



# The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

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## Gossip of an Antiquary.

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**A** GIGANTIC undertaking lies before our Berkshire antiquaries and historians, and that is no less than the compilation of a large County History. Many of my readers will have heard of "The Victoria History of the Counties of England" which Messrs. Archibald Constable and Co. are publishing in a series of no fewer than 160 volumes of large imperial octavo. This will be a stupendous monument of literary and historical enterprise. The series will appear under the highest and most promising auspices; the Queen has recognised the national character of the work by allowing her name to be given to it, and accepting its dedication to herself; and the learned men throughout the kingdom will be engaged in making the volumes as perfect as possible.

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It must be the endeavour of all our Berkshire friends who are specially interested in or actually working at some definite line of local research to make the Berkshire volumes worthy of this great enterprise. We have often sighed for a good County History. Now we hope to have our longings satisfied. Here is an opportunity which has never occurred before, and will never occur again. So we must use it to the very utmost of our ability.

The history of each county will open with its geology, pass on to its paleontology, and so through the ascending scale of the floral and animal kingdoms until prehistoric man is reached. Thence it will trace county by county the story of England's growth from its prehistoric condition, through the barbarous age, the settlement of the alien peoples, and the gradual welding of many races into a nation which is now the greatest on the globe. All the phases of ecclesiastical history ; the changes in land tenure ; the records of historic and local families ; the history of the social life and sports of the villages and towns ; the development of art, science, manufactures and industries—all these factors which tell of the progress of England from primitive beginnings to large and successful empire will find a place in these precious volumes.

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Family history is to be treated in a scientific spirit of judicious scepticism and illustrated by authenticated pedigrees. Heraldry will not be neglected, and a supplementary volume will be issued for each county, containing the pedigrees of the present county families and illustrations of the arms of the families mentioned in the Herald's Visitation. There will be many thousands of illustrations, and each county will contain archæological, domesday and geological maps.

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Such is the general scheme briefly and roughly outlined. We shall have a county committee, of which the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wantage, has consented to act as chairman, a general editor for the county, a band of volunteer county workers, and a number of specialists who will act as sub-editors and supervise the histories of the periods which they have specially studied. By this means great accuracy will be obtained, and many of the legends and "fairy tales" which too often disfigure local histories ruthlessly destroyed. The Editor of this Journal tells me that he will be very glad to hear from any ladies and gentlemen who may be willing to assist in this work, and that he will be very grateful for their co-operation.

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Those of us whose fate it is to have to peruse ancient documents know how permanent the old inks must have been, since when MSS. have been carefully preserved and kept free from damp, the old writing is always decipherable. I wonder sometimes whether

our modern inks will last in the same way, when the antiquaries of the year 2050 A.D. come to read our writings which will then of course be extremely valuable. Mr. Hepworth, whose scientific writings and lectures are well known, has written to me on the subject, and is endeavouring to trace the composition of the writing-inks employed in past centuries, with a view of noting the permanence, or want of permanence, shown by various specimens. He would be very grateful for any specimens of reliable date which he could analyse, and perhaps some of my readers can supply him with some. The operation would of necessity destroy the documents, so they would have to be of a valueless character.

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The destruction of old buildings goes on apace. Report says that the old Hospitium of Reading Abbey is to be spared. If this be true, I congratulate the Corporation of Reading for their zeal in preserving this unique and interesting building. At Croydon it has been found necessary to form a Croydon Antiquities Protection Committee for preserving the ancient Hospital of the Holy Trinity, an Elizabethan building, erected by John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1599. Some people are clamouring for its demolition. I hope that the Committee will be successful in opposing such a deed of vandalism.

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The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest on Natural Beauty has acquired the old Court House at Long Crendon, Bucks. It is a fourteenth century building which was probably built as a wool store in the days when the district produced more wool for the busy looms of East Anglia than almost any other part of England. Manorial Courts were held here from the days of Queen Catherine, Consort of Henry V. to the present time. £350 is required for its restoration, and I shall be very glad to forward to the Secretary of the National Trust any donations which may be sent for this excellent object.

