



# The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

---

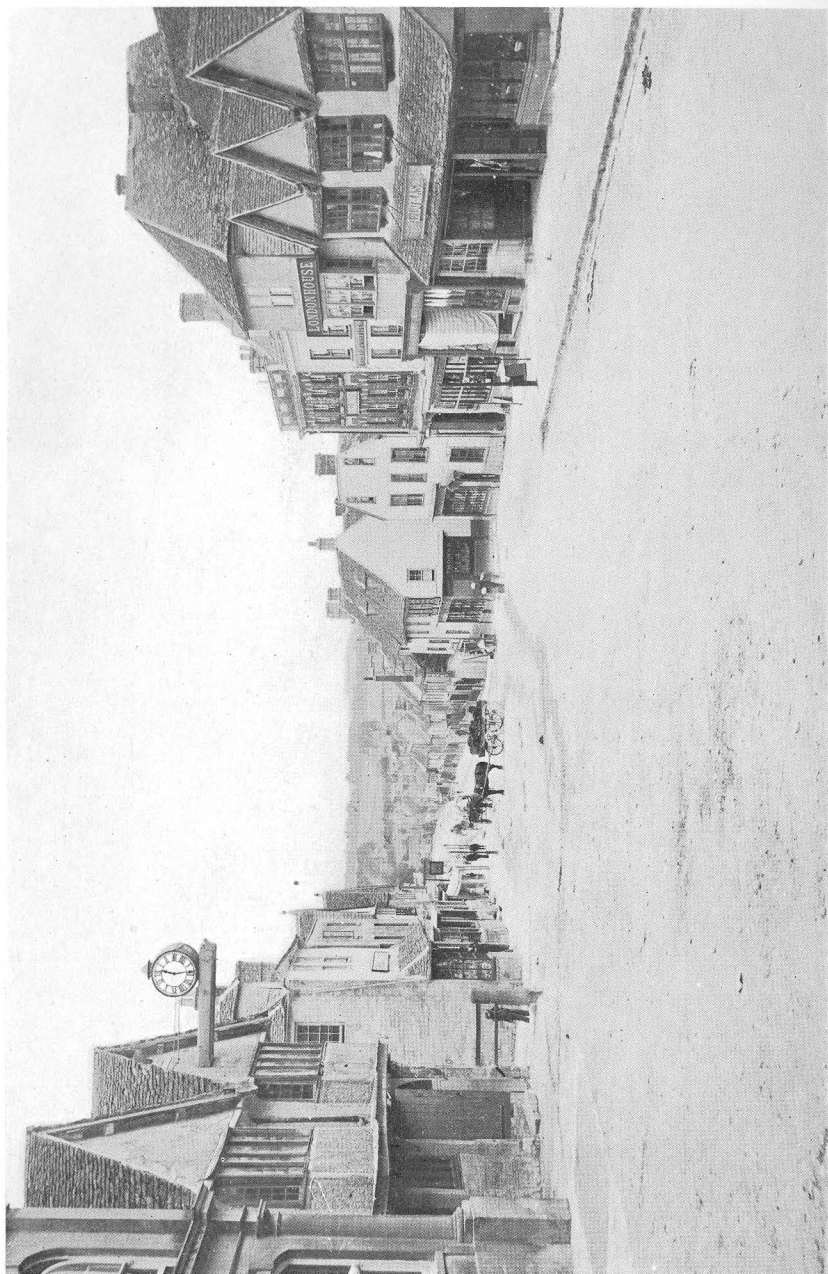
## Gossip of an Antiquary.

---

Many of our readers who reside in that delectable county, Oxfordshire, will welcome the new volume on the Memorials of that shire which Messrs. Bemrose and Sons have just published. It is a handsome book, bound in white cloth with gold tooling and red and black lettering, and bears the old arms of the City of Oxford in gold. The contents also should please the most fastidious reader. In addition to an historical sketch of the county, Dr. Arthur J. Evans discourses with much learning on the Rollright Stones, recording all the folklore which has gathered round that famous circle and connecting it with similar traditions current in India and elsewhere. He is the first, I believe, to connect the name with "Roland the brave," who stood forth as the legendary champion of Christendom against the Paynim.

\* \*

The story of Broughton Castle is ably told by Mr. Cheales, and Lady Gordon Lennox has added a valuable postscript recording the discoveries which she has made during her tenancy of the ancient house of the Lords Saye and Sele. Mrs. Sturge Henderson writes gracefully of Blenheim Palace and its first owner, the great Duke, and of the eccentricities of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, "la belle Jennings"; and tells of the Poets of Oxfordshire with a charming appreciation of William Morris and Kelmscott.



HIGH STREET, BURFORD.

One of the most attractive places in the Shire is the old town of Burford. It has been "discovered" recently. "Urban Sylvanus," otherwise Canon Beeching, whose career his Berkshire friends have watched with interest, and an Oxford don, the Rev. W. H. Hutton, have both been writing about Burford, but no one knows the place as well as Mr. W. J. Monk, who tells its story in this volume and also that of Witney.

"O fair is Moreton in the Marsh  
And Stow on the wide Wold,  
Yet fairer far is Burford town  
With its stone roofs grey and old;  
And whether the sky be hot and high  
Or the rain falls thin and chill,  
The grey old town on the lonely down  
Is where I would be still.  
O broad and smooth the Avon flows  
By Stratfords' many piers,  
And Shakespeare lies by Avon's side  
These thrice a hundred years;  
But I would be when windrush sweet  
Leaves Burford's lonely hill—  
The grey old town on the lonely down  
Is where I would be still."

\* \*

Thus sings the poet of peaceful Burford, and surely there are few towns so fair with its granite stone houses which have weathered the storms for centuries. But Burford was not always peaceful, and few will forget that tragic scene in the old churchyard when Cornet Thompson and Corporals Cheworth and Perkins were shot by Cromwell for their part in the conspiracy of the Levellers.

\* \*

Professor Burrows tells us of the life of Lord Falkland the Blameless. Mr. Keyser gives graphic notes on the Oxfordshire churches with eight illustrations. Mr. Field describes Dorchester, Bensington and Ewelme. Viscount Dillon discourses pleasantly on the home of his ancestors. Mrs. Climençon records the glories of Henley. Mr. Theodore Cook sketches the rise of the Oxford Colleges, and there are chapters on Caversham Bridge, Godstone and Fair Rosamund, King John's Palace at Little Langley, and Town and Gown at Oxford. The volume has many illustrations.

\* \*

The industrious diggers at Silchester have been well rewarded for their pains during the past season. The public baths of the city

have been disclosed, and after the lapse of centuries we have seen the apodyterium, or undressing room, the frigidarium with its cold bath, the tepedarium, sudatorium, and caldarium, all complete as the Romans left them. Five small houses have been uncovered and various objects of bronze, iron and pottery, and a small altar discovered, which will soon enrich the treasures of the Reading Museum. I am glad to see that Mr. G. E. Fox, F.S.A., has prepared an excellent guide to the Silchester collection, which will be invaluable to students and visitors.

\* \*

Old customs die fast but High Wycombe, Bucks, preserves some ancient usages. There the Mayor is, I believe, still "weighed" on accepting the office, and the Michaelmas Hiring Fair is still held, when the bucolics appear decorated with tufts of horsehair, whipcord, straw, etc., the distinctive badges of their respective callings and are hired by the farmers for the ensuing year.

\* \*

Queen's College, Oxford, has discovered the tomb of its founder in a crypt under the apse of the chapel opened for the purpose of installing the electric light. There a leaden casket was found containing the remains of Robert Eglesfield, chaplain and confessor to Phillipa, Queen of Edward III., from whom the College derives its name. The casket is inscribed *Reliquiæ fundatoris*. As I alluded to old customs just now I may mention that the Boar's Head Feast took place in this College as usual at Christmas, when the old song was sung

" The Boar's Head in hand bear I  
Bedecked with bays and rosemary  
And I pray you, masters, be merry  
Qui estis in convivio  
Caput apri defero  
Reddens laudes Domino."

\* \*

There are four versions of this ancient carol. The earliest is called "the original carole," taken from "Christmess Carolles, newly emprynted at London in ye Flete Strete, at ye sygne of ye sonne by Wynkyn de Worde. The yere of our Lord, m.d. xxi." The second is the one quoted above. The third is very rare, and is taken from the Balliol MSS., No. 354, and the fourth is from the Porkington MSS., a fifteenth century collection. The origin of this custom can be traced to the old Scandinavian Yule festival, though it is attributed to the story of the student who was attacked by a wild boar while he

was diligently studying Aristotle during a walk near Shotover Hill. His book being his only defence he thrust it down the boar's throat, exclaiming "græcum est." The boar found it very difficult to digest and died on the spot, and the head was borne in triumph to the college. That was 500 years ago, and ever since the Boar's Head has graced the Christmas feast.

\* \*

The founder of the College has preserved his memory by directing that on New Year's Day a needle and thread, which form a rebus on his name, *Aiguille et fil* (Eglesfield), should be given to each member of the College. The bursar performs this duty every year, adding the wholesome moral "Take this and be thrifty."

---

## Proceedings of Societies.

---

**BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.**—The first meeting of the Winter Session was held in the Abbey Gate on October 21st, when an interesting lecture, illustrated by lantern slides, was given by Miss M. A. Murray, of University College, London, on "Social and Domestic Life in ancient Egypt, with some account of Recent Excavations." Miss Murray spent last winter conducting the excavations at Abydos under the direction of Professor Flinders Petrie. An enthusiastic member proposed that the Society should organise an expedition to Egypt to witness Miss Murray and her helpers at work, but we fear that we may not be able to wander so far afield.

The second meeting was held on November 19th when Mr. Nigel Bond, Secretary of the National Trust for the Preservation of objects of historical interest and natural beauty, lectured on the aims and work of this useful and important society. His lecture was illustrated by lantern slides, and amongst other objects now entrusted to the care of the National Trust is the Falkland Memorial at Newbury. It was suggested that the Berks Society should co-operate with the National Trust and assist its work by calling the attention of the Society to objects which ought to be preserved.

Members of the Society who desire to read papers for the subsequent meetings are requested to communicate with the Hon. Secretary.