



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

I am much interested in the race of the old-fashioned Parish Clerk which is fast passing away. Many stories of his quaintness, his curious manners and customs, still exist, and I am trying to collect these before they are quite forgotten. I should be very grateful if any of your readers will kindly send me descriptions of the old-fashioned services which existed in the middle of the last century, and perhaps still linger on in obscure villages and country towns. The old clerk was often a very worthy person, who served God and did his duty according to his lights and knowledge, and stories of his faithfulness, as well as of his quaintness, would be very acceptable.

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Swift wrote the "Memoirs of P.P., Parish Clerk," and perpetuates the memory of the careful old man who records his daily proceedings in a Pepys-like fashion, one entry being: "Smoothed out crease in the great Bible this morning," and Hogarth gives a pictorial delineation of the eighteenth century clerk in "The Sleeping Congregation." Many stories have reached me from various parts of England, many very amusing, many quaint, and some which tell of the devotion of these old men, and of their long years of service, and of the affection with which they were regarded by both parson and people. Still I should like to hear many more stories and descriptions of old-fashioned services, of "the music," flutes, violins and 'cello, in the gallery, and of the manners and customs of our forefathers which seem strange to modern folk.

The Editor of the Berkshire Victorian History tells me that he is collecting information with regard to the industries of the county, and would be glad to know any details of old and almost forgotten trades and industries which once flourished in Berkshire, in hamlet or town. It would not be necessary to send him those already recorded in Lysons, Man, Coates, and other well-known histories; but frequently in obscure villages some trades have flourished and died out and have escaped the attention of the chronicler. He heard recently of the famous shoe-making industry of Cookham, which provided boots for the soldiers in the Crimean war, and sent its wears all over the world. The industry is now nearly dead. What traces are there of cloth-making in villages. There were paper-mills at Arborfield, but they were burnt down, and the water-wheel only remains, which provides the motive-power for the electric lighting of Arborfield Hall. He would be grateful for all such information which my readers can send him.

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Pin-making was an old Reading industry, and it was as late as 1850 that the last pins were made in the town. Some examples of these are preserved in the Reading Museum. Mr. Richard Hanson was the last pin-maker in Reading, who was apprenticed to Mr. Deane, and bought the business which was carried on in the old Oracle. With the destruction of that building pin-making ended. Perhaps some one can tell us more about this industry, and of the rope-making which was also carried on there.

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The Weavers' Company of Newbury have just been celebrating their annual feast. Like their brethren, the great livery companies of London, they have ceased to have any connection with the trade from which they take their name. They have an endowment and some relics of their former greatness. Perhaps some one will tell us more of this interesting survival of old Berkshire guild-life.

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Disciples of the fragrant weed will be interested to know that the practice of smoking is much more ancient than is usually supposed. In the old Roman fort of Aliso, near Haltern, Germany, fifty-four fragments of clay pipes have been found 9 feet below the surface of the ground. The ground had not been disturbed, and the pipes showed Roman handiwork. Numbers of antique pipes have been found in England under circumstances which made it improbable that they could be more recent than the introduction of tobacco and

the onslaught of Sir Walter Raleigh's servant with a bucket of water in her endeavour to put out his pipe. Authorities have long been inclined to believe that smoking was practised here some time before the discovery of America. There is a famous mantle-piece in Cawdor Castle, which bears the date "1510," and one of the figures upon it represents a fox smoking a pipe. Possibly the figures were added later, but the existence of so many old pipes buried in earth which has been undisturbed for centuries seems to point to the antiquity of smoking. In the absence of tobacco probably hemp-seed was the material smoked.

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Our neighbours in Hampshire have been holding an interesting exhibition at Southampton. A large number of antiquities relating to the Borough of Southampton were brought together, and some objects of special interest from other parts of the county. The exhibition seems to have been most successful.

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The Committee on Ancient Earthworks and Fortified Enclosures, in presenting their report to the Congress of Archæological Societies on July 6th, regretted that more Archæological Societies had not taken up the idea of compiling a schedule of the ancient defensive works in their respective districts, either in conjunction with the Committee or independently, and it was urged upon the secretaries of societies to arrange, when possible, for the survey and scheduling of all such works as are included in the inquiry. Poor Secretaries! They have already much more work than they are always able to perform. They are usually busy men who have many public and private duties, and the management of an archæological society with its excursions and lectures and publications is no light task. Members are quite willing to take part in the Society's doings, and attend the excursions and lectures, and to consider that there their duties end. Every society wants more working members who will undertake some such special work as that suggested by the Congress with regard to earthworks and relieve the unfortunate Secretary of some part of these multitudinous duties. Will any members of the Berks, Oxfordshire or Buckinghamshire Societies take up this important task?

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For some years there has been open to the public view at the bottom of Southgate-street, Gloucester, a portion of the old Roman wall which once ran round the city. It was the only remaining por-

tion above ground. This also is now being removed to make way for a new building. Beneath this is the bottom portion of the old wall, which is composed of great slabs of even granite in perfect condition, and its foundations will soon be buried.

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—On July 21st the Berkshire Archæological Society went far afield and visited the neighbouring district of Oxfordshire, which lies along the Berkshire border, penetrating as far as Fairford, in Gloucestershire. We left Reading at ten o'clock, journeying to Oxford, where a special train, kindly provided by Mr. Keyser, awaited the party to convey them to Fairford. The "special" was not quite as expeditious as could be wished, and made its way quietly along the single line of rails which connects the City of Learning with the quaint little town of Fairford. There carriages awaited the party to convey the antiquaries to the historic church, renowned throughout England for its wonderful stained glass windows. We drove past the summer seat of the famous artist, Mr. Abbey, R.A., and the birthplace of John Keble, the author of the *Christian Year*, to which after an absence of many years some members of the family have just returned, and then through the quiet Market-place to the church. This building was founded by John Tame and finished by his son, Sir Edmund Tame, at the end of the fifteenth century. Traces of an earlier structure can be seen in the base of the tower as far as the second string course, which is early English work. All the rest of the work is late perpendicular. There is an old story which relates that the glass was designed by Albert Durer, that it was made in Germany and designed for a church at Rome, that the ship conveying the glass thither was captured by an English vessel, and that the church was built in order to receive the glass. This interesting myth may be safely discarded. During Puritan times the glass was preserved from destruction by the care of some thoughtful persons who buried it; otherwise, it would scarcely have escaped the axes and hammers of Puritan iconoclastic zeal and the fury of Cromwell's soldiers.