions took place during the summer to places of general and local interest. The Committee desire to express their thanks to the gentlemen who have read papers before the Society, and to those who have so willingly entertained the members on the occasion of their visits to historic places.

LECTURES.

The course of Lectures delivered during the session was as follows :—

On March 31st, on the occasion of the Annual Meeting, a lecture on "Old Tenures and Manorial Customs chiefly relating to Berkshire" was read by the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield.

On July 1st, a paper was read by W. M. Childs, Esq., of the University Extension College, on "England under the Five Queens Regnant.

On November 24th, a valuable paper was read by L. Treacher, Esq., F.G.S., on "Prehistoric remains in the Thames Valley," and the lecturer exhibited a portion of his interesting collection of flint and bronze implements.

EXCURSIONS.

On April 28th, the Society visited Hardwick House, by kind permission of C. D. Rose, Esq., which was described by Canon Slatter; Mapledurham House, the Church and Rectory, described by the Rev. F. St. John Thackeray; Caversham Church and the Rectory, the seat of H. Caversham Simonds, Esq., described by G. W. Wing, Esq. The members were hospitably entertained by the Vicar of Mapledurham and Miss Thackeray.

On May 19th, an excursion was made to Lambeth Palace and the Tower of London. The former was described by T. Kershaw, Esq., F.S.A., the Librarian, and special facilities for

inspecting the Tower were granted by the late Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.B., the Keeper of the Crown Jewels.

On September 29th, the Society visited Silchester, in conjunction with the Reading Literary and Scientific Society, when the Roman city was described by J. St. John Hope, Esq., F.S.A.

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, who is the honoured Patron of the Berks Society, an address was presented by our Society to Her Majesty, who was pleased to receive graciously the expression of our loyalty and affection.

The Photographic Survey of the County has been commenced by the Camera Club, at the suggestion of your Secretary, who recently gave an address on the subject at the Extension College, and the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society is co-operating in this important work.

The Committee are glad to be able to report that some steps have been taken with regard to the compilation of a Catalogue of Berkshire portraits, in connection with the National Portrait Catalogue. Your Committee recommend that a sub-committee, consisting of Lord Saye and Sele (chairman), the Rev. Alan Cheales (secretary), Miss Thoyts and H. Ogilvie, Esq., be appointed to carry out this work.

The Archæological Survey of the County was commenced some years ago, but is still in a very imperfect state. The Committee would be glad if some members of the Society who have leisure would undertake this very important work.

The usual prizes have been presented to various schools for the study of history, and for progress in architectural drawing.

#### OBITUARY.

It is with most heartfelt and sincere regret that your Committee have to record the very great loss which the Society has sustained by the death of our esteemed and beloved President, Sir George Russell, Bart., M.P., whose departure from us is so deeply deplored by a very large circle of his friends and neighbours. His genial nature, his kindness and many excellencies endeared him to all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. As the President of the Berks Society, he always took a keen interest in its welfare, and his reception of the members at Swallowfield Park a few years ago, when Lady Russell read a paper on the history of the house he

loved, was one of the most successful meetings in the annals of the Society.

We have also to deplore the loss of one of our Life Members, Richard Benyon, Esq., whose munificence and generosity are well known throughout Berkshire. As the owner of one of our historic houses, as one of the most respected of our English squires, as a true friend and benevolent supporter of all charitable institutions, his memory will live and be cherished by all who knew him.

Another death has been greatly felt by the Town of Reading, and also by our Society, that of George Palmer, Esq., who was formerly one of our Vice-Presidents.

We miss too at our meetings one who was most constant in his attendance, and who took a keen interest in our work, the Rev. J. Jackson Goadby, F.G.S., the respected President of the Reading Literary and Scientific Society, who, during his residence in Reading, made many friends and had taken an active part in all movements which tend to the advancement of learning.

#### PUBLICATIONS.

In connection with the Society the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal* continues to be published. It contains a record of the proceedings of our Society, Notes and Queries relating to the three counties, together with papers on subjects of antiquarian interest. The Committee hope that a larger number of members will become subscribers to this publication, which is the official journal of the Society, and thus increase its usefulness. All communications relating to the Journal should be made to the Secretary.

Among the books produced during the past year is a volume on the history of the Berkshire Militia, by Miss Thoyts, which is a work of great merit, and is worthy of the subject of which it treats. The same lady is engaged upon the great work of copying Parish Registers of the County, which are about to be published by Messrs. Phillimore and Co.

In concluding this Report your Committee desire to state that they hope to arrange an attractive programme of excursions and lectures for the coming season, and trust that the Society may be enabled to continue its career of usefulness in promoting the study of the past history of our county, and that pleasure and profit may be the result of its labours to all its members.