



## Berks Archæological Society.

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*REPORT of the Committee for the year 1906-7.*

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**Y**OUR Committee have much pleasure in presenting their Report of the work of the Society during the past year, and have to record a successful season of the operations of the Society, which has displayed its usual activity with regard to the number of lectures and excursions to places of historic interest.

Some discoveries of unusual interest have been made during the past season. At the last annual meeting the Librarian reported on the remains of St. Edmund's Chapel which had been found at the end of Beresford Road, Oxford Street, Reading. The site of the original Chapel was on land near the present Greyfriars Church, and by the kindness and generosity of the President some excavations were made, but nothing of importance was found. The thanks of the Society are due to the President for providing the funds necessary for this work.

Another discovery of great importance was made in the Forbury Gardens, when during the process of digging a trench for the purpose of a drain portions of 40 skeletons were unearthed. These were almost all in an orientated position, and the finding of rude tiles beneath the heads of several of the bodies shows that the burials belonged to the Anglo-Saxon period. A full report of the discovery was made by the Honorary Treasurer and read before the Society's meeting in January last, and is printed in the April number of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal.

The discovery of a quern and some Romano-British pottery at the Prospect Park Brickworks, Reading, seems to indicate the existence of some important Roman building on that site, which has been examined by the officers of the Society and by Mr. Mill Stephenson, the director of the excavations at Silchester. The

Honorary Librarian reported the discovery at the Society's meeting in February, and it is hoped that some excavations may be made which may reveal the presence of a Roman villa.

The antiquaries of Newbury also report the discovery of a Roman villa at Newbury, where, although the name Speen, the Roman *Spina*, indicates the position of a Roman station, few Roman relics have hitherto been found. Excavations are in progress, and we hope that satisfactory results may attend the exertions of our brother antiquaries in the western town of Berkshire.

During the past session three excursions have been made and seven lectures delivered.

#### EXCURSIONS.

On June 25th, the Society in conjunction with the Newbury District Field Club visited Devizes and its neighbourhood, and were welcomed by the Mayor, the Rector, and Mr. Cunnington, Secretary of the Wilts Archæological Society. Devizes Castle was inspected by the kind permission of the owner, and an able paper read by Mr. Walter Money on its history. Luncheon was served in the old Bear Inn, once kept by the father of Sir Thomas Lawrence. The Town Hall with its collection of ancient charters and civic insignia, and the Museum, especially rich in Wiltshire antiquities, were visited, and then the party drove to the picturesque village of Potterne, inspected the noble church and the old timbered houses, and then returned homewards with many memories of the delightful Wiltshire country.

On July 23rd the Society made an excursion to Stoke Poges, Burnham and Hitcham. The members were very hospitably entertained to luncheon by Mr. and Mrs. Veitch at Burnham Park. The churches were admirably described by the President. The Hon. Secretary read a paper on Stoke Poges and its Manor, and its association with the Poet Gray, and Mr. Goolden explained the plan and buildings of Burnham Abbey.

On September 10th, the Society in conjunction with the Newbury District Field Club, visited North Hinksey, Cumnor, Northmoor, Stanton Harcourt and South Leigh. The churches were described by the President, and the party was favoured with the presence of Mr. James Parker and Mr. Walter Money. The former told the story of Amy Robsart and the inaccuracies of *Kenilworth*, and the latter gentleman read a paper on the Manor House of Stanton.

All the Excursions were very well attended, and seem to have been appreciated by all who took part in them. It is certainly a pleasure to the Berks Society when the Members of the Newbury District Field Club are able to unite with them and visit together places of historic interest in Berkshire or the neighbouring counties.

LECTURES.

On the occasion of the last Annual Meeting, held on May 29th, 1906, papers were read by the Rev. Alan Cheales on "St. Edmund's Chapel," and by the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield on "The Ceilings of Walsingham House."

On October 23rd, Mrs. Cope was to have read a paper on "Parish Registers," but was unfortunately prevented by illness. In her absence Mr. J. H. Cope lectured in her stead.

On November 19th, the President lectured on the Berkshire Churches of Buckland, Hinton Waldrist and Longworth, and illustrated his address with an excellent series of lantern slides. The lecture is published with illustrations in "The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal."

On January 3rd, 1907, Mr. Ravenscroft read a paper on the recent discovery of human remains in the Forbury Gardens at Reading, together with some notes on other ancient burials in the neighbourhood of the town. This paper has been printed in the Journal.

On January 31st, Mr. W. Page, General Editor of the Victoria Histories of the Counties of England, lectured on the History of Berkshire, and Mr. Ditchfield gave a report of the progress of the history. The Mayor and Mayoress of Reading kindly invited the members to tea and to a reception in the Council Chamber.

On February 28th, the Rev. J. Howe gave a lecture on Winchester Cathedral, illustrated by slides kindly lent by the Dean and Chapter. The Rev. Alan Cheales also read a paper on the Roman quern and pottery recently discovered at Prospect Park.

On March 22nd, Captain Henderson gave an illustrated lecture on a Tour in Norway.

The thanks of the Society are due to those gentlemen who have so kindly delivered lectures, and to the ladies and gentlemen who have entertained the members. These include the Mayor and Mayoress of Reading, the President, and Mr. and Mrs. Veitch, of Burnham Park, whose hospitality will be gratefully remembered.

The Society still enjoys the privilege of holding its meetings at

the Abbey Gate, of which they are the tenants under the Corporation of Reading. For some years past one of the rooms has been occupied by the Central Aid Society. This has now been acquired by your Committee, and has been furnished and decorated. It is now the library and secretary's office. During the past year your Committee has had some correspondence with the Corporation with regard to the extension of the lease of the Abbey Gate on the condition that the Society should spend money upon the decoration and restoration of the building. Some difference of opinion was manifested with regard to the amount proposed to be expended and the repairs required, and the negotiations fell through. Hence we have reverted to the original annual tenancy. Possibly, at some future period, the matter will be again raised. It is, however, satisfactory that the whole building is now held by the Society, and our thanks are due to the Corporation for granting us this suitable and convenient home. Your Committee has also been corresponding with the Corporation with reference to the ceilings of the old house in Minster Street. It was hoped that the Corporation would have erected these ceilings in some part of the new buildings connected with the Town Hall. We understand that they have abandoned such intention. It would have been satisfactory if those relics of old Reading could have been preserved in the Municipal buildings. The Corporation has been approached with reference to further excavations in the Forbury Gardens, for the purpose of investigating the Saxon cemetery. The Town Clerk writes to say that such excavations in the spring would interfere with the work of the gardeners, and suggests a renewal of the application in the autumn.

The Committee has accepted with many thanks the presentation of some books by the Rev. J. F. Warren.

The membership of the Society remains about the same. At our last annual meeting in 1906 the members were 159, to-day we have on our list of members 158. According to the treasurer's account the year 1906 began with a balance in hand of £36 4s. 11½d., and ended with a balance in hand of £26. The financial statement shows that it will be necessary to practise economy during the coming year. There has been some increase in the cost of lectures and excursions. It is believed that members appreciate lantern lectures, but the hiring of lime-light lanterns is costly, and perhaps next season we shall have to restrict the number of such illustrated lectures. In some years, by careful management, we have actually gained money on our excursions, but it is not considered right to

make money by our excursions, but to give members the advantage of their subscriptions, and even this year we have tried to make the tickets as cheap as possible, with some detriment to our funds. We have also been generous in our donations to works of restoration and other subjects of antiquarian interest. In view of the work that lies before us, the excavations at Prospect Park and in the Forbury, the increased rent of the Abbey buildings, the improvements of these rooms, etc., it is advisable that the income of the Society should be increased. The treasurer estimates that there will be the small balance of only £16 left to us at the end of next year. Your Committee hopes that the members of the Society will make every effort at once to increase its membership and to do something for the promotion of the study of archæology in this county. If members cannot all give lectures, or actively promote antiquarian research, they can at least assist those who are so engaged, and they can materially help by proposing new members for election to the Society, by attending lectures and excursions regularly, and by helping forward all schemes which have for their object the promotion of the study of archæology. It is by this means the position of the Society may be strengthened. The Committee hopes to arrange the usual number of excursions and lectures during the coming year, and trusts that by the hearty co-operation of the members of the Society, and by a large increase in its members it may be able to perform even more useful work in the future than it has in the past in promoting the study of the antiquities of the Royal county.

P. H. DITCHFIELD,

*Hon. Secretary.*

