

Proceedings of Societies.

CONGRESS OF ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETIES.—The fourteenth congress was held at the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries at Burlington House on July 8th. The Hon. Secretary attended the congress on behalf of the Berks Society. A provisional scheme for recording earthworks had been carefully drawn up, and was submitted for the approval of the Society. The Report of the Treasury Committee on the custody of Local Records was presented. It was suggested that the County Councils should be approached and urged to form in each county a Record Office for the preservation of ancient documents. It would be necessary to have fire-proof rooms, and a custodian who was qualified to read and catalogue the records. Each Council would be urged to obtain returns from each parish as regards the custody of parish records.

Mr. Ralph Nevill, the Secretary of the Congress, introduced the subject of the adoption of English names by aliens. He said that our English family names were a heritage which had been handed down to us ; but by Common Law any man may take any name he likes. He instanced the case of the notorious foreigner who had assumed the name of Chapman, and of the money-lender who called himself Gordon. People came into the country, bought a bit of ground, and assumed an old name. The Congress thought that great hardship and danger might arise from this, but as the matter scarcely came within the domain of archæology no action was taken in the matter. The discussion of several subjects was postponed.

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BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The Berks Archæological Society made their second summer excursion on Thursday, July 23, and, visited the beautiful Abbey of Malmesbury and, by the kind invitation of the Countess of Suffolk and Berkshire, the historic mansion of Charlton.

The Rev. P. H. Ditchfield described the historical associations of the Abbey. He said that Malmesbury occupied a position of strategic importance and had great natural strength. It stood on a peninsula formed by the confluence of the Bristol Avon and Newton Water, while the third side of the triangular space was protected by a rampart which ran along a neck of land between the two streams. The name " Westport " preserves the memory of a fortified gateway.

The mythical origin of Malmesbury was attributed to Malmud, king of Britain, father of Brennus, famous in Roman history, who was said to have founded the town B.C. 400, and called it Bladon. No Roman remains had been found there, and therefore it could not have been an important place in Roman times. The Saxons called it Ingleburne, and as it stood on the borders of Wessex and Mercia it was occupied by both kingdoms at different times. Tradition states that there was a nunnery there, and Leland mentions it, adding that the nuns were not quite so good as they should be, and were turned out by a Saxon archbishop. The real history begins with Maddulf, an Irish hermit, who lived in the seventh century, and obtained leave to have a cell here. He attracted many people by his pious life, and founded a monastic school to which hundreds flocked. Amongst them came Aldhelm, a relation of Ina, king of Wessex, first bishop of Sherborne, who founded the abbey. He was a man of great piety and virtue, worked several miracles, and sang beautiful songs to the wayfarers, and thus attracted them to listen to his teaching. He founded the beautiful gem of Saxon architecture at Bradford-on-Avon. Eleutherius, bishop of Wessex (672-76 A.D.), gave him a grant of land for an abbey and appointed him first abbot. He raised a church dedicated to the Holy Saviour, SS. Peter and Paul, and within the precincts another church dedicated to St. Mary, and a chapel to St. Michael, in which he was buried. King Alfred wished to make Malmesbury a seat of learning, and sent a learned Scot, named John, to teach them, but his pupils liked him not, and murdered him, stabbing him to death with their steel pencils. Athelstan was a great benefactor of the town. When he was fighting against the Danes the men of Malmesbury fought well and bravely, so he rewarded them with a grant of land which is still held by the burgesses, and divided into allotments varying from two to ten acres. When a burgess is admitted the steward gives him a turf and strikes him three times with a twig, saying—

Turf and twig I give to thee,
Same as King Athelstan gave to me.

Athelstan and his two sons, slain by the Danes, were buried here, and the tomb of the former erected in the fourteenth century remains. Abbot Alfric, appointed by King Edgar, rebuilt and restored the church of St. Mary and made it the principal one. The church of SS. Peter and Paul was a smaller building, and stood on the south side of the south transept, wherein in Leland's time weavers had their looms. The church had two organs, one presented by St. Ald-

helm, which was a mighty instrument with innumerable notes, blown with bellows, and had a gilded case. The other was made by St. Dunstan and had metal pipes. The Danes came to Malmesbury with the intention of plundering it, but one of them attempted to take a stone from the shrine of St. Aldhelm, and fell back as if he had been shot. So they left the abbey alone and fled away. William the Conqueror was a benefactor of this monastery, and gave to it the head of St. Ouen, which he brought from Rouen, and Queen Matilda endowed the church with several manors. William of Malmesbury, born in 1075, the great historian, lived and worked here, and formed the library; he refused the office of abbot, preferring to devote his life to study. Bishop Roger of Salisbury built a castle here, which was destroyed in John's time. The present church was built in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth the monastic buildings were erected when William de Colerne (1260) was abbot, and included two halls, a kitchen, bakehouse, dormitory, chapter-house, vineyard and herb garden. In the same century the hospital of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem was built in the lower part of the town, of which a single arch remains. The abbey was dissolved in 1539, when Abbot Selwyn and twenty monks were pensioned. The monastic buildings were gradually pulled down and carried away. The Tudor house near the church was built on the foundations of the infirmary. William Stump, a rich clothier, bought the abbey buildings from Henry VIII. for 1,500*l.*, and set up looms for his weavers in the chapel. His son or grandson gave the nave to the town for a parish church. The valuable monastic library was dispersed, and the MSS. were used to stop bung-holes in beer-barrels, to cover books, to wrap gloves and scour gun-barrels, for which they were found especially serviceable. Malmesbury was the scene of many fights in the Civil War, and was occupied by both Royalists and Roundheads, and the marks of bullets can be plainly seen on the walls. It is a matter of regret that time has dealt so hardly with this majestic pile, but in spite of all the destruction that has taken place, it remains one of the most interesting buildings in the country, not only on account of its architectural beauties, but also for its most important historical associations.

Mr. Keyser described the architectural features of the abbey. He said that it was a matter of regret that so small a part of the building remained. Originally the plan consisted of a nave with aisles, a central tower with transepts and chancel. The large central tower and spire were higher than Salisbury, which was usually considered

to have been the highest in England, but it was surpassed by the lofty spire of old St. Paul's Cathedral, London. The principal building belonged to the latter part of the twelfth century, and he considered that Malmesbury showed the earliest example of the pointed arch. The arches of the nave were all obtusely pointed, whereas the doorways were semi-circular. The south doorway was one of the finest in England. He pointed out the elaborate ornamentation, which was very similar in style to the carved work seen in the Forbury Gardens, Reading, and in the garden of St. Lawrence's Vicarage. The Abbey Church at Reading and that at Malmesbury were built at the same time, though the Reading church must have been much larger. Mr. Keyser pointed out the prismatic billet ornament and the sunk lozenge on the arches, the fifteenth-century screen, the fourteenth-century roof, part of which had been destroyed by the fall of the west tower, and the fifteenth-century "watching loft," which he conjectured might have been the abbot's pew.

The party afterwards drove to Charlton Park, where they were received by the agent, Mr. Bates, in the absence of the Countess.

CHARLTON PARK.

The Rev. P. H. Ditchfield briefly described the house and the history of the family. He said that this house is especially interesting to Berkshire people as it is the home of the noble and illustrious family who take part of their title from our royal county. In ancient times this manor belonged to the abbots of the monastery. After the Dissolution it was granted to the Knivet family. Thomas Howard, the fourth Duke of Norfolk, married as his second wife Margaret, only daughter and heiress of Lord Audley of Walden. This nobleman was unjustly convicted of conspiracy in the matter of Mary Queen of Scots, and was beheaded in 1572. His son, Thomas Howard (born 1551), was a great naval officer in the time of Queen Elizabeth, was heir to his mother's estates, and was restored to his paternal estates in 1585. In 1603 he was created Earl of Suffolk and Knight of the Garter, and married as his second wife the eldest daughter of Sir Henry Knivet of Charlton, and widow of the Hon. Richard Rich, eldest son of Lord Rich. (The earldom of Suffolk was an old title revived. They would remember the unfortunate Earl of Suffolk who was butchered by the sailors when he was leaving England in the time of Henry VI.) He built Audley End, one of the most magnificent mansions in England. He performed great services to his country, suppressing the rebellion of the Earl of Essex, who had married one of his daughters, whose character was none of the best.

He became Lord High Treasurer, and discovered the Gunpowder Plot. Finally he was accused of accepting bribes and dismissed the king's service. The elder son of this earl (Theophilus Howard) inherited the title, became Privy Councillor and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The younger son (Thomas) inherited his mother's estates here at Charlton, was Master of the Horse to Charles, Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles I., raised to the peerage as Lord Howard of Charlton and Viscount Andover, and created Earl of Berkshire in 1625. He would often be at Windsor with the young prince, hunting in Windsor Forest, and when he became an earl chose his title from the name of the royal county wherein so many happy days had been spent. He was devoted to his royal master, and was a great Royalist and fought in the Civil War. After the execution of Charles I. he lived here in retirement, and at the Restoration, as a reward for his fidelity, he obtained a grant of the farm of the revenues of post-fines for forty-eight years, amounting to the comfortable income of 2,276*l.* a year. Without mentioning the numerous members of this family, Mr. Ditchfield said that he would only allude to the union of the titles. Owing to Henry, tenth Earl of Suffolk (b. 1706), dying childless, the earldom came to Henry Bowes, who was descended from Thomas, the first Earl of Berkshire and second son of Thomas, first Earl of Suffolk. Thus the titles were joined, and Henry became the eleventh Earl of Suffolk and the fourth Earl of Berks. This house was commenced by Thomas Howard, the first Earl of Suffolk, in the time of James I., and the parts erected by him are considered an excellent example of the Jacobean style of architecture. The west front was designed by Inigo Jones, and it is said to have been built by him before he had studied the works of Palladio and become deeply imbued with the influences of the Italian school. A great gallery extends the whole length of this front. The general plan of the mansion consists of a square with four fronts with towers at the angles, finished with cupolas and vanes. It is all built of stone, and measures 128 feet by 180 feet. Formerly there was a large quadrangle in the centre. This (as in the case of many other mansions) has been covered by a roof and a dome and converted into an immense hall. The south or principal front has a central porch adjoining square towers and wings at each extremity. In the basement of the porch is an arcade in the Doric style, an innovation on the buildings of Elizabethan age. The windows are mullioned with square heads, but in the upper storeys retain the Tudor labels. The parapets are enriched to an extreme

with scrollwork, perforated, which ornament is continued up the gable ends and crowned with pedestals, orbs and obelisks. The north and east fronts were erected by Brettingham under the direction of Henry, twelfth Earl of Suffolk and fifth Earl of Berks, who was principal Secretary of State for the Northern Department in the time of George III. (d. 1779). The house contains a fine collection of pictures, which they would now have the pleasure of seeing. Mr. Ditchfield concluded by expressing their gratitude to the Countess of Suffolk and Berkshire for her great kindness in allowing them to visit her beautiful home, and to Mr. Bates for kindly making arrangements for their reception.

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On September 17th the Society visited Maidenhead where a meeting of townspeople assembled in the Town Hall. Dr. Playne presided, and a lecture was given by the Hon. Secretary on the history of Maidenhead. There was an exhibition of municipal charters, documents and maces, arranged by the Town Clerk. A large party then drove to Hurley, where they were received in the Church by the Vicar, the Rev. F. T. Wethered, who gave a very able and interesting lecture on the history of Hurley. Lady Place was then visited, and Mr. and Mrs. Hancock kindly entertained the party to tea in the Refectory of the Priory. A hurried visit was paid to the vaults of the old house which saw the birth of the Revolution, the monastic pigeon-house and tithe barns. Mr. Wethered has kindly presented all the members of the Society with a report of his lecture. The thanks of the Society are due to Dr. Playne for his help in organizing the meeting at Maidenhead, to the Vicar of Hurley for his lecture, and to Mr. and Mrs. Hancock for their hospitality.

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Two lectures of the winter session have been arranged. On October 21st Miss Murray, of University College, London, will lecture on "Social and Domestic Life in Ancient Egypt, with some account of recent excavations,"; and on November 19th, Mr. Nigel Bond will lecture on "the Aims and Work of the National Trust for places of Historic Interest and National Beauty." Both lectures will be illustrated by lime-light views. The Secretary will be glad to hear from any member who would be willing to read a paper before the Society after Christmas.

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The Newbury Field Club visited Oxford on September 23rd, on the occasion of their second summer excursion.