



Berks Archæological Society.

ANNUAL REPORT, 1904—5.

IN pursuance with their usual custom, your Committee beg to present to the Members of the Berks Archæological Society a Report of the transactions for the past year.

With respect to the general occurrences of this period we may notice the unfortunate necessity of the destruction of the old Walsingham House in Reading, at the corner of Minster Street and Broad Street. Some fanciful history has been woven about it, but there is no doubt that it was a fine example of 16th century domestic architecture. The ceilings were remarkable for the beauty of their design and the excellence of their execution. The owners of the property were, however, anxious to preserve any objects of architectural or historic interest, and placed at the disposal of the Corporation of Reading any objects of antiquarian value which might be recovered. Certain parts of the ceiling were carefully cut out and removed to the Abbey Gate, and are at present in the safe custody of your Society. They have been carefully photographed by Mr. Walton Adams, and an illustrated description of them, written by your Secretary, will shortly appear in the columns of "The Studio." Your Committee is in communication with the Corporation of Reading with regard to their future location, and an offer has been received from the owner of one of the oldest houses in Berkshire to purchase the panels and erect them in a new wing attached to his residence. Unfortunately no other objects of interest were discovered when the house was pulled down.

Recently it was discovered that the ancient tower of Shinfield Church had fallen into such decay that it was no longer safe to ring the bells. The repair of the tower, at a cost of £120, has been undertaken, and the work is now in progress. Your Society recommend a grant of two guineas for this purpose in case that the work is done satisfactorily.

The removal of the Reading College to a new site in the London Road, generously given by Mr. Alfred Palmer, High Sheriff of Berkshire, is a matter of considerable interest to your Society. The new buildings have been entrusted to the architectural care of two members of our Society, Mr. W. Ravenscroft, F.S.A., our Hon. Treasurer, and Mr. Charles Steward Smith, and we may confidently expect to see the erection of an important building worthy of the town. It is to be hoped that the Corporation of Reading, into whose possession the old Hospitium of the Abbey will now revert, will do their utmost to preserve the ancient building, and not countenance any destructive vandalism for the sake of modern utility. It is much to be deplored that City and Borough Councils too often take little interest in the legacy of ancient buildings bequeathed by our ancestors and entrusted to their care, and are ready to sacrifice priceless objects of antiquarian and architectural interest for the sake of utilitarian considerations. The walls of York, the Plummer Tower at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Whitgift's Hospital at Croydon, are some examples of threatened vandalism, and it is one of the main objects of your Society and kindred societies to prevent as far as possible such destruction. The members of our Society will do good service in calling the attention of your officers to any such devastating schemes, in order that, if possible, some steps may be taken in order to avert them.

We still watch with profound interest the excavations which the Society of Antiquaries are carrying out at Silchester, and which have enriched the Museum of Reading with such a priceless collection of Roman antiquities. We have still to deplore the apathy which the inhabitants of Reading show, and the small amount of subscriptions sent from this town to the excavation fund. Any subscriptions which the members of our Society may be pleased to give will be thankfully received by the Hon. Treasurer of the Fund. The Committee recommend a grant of five guineas during the present year.

During the past year we have to notice the publication of a learned work by the President of our Society on a subject which he has made his own, "Norman Tympana and Lintals in the Churches of Great Britain," which records many examples from our own county. Berkshire archæologists have been especially gratified to read this splendid result of the labours of their President. We understand that Mr. Nash, a former Secretary of our Society, is engaged upon a second volume of the valuable and interesting

Churchwardens' Accounts of the Church of St. Giles, Reading, which will take its place among such similar works as the Accounts of St. Mary's Church, edited by Mr. F. N. A. Garry, the Registers of the same Church by the Rev. G. P. Crawford, the History of St. Laurence's Church by the Rev. C. Kerry, and the Records of Reading by the late Rev. J. M. Guilding. We understand, also, that a complete and learned History of Reading is being prepared by the Principal of Reading College, to the publication of which we shall look forward with much interest. The publication of the first volume of the Victoria County History of Berks has been delayed by the unfortunate illness of Mr. Horace Round, the editor of the Domesday section, but it is hoped to issue that volume before the close of the present year, while the material for the second and succeeding volumes is being collected, and much progress has been made with the tracing of the manorial histories. The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal has now reached its eleventh volume, and contains several important papers relating to Berks. Amongst them may be mentioned Mr. St. John Hope's Accounts of the Roman City of Silchester, an Inventory of the Church Plate of Berks, Beating the Bounds of Brightwalton, Notes on the Abingdon Chronicle, the Berkshire Domesday, a valuable Paper on Berkshire Palimpsest Brasses, a Transcript of the Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Mary's, Thame, Reports of Discoveries in the Upper Thames Valley and Oakfield Park, Old Southcote House, and various Notes and Queries relating to the County. Your Committee would point out that at least sixty members of the Society do not subscribe to its Journal.

The discovery of an important Palimpsest Brass at Binfield has happily been made by Canon Savory and Mr. Mill Stephenson, an account of which appears in the Journal. On the obverse are the figures of Richard Turner and his wife, on the reverse the figure of an Abbott and an inscription to the memory of William Bampton, citizen of London. Canon Savory has had the fragments mounted and restored to the Church of Binfield. Another discovery is that at Oakfield Park of a Roman pottery manufactory, an account of which appears in this Journal. Mr. Margrett's discovery of pre-historic remains in the Upper Thames Valley is important, as in all probability it showed the relics of one of the few pile dwellings that have been found in this country.

EXCURSIONS AND MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY.

During the year the usual number of lectures have been

delivered and excursions made to places of historic interest in the county and neighbourhood. There have been six lectures and two excursions.

On June 16th, 1904, on the occasion of the last Annual Meeting, an able and interesting lecture was given by Mr. Llewellyn Treacher on the History of Ruscombe, which we hope will be shortly published in the Journal.

On July 21st an excursion was made to Fairford, Burford and Witney, which was much enjoyed by all who took part in it. A full account of the excursion is given in the Journal, and need not be here repeated. The Society has especially to thank the President for providing, at his own cost, a special train from Oxford to Fairford, without which it would have been impossible to have accomplished the journey. Our thanks are also due to Mr. Cheetle and Mr. Monk, of Burford, for kindly conducting the party to various places of interest, and to the Rector of Witney and Mrs. Kirby for entertaining the Society to tea.

On September 22nd the Society made an excursion to Wallingford, that being the special Berkshire town visited last year. In accordance with our usual programme, the inhabitants were invited to a meeting in the Town Hall to hear a lecture on the history of the town. The thanks of the Society are due to the Rev. J. E. Field for his lecture and for acting as *cicerone* to the town. The Society also visited South Moreton and Aston Tirrold. The Society owes its thanks to the Misses Hedges for permission to see the Castle, to the Mayor for granting the use of the Town Hall, and to the Vicars of South Moreton and Aston Tirrold for welcoming the members at their Churches.

On November 17th Mr. Petrocokino gave an interesting lecture on "The Land of the Incas," in which he described his tour in South America. The lecture was charmingly illustrated by lantern slides.

On December 15th the Rev. Alan Cheales, our great authority on Egyptian antiquities, delivered a learned lecture on "Israel in Egypt."

On February 8th the President gave a very interesting lecture on the Churches of Sparsholt and Childrey, illustrated by lantern slides. This lecture will be published shortly in the Journal.

On March 1st Captain Henderson lectured on a Tour in Northern France and Paris, illustrated by excellent lantern slides taken from his own photographs.

On April 6th Mr. Peachey read a learned paper on "Touching for the King's Evil," in which he gave the Society the benefit of many years of careful study of an abstruse subject, which lecture your Committee hope to see published in some permanent form.

The thanks of the Society are due to these gentlemen for the valuable and interesting papers which they have read, and also to the ladies and gentlemen who have entertained the members to tea on the occasion of these lectures. The names of these ladies and gentlemen are :—The President, Lord Saye and Sele, Colonel and the Hon. Mrs. Broadbent, Mrs. Morris Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Wyley, and Mrs. F. E. Williams.

Prizes for history have been given to the successful scholars at the Kendrick Schools.

For the coming season excursions to Devizes, Windsor, Aldworth, and Guildford have been suggested, and the arrangements will be made by the Committee.

CUSTODY OF THE ABBEY GATE.

The Society will be glad to know that the Corporation of Reading has granted a new lease to the Society of the Abbey Gate, but at an increased rental. Power has, however, been granted to the Society to let the large chamber for meetings and to make a suitable charge for its use ; it is, therefore, hoped that the funds of the Society will not be unduly strained by the increased rental which the Corporation has required. The principal chamber of the Gateway affords a very convenient meeting-place for all kindred societies and other bodies, and the Committee hope that extensive use may be made of this ancient building.

Your Committee desires to call the attention of the members to the approaching visit of the British Archæological Association to Reading on July 17th and following days. The Berks Society will give a hearty welcome to this venerable Association, which has done so much in the past to educate the people of England to a due appreciation of the wealth of antiquarian and historic interest which this country affords. A Committee has been formed to carry out the necessary arrangements. The Mayor of Reading is the President of the Congress, and has kindly promised to invite the members and friends of the Congress to a Reception in the Town Hall on the evening of the opening day. Excursions have been arranged to Abingdon, Wallingford, Newbury, the White Horse, Upton Court, Silchester and Aldermaston, and valuable papers will be read in the

evenings at the Great Western Hotel, which will be the headquarters of the Association. Congress tickets, price one guinea, will admit one gentleman and lady to all the meetings of the Congress, and to the excursions at the same rate as the members of the Association, and also to entitle the holder to a copy of the journal containing a report of the proceedings. Applications for Congress tickets should be made as soon as possible to the Secretary.

The Committee hopes that the visit of the British Archæological Association to Berkshire will kindle increased interest in, and love of, the antiquities of the Royal County, that it will induce many of our members who have time and leisure at their disposal to undertake some active research work in investigating the records of Berks, and strengthen our Society in its endeavours to study and preserve the legacy of historical, architectural and archæological interests bequeathed to us by our forefathers.

NEWBURY FIELD CLUB.—The annual excursion took place on Monday, July 3rd, when the Field Club visited Old Basing House.

