



Berks Archæological Society.

REPORT, 1907-8.

YOUR Committee have much pleasure in presenting their annual Report for the past year. They have to record the usual amount of activity and progress with regard to the Society's operations; the usual number of lectures have been delivered, and successful excursions were made to places of historic interest.

OBITUARY.

The Society has to deplore the loss which it has sustained by death, during the past year, of some of its leading members. Foremost among these gentlemen was the Right Hon. Lord Saye and Sele, a nobleman of an ancient and honourable family, the members of which have played a leading part in the making of the history of England. He was 21st in descent from Geoffrey de Saye, who opposed King John, and who was one of the 25 Barons entrusted with the enforcement of Magna Carta. Another ancestor of his, the first Baron, was murdered by Jack Cade's mob in Cheapside, 1451. The second Baron landed with Edward IV., but fell at the battle of Barnet in 1471. The eighth Baron was a commissioner for the Public Safety in the time of Charles I., and a distinguished Parliamentarian. There are few pages in English history which contain no reference to the distinguished ancestors of our departed friend, whose kindliness of heart and sympathetic friendliness endeared all men to him. He took a keen interest in the welfare of the Berks Archæological Society, and was never so happy as when he was present at our meetings, or travelling with us on our excursions. In the absence of our President he frequently took the chair at our meetings. We all deplore the loss of a valued friend, a keen supporter of our Society, whose place amongst it is impossible to fill.

Another loss which the Society has sustained is that of Mr. R. E. Goolden, an active member of our Committee, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and a devoted archæologist. His health has been failing during the past year, but his departure was sudden and unexpected. He took the greatest possible interest not only in the work of our Society, but in all that concerns the study of the past. He was associated with other Antiquaries in the investigations of the ruins of Burnham Abbey, and during recent years has been most useful in helping forward all antiquarian enquiry. His memory will be endeared to many by the thought of his kind and sympathetic nature and absolute unselfishness.

Yet another death we have to record, that of a very old member of this Society, Mr. Rutland, of Taplow, who for a short period held the office of secretary. He was one of the foremost leaders of antiquarian research in this neighbourhood in days when little interest was generally taken in archæology. He superintended the excavations of the Roman villa at Maidenhead, wrote a history of the parish of Taplow, and amassed a valuable collection of antiquities, which we would suggest that the Maidenhead people should acquire as a nucleus of a local museum.

Your Committee regrets that want of means at the present time prevents the Society from engaging in some important research work, which lies near at hand and awaits investigation. It has been found impossible during the past year to begin any excavations in the Forbury in order to discover more accurate information with regard to the Saxon burial ground, concerning which Mr. Ravenscroft read a paper last year. The Roman site in Prospect Park still awaits developments, and there is much else that requires to be done, if means and the personal service of individuals can be obtained. At the present time it is very important that such sites as that of the Minster Church at Abingdon should be investigated, in order that the results may be recorded in the Victoria County History of Berks. Your Committee would suggest the formation of a special fund for excavations, and would enlist the kind services of some members of the Society for the carrying on and superintendence of the work.

Your Committee desires to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Large, of East Hanney, on the restoration of a village cross in that hamlet. Some fragments of the old cross had been discovered, and by their praiseworthy efforts, Mr. and Mrs. Large succeeded in raising sufficient money for the restoration of the cross, which was accom-

plished under the direction of your Treasurer. The cross was dedicated by the Bishop of Oxford on March 31st.

Dr. Hurry has succeeded in placing a drinking fountain on the site of St. Anne's Well, Caversham, which was recently formally opened by the chairman of the Urban Council.

The excavations at Silchester are drawing to a close, and the Society of Antiquaries is to be congratulated on the sight of the completion of a gigantic undertaking, which has enriched the Reading museum with so great a store of Romano-British treasures. A most important discovery was made during last year's operations, in what is believed to be a small temple of Mars, and a votive tablet inscribed with the name Calleva. The discovery of a mediæval cooking pit at Catesgrove must be noted, and also the formation of an interesting collection of relics connected with the siege and defence of Donnington Castle, in the hall of that building.

EXCURSIONS AND LECTURES.

During the past year three excursions have been made and six lectures delivered.

On June 15th, the Society visited the north-west part of the county and the adjoining district of Wiltshire. There was a large attendance of members, and the arrangements were much facilitated by the providing of a special train from Didcot to Faringdon, the cost of which was generously defrayed by the President. The members visited Great Coxwell Church (described by the President), the Grange Barn (described by the Secretary), Coleshill House, by the kind invitation of the Hon. Duncombe Pleydell Bouverie, where a paper was read by the Secretary, the Churches of Coleshill, Highworth and Inglesham, described by the President, and Buscot Park, where the Society were kindly entertained to tea by Sir Alexander Henderson.

On August 7th, the Society journeyed to Wiltshire, and visited the neighbourhood of Chippenham and Calne. By the kind invitation of Lord and Lady Lansdowne, the members inspected the beautiful house of Bowood, one of the latest works of the brothers Adams, a privilege which is rarely accorded. Lacock Abbey was also visited, by the kind invitation of Mr. Talbot, who entertained the Society to tea. Many pleasant recollections will linger in the minds of all those who took part in this enjoyable excursion.

A half-day excursion took place on September 23rd, to Bucklebury and Stanford Dingley, when Mr. Walter Money gave an

interesting lecture on the history of the manor of Bucklebury, and the President described the church of that village and that of Stanford Dingley. The mural paintings, brasses, and curious encaustic bricks, created much interest. Mr. and Mrs. Keep kindly invited the members to tea at their house, Ferrises, and their hospitable entertainment brought an interesting programme to a close.

LECTURES.

On the occasion of the last Annual Meeting, April 18th, Mr. C. Forbes lectured on the churches of Essex, illustrated by an admirable series of lantern slides, made from photographs taken by the lecturer.

On November 19th, the Secretary lectured on "A Reading Pageant." He was assisted in the interpretation by the Rev. R. P. and Mrs. Newhouse, Mr. Mansfield, and by a choir of ladies and gentlemen, under the leadership of Mr. Pryce Aspinall. The book of words has been printed.

On December 13th, Major Godsall delivered an able lecture on "A Military Study of the Conquest of Britain by the English." A resumé of this lecture has been published in the Journal.

On January 30th, Dr. H. A. Powell gave a very interesting lecture on "Japan and its Gardens," beautifully illustrated by lantern slides.

On February 13th, Mr. Arthur W. Sutton gave a valuable lecture on "A Camping Tour in Petra," which was greatly appreciated by a large audience, his lantern slides being much admired.

On March 19th, Mr. Albin White gave a very interesting lecture on "The Land of Lley, a little known corner of Wales," his illustrations being excellent.

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. The following may be especially mentioned: The President, Mr. and Mrs. Millett, Mrs. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Wyly, Sir Arthur Henderson, Mr. Talbot, of Lacock Abbey, Mr. and Mrs. Keep and Miss Smith.

The Committee has accepted with many thanks the presentation of a valuable series of 22 volumes of the Architectural Review, by the Rev. J. Howe, and by Mr. Ravenscroft.

The membership of the Society remains exactly the same, 166, showing an increase of 2 gentlemen, a decrease of 2 ladies.

The present financial condition of the Society will be explained in the Treasurer's Report.

The Committee desires to record their great regret on the resignation of the esteemed Treasurer, Mr. Ravenscroft, who on account of his departure from Reading, feels that he is unable to continue to be an official of the Society. Mr. Ravenscroft kindly undertook the office of Treasurer when the financial condition of the Society was at a very low ebb, and by his continued care and business capacity, rescued it from its financial difficulties. The Hon. Secretary desires especially to thank Mr. Ravenscroft for all the ready assistance which he has invariably given to him, and personally regrets extremely his departure from Reading. We hope, however, to retain his name on the list of members of the Society, and occasionally to have the benefit of his advice and guidance. The Committee recommend that his son, Mr. F. Ernest Ravenscroft, should be appointed to succeed him as Treasurer. Mr. Ernest Ravenscroft is willing to act, if it is the unanimous wish of the members, and the Committee feel sure that the Society will be fortunate in obtaining his services.

PUBLICATIONS.

The Victoria County History of Berks is progressing, and two volumes have been published. The third volume is in progress, which will contain the first instalment of topography.

A volume on the Highways and Byways in Berks has been published, which in spite of certain picturesque descriptions of scenery, is felt to be a book unworthy of the county, and full of inaccuracies.

The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal continues to be published, and is now in its 14th year. The last volume contains an architectural account of the churches of Buckland, Hinton Waldrist and Longworth, by the President, with an admirable series of illustrations presented by him, Mr. Ravenscroft's paper on the Forbury cemetery, Bisham Abbey, by Mr. Dormer, the Wilcotes family, by Mr. Carter, and other papers of interest. The new volume contains an important series of extracts from the Feet of Fines, made by Mr. Acton Pile, a valuable series of documents especially for those who wish to trace their family history, or the ownership of properties.

The Committee hopes to arrange the usual number of excursions and lectures during the coming season. The following suggestions for the summer excursions have been received: (1.) Bradford-on-Avon, (2.) The Chalfont Country, (3.) Silchester, (4.) Wraybury and Runnymede, (5.) Montacute House and Brimpton d'Evercy and that

neighbourhood, (6.) Purton, Cricklade and Cirencester, (7.) Milford and Christchurch. The hearty co-operation of the members of the Society is solicited in all schemes which have for their object the study of the archæology of Berkshire. The study of the past history of our country is the best preparation for the elucidation of the problems of the future, and the object of our Society is to enable our countrymen to appreciate the grandeur of their heritage handed down to them from a great and glorious past.

Notes and Queries

RELATING TO BERKS, BUCKS AND OXON.

Communications are invited upon all subjects of Antiquarian or Architectural interest relating to the three counties. Correspondents are requested to write as plainly as possible, on one side of the paper only, with REPLIES, QUERIES and NOTES on SEPARATE SHEETS, and the name of the writer appended to each communication.

Owing to lack of space we are obliged to withhold until our next number some Notes and Queries which have been received.

Proceedings of Societies.

On June 22nd, the Newbury District Field Club and the Berks Archæological Society visited Montacute House, Brimpton d'Evercey, and other interesting places in the Yeovil district. We hope to give a full account of the excursion in a subsequent number.

On July 28th, the Berks Archæological Society will visit Cholsey, North Moreton, Sinodon Hill, Little and Long Wittenham.

The British Archæological Association is holding its Annual Congress this year in Cumberland, under the presidency of Mr. Keyser.

Some reviews of books are unavoidably held over until the next number of this Journal.