

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—EXCURSION TO THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE.—On June 24th the Berks Archæological Society visited the interesting country of the Vale of White Horse, and in this season of unsettled weather were favoured with a fairly fine day, a sharp shower at the close of the afternoon being the only inconvenience. About forty members and their friends formed the party, including Mr. C. E. Keyser (President), the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield (Hon. Secretary), Mr. E. Ravenscroft (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. J. T. Strange (who accompanied the travellers in his motor-car), Mr. and Miss Keep, the Rev., Mrs. and Miss Morris-Williams, Rev. R. P. Newhouse, Rev. J. Halpin, Mr. Collier, Miss Cooper-Smith, Miss Kitcat, etc. The country visited is seldom explored and little known by Berkshire people as the villages are secluded and inaccessible save to the cyclist and motorist, and the members especially appreciated the opportunity of inspecting old world hamlets, interesting churches and manor-houses upon which the White Horse looks placidly down from its green hillside, and tells of the ancient peoples who inhabited the Vale and trod its wind-swept hill. The Society was favoured with the presence of its President, who showed his architectural knowledge by ably describing the features of the churches visited, and the members were cordially welcomed in each place by the parochial authorities and abundant hospitality was extended to them. The party left Reading by the 9.50 train, and from Didcot a special train, kindly provided by Mr. Keyser, conveyed them to Uffington where carriages met the visitors and drove them to Uffington Church. A description of this has recently appeared in the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal* illustrated by a charming series of photographs, and a brief notice need only be recorded. Mr. Keyser said it was one of the most interesting in the county, it had had the advantage of the support of great and powerful abbeys of the original Early Norman church built by the Monks of Abingdon, and nothing remained except a little recess in the wall. It was transferred to Reading Abbey and entirely rebuilt in the 13th century. It was important as being the mother church of Woolstone and Baulking. Cruciform in plan it was a magnificent example of Early English architecture, having been begun, carried on and finished all at the same period between the years 1240 and 1250, except one decorated window and the upper part of the tower which was a restoration. An old Bible in the parish records : "December 2nd, 1740. Then was Uffington stepe beat down by a tempest wind thunder and liten." The fluted mouldings of the chancel arch were a sign of the later Early English style. There are two little chapels at the east of the south transept known as the St. John's or Baulking aisle, and one in the north transept. Points of interest are the shortening of the windows of the nave, the consecration crosses, of which eleven out of the usual number (twelve) remain, the old iron-work of the doors, the votive crosses and the old clock made by a village blacksmith in 1615. Passing by the old School-house, described by Tom Hughes, a quick drive brought the party to Woolstone Church, which was a chapelry of Uffington and is now connected with Baulking Church. The little church is Norman with later windows inserted in the 14th century. An interesting feature is the leaden font of Late Norman character, of the same type as that at Childrey. The candelabra were conveyed here from a church in Bath in 1754. Compton Beauchamp was the next stopping place, a tree embowered village at the foot of the down, containing a fine manor-house, the residence of Judge Bacon, who kindly invited the antiquaries to visit his house. A fine avenue of elms leads to it with wrought-iron gates showing the arms of the former owners. The moat is complete and is covered with water lilies. The house is built with an inner quadrangle; the front is of stone of the style of Queen Anne and was erected by the Richards family of Yaverland in the Isle of Wight, one of whom married a daughter of the family of Warneford thus obtaining great wealth. Behind this front is the earlier brick-built Elizabethan

E shaped house, which consisted of a hall, now divided into two rooms, a small kitchen and with drawing-room. The moulded beams were discovered during a recent restoration by Judge Bacon. The lawns and gardens which rise up the hill side in terraces are shut in with splendid elms, and there is a dark yew-alley called the cloister walk. The manor was formerly held by the baronial family of Somery, and under them by William de Beauchamp, ancestor of the Earls of Warwick, who were for a long time lords of the manor. The Fettiplaces held it in 1524 and at a later period the Pyles, the Richards, Wrights, and now it is owned by the Earl of Craven. Adjoining the manor-house is the Church, which is cruciform. There is no chancel arch, a Norman western arch, Early English window, a Decorated west window, a low side window and high side window that lighted the rood loft. We noticed a 13th century pillar-piscina, plain sedile of the same date, and some 14th century glass representing the Annunciation and the Crucifixion, the cross being coloured green. The next village visited was Ashbury, where the Vicar kindly permitted the large party to partake of their picnic luncheon in his vicarage. The old manor-house is an interesting 15th century building and was a grange of Glastonbury Abbey. The church is being re-roofed, and funds are needed for the carrying on of the work which has been bravely undertaken by the Vicar, the Rev. L. Hamerton. It affords examples of every style. The Norman doorway is one of the best in England, and dates from about 1180 to 1200. The Norman nave was probably burnt down and rebuilt in the 15th century. The south transept is Early English and the north and the chancel Decorated. Crossing the boundary of the county we arrived at Bishopstone, where there is another fine doorway evidently wrought by the same hand which carved that at Ashbury, and we noticed a Norman holy-water stoup and the entrance to the rood loft. The church was reconstructed in the 15th century about 1480. There is some old glass with figures of the Virgin and St. Paul, two squints and a piscina. Little Hinton is a pleasant village, where the party were hospitably entertained to tea by the Vicar. In the church is a remarkable Norman font, one of the finest in the country, it has finely wrought scroll work issuing from the mouth of a boar standing near a goose. It is lined with lead. The church is chiefly Norman with solid massive pillars; the chancel was built about 1300 A.D., and the clear-storey in the 15th century, the roof belonging to the same period. After tea Mr. Ditchfield thanked the Rev. C. E. Perkins for his hospitality, whose ancestors came from Berkshire, his family being connected with the Perkins' of Upton Court, and then proposed that as His Majesty King Edward VII. had been Patron to the Society, an address of sympathy should be presented to King George with a request that His Majesty would graciously consent to become the Society's Patron, as his august father and grandmother Queen Victoria had been before him. This was carried unanimously. Owing to a downfall of rain and the lateness of the hour, the proposed visit to Wanborough was abandoned and the party drove to Shrivenham, where a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Keyser for kindly providing the special train, without which the excursion would have been impossible, and for so ably describing the architectural features of the churches. The arrangements for the excursion were made by the Hon. Secretary, Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, who was cordially thanked for the trouble he had taken in planning so pleasant and instructive a visit to the villages of the Vale, and he was ably assisted by the Treasurer, Mr. E. Ravenscroft.

On April 6th, a lecture was given by Mr. R. T. Forster (Treasurer of the British Archæological Association), on "The Roman City of Corstopitum, near Corbridge-on-Tyne." Mr. Forster very clearly explained, aided by lantern slides, the discoveries made during recent excavations of the site of what was evidently a large Roman town on the Great Northern Road, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, much resembling Silchester in Hampshire. It was evidently a garrison and supply town for the Roman soldiery, and was strongly fortified. There was plenty of good stone available, and consequently remains of splendid masonry had been found; but Corstopitum, like other Roman camps in the North, did not yield any tessellated pavements. After the lecture tea was provided on the kind invitation of Miss Hissey and Miss Cooper Smith.

On April 29th, the annual meeting was held, when there was a large attendance. The Report (published in this number) was read by the Hon Secretary, the Treasurer's accounts presented, and the officers elected, and the thanks of the Society given to them for their past services. The Rev. R. S. Mylne, B.C.L., F.S.A., gave an interesting lecture on "Bayeux and Norman Architecture."

NEWBURY DISTRICT FIELD CLUB.—The annual meeting was held recently, when the reports of the Society's proceedings were presented, and the officers elected. It was decided to arrange another joint excursion with the Berks Archæological Society.

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.

Notes.

AMONG the pictures recently sold at Christie and Manson's, in King-street, St. James, were two fine Gainsboroughs. The one, a large landscape with cows, is an early work; it has never been tampered with or restored. The smaller picture is a pomeranian dog and puppy, said to have belonged to Gainsborough's friend Abel. The dog figures in many of Gainsborough's earliest portraits. The picture is said to have belonged to Mrs. Gainsborough, perhaps given to her by Abel. The matrimonial differences between Thomas Gainsborough and his wife are well known, and the story goes that after a quarrel he painted the dog's picture as a peace offering to his wife. These pictures hung for many years in the drawing-room at Sulhamstead House, and are the property of Major Thoyts' two daughters. They were exhibited at several London galleries and at the celebrated Exhibition of Eastern Counties Artists at Ipswich, but have never been photographed or engraved. It is to be hoped they will not be allowed to go out of England, as they are good specimens of the artist's work. Gainsborough passed many years at Bath, and visited houses in the south of England. His style is typically English, and that he painted from nature is evident, as the background in many of his pictures are easily recognised.

CANDLE AUCTION.—The triennial "candle auction" for the letting of the Church Acre was held at the Parish Hall, Aldermaston, the Rev. F. R. Horwood presiding. In accordance with precedent, at a distance of one inch from the top of the wick of a tallow candle a pin was placed by the parish warden (Mr. M. W. Iremonger). The candle was then lighted, and the last bid before the dropping of the pin secured the tenancy of the land. The outgoing tenant was Mr. J. Wright, but on this occasion the holding was secured by Mr. F. Clark for a yearly rental of £3 15s., payable to the churchwardens for Church expenses.