

Proceedings of Societies.

THE BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

EXCURSION TO RUSCOMBE, SHOTTESBROOKE, OCKWELLS, ETC.

The first excursion of last year (1925) took place on June 25th and was well attended, there being between fifty and sixty members and their friends. Stopping at Ruscombe Church its architectural details were pointed out by our President, while the vicar spoke on the history of the parish. After Ruscombe, the next place visited was the beautiful fourteenth century Church at Shottesbrooke, one of the three collegiate churches in our county; for so it was made by Sir William Trussel in the fourteenth century, who here founded a college with a warden, five chaplains and two clerks and so it remained until its collegiate existence was suppressed by Edward VI. The last warden being William Throckmorton, whose tomb (1535) is against the north wall of the chancel.

The party then journeyed to Ockwells Manor, the seat of Sir Edward Barry, Bart., who extended a hearty welcome to the members of the Society and pointed out all the many interesting features of his fifteenth century mansion. Mr. Ditchfield had prepared a paper describing the history and antiquities of the house; in his absence, which was greatly regretted by all, this was read by the Hon. Treasurer. The chief glory of Ockwells is the armorial glass windows, which date from the fifteenth century. In the last Century, when Ockwells was owned by Mr. Grenfell of Taplow Court, he had the glass taken from Ockwells to Taplow Court, where it remained in packing cases till the present owner of the Court, Lord Desborough, generously presented it to Mr. Stephen Leech, who then owned Ockwells. This was a very generous action on Lord Desborough's part, as he had been offered a high price for the glass. During the time the glass was at the Court, the Rev. Charles Kerry, author of the 'History and Antiquities of Bray,' suggested to Mr. Grenfell to place it in Bray Church; to this he would not accede. Want

of time prevented the party from going to see Bray Church, famous for its versatile vicar—Simon Aleyn—who through so many religious and political changes would ever remain vicar of Bray. So proceeding to Cookham, where lunch was partaken of at the 'Bell and Dragon,' the party after lunch went to Cookham Church, where they were met by the rector, the Rev. Dr. Bachelor, who described the architecture of his church. A drive through beautiful scenery brought the excursionists to Bisham Church, situated on the banks of the Thames. The President described the building. The Norman tower is of hard chalk, the rest of the building has been rebuilt. One of the most interesting features of this church are the tombs of the Hoby family, who owned Bisham Abbey from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century, notably those of Sir Thomas Hoby and his half-brother Sir Philip Hoby, erected by the widow—Dame Elizabeth Hoby—of the former. Time did not allow us to examine all the heraldic mementoes of the Hoby family, and once more our members had to enter their conveyance to journey to Ladye Place, where they received a hearty welcome from the owner, Major Rivers-Moore, and his wife. The house is mostly modern, having been built in the last century; in the grounds are the remains of Hurley Priory, a Benedictine House, founded in the eleventh century (1087) by Geoffrey de Mandeville, as a 'cell' of Westminster Abbey. When Hurley surrendered to Henry VIII, that monarch granted the site to Westminster, and when a few years later that Abbey in its turn surrendered to the king, Hurley passed into lay hands, when it was granted to Charles Howard, who sold it to Leonard Chamberlain; the latter disposed of it to John Lovelace, whose descendant John, Lord Lovelace, was a great supporter of the Revolution of 1688. It was in a vault of his house at Ladye Place—for his ancestor the grantee of the priory buildings had converted them into a dwelling house—the meetings to promote the cause of the Revolution took place. Readers of Macaulay's History will recall the description of these assemblies. Through the kindness of Major Rivers-Moore our members were allowed to wander about the grounds and to inspect the dovecote, the tithe-barn and the excavations,

which the present owner has made and which are revealing the plan of the priory. Leaving Ladye Place the party wended their way to Hurley Church, which our President described, after which the journey to Reading was resumed and thus was brought to an end one of the most interesting excursions the Society had had for many a day.

EXCURSION TO WARBOROUGH, GREAT MILTON, AYLESBURY, ETC.

The two-day excursion, which is such a popular feature in the life of our Society, took place on August 21st and 22nd, 1925, when various places in the neighbouring counties of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire were visited. In these days those who take part in our excursions no longer depend on the railways, but travel from place to place by motor; so the majority of our members left Reading at half-past nine in the morning in char-a-bancs—though of course some of our people journeyed in their own cars—and proceeded through Pangbourne and Wallingford to Warborough, where the church was described by our President. In this church is a leaden font—there are only two in Oxfordshire—it is transitional with a perpendicular pedestal and is very much like the font at Long Wittenham in our County of Berkshire. The next place visited was Great Milton, at one time the home of the Dormer family, who here had a manor house, though naught now remains of their residence save the gateway. Beneath the tower of the church is the tomb of Sir Michael Dormer, who served under Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester—the favourite of Queen Elizabeth—in the Low Countries and who sold the manor of Milton to Sir Edward Greene towards the end of the sixteenth century. The church is a handsome structure, consisting of a nave and chancel with north and south aisles. Originally a Norman building it has been much altered.

Resuming the journey to Great Haseley a halt was made to see the church in which is a thirteenth century monument said to be that of William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex; the sixteenth century helmet gloves preserved in this church are thought to be those of Sir William Barentyne, who is buried here; he was sheriff of Oxfordshire in the reign of Henry VIII.

Two rectors of the parish are well known: John Leland the famous antiquary in the time of Henry VIII, whose 'Itinerary' is known to all archaeologists; the other rector was Christopher Wren, dean of Windsor and father of the illustrious architect of St. Paul's Cathedral. Rycote was the next place on the list, where the party were welcomed by Colonel Hamersley, who some years ago purchased the property and house from Lord Abingdon, whose ancestor Lord Williams of Thame acquired the manor in the sixteenth century. Lord Williams here erected a magnificent house, where he in 1554 entertained Princess Elizabeth when on her journey to be imprisoned at Woodstock, whither Lord Williams and Sir Henry Bedingfield were ordered by Queen Mary to escort her. Lord Williams' mild treatment of the Princess—the future Queen—won him her royal favour, for when she ascended the throne she twice visited him at Rycote. Another monarch, Charles I, was also a guest at Rycote, the first time when Parliament was sitting at Oxford and not in London because of the plague, on the second occasion when the country was in the throes of the Civil War. Of this house only ruins now remain for it was dismantled by the third Earl of Abingdon. The story of the chapel erected by Richard Quartermain in the fifteenth century was narrated by the Hon. Secretary. After thanking Colonel Hamersley for his welcome the party left for Thame, where luncheon was served at the Spread Eagle Hotel, and after visiting the church, originally built by the Bishop of Lincoln (Bishop Grosseteste) in 1241, they journeyed to Notley Abbey, which was inspected by the kind permission of the owner, Mr. Reynolds. Mr. Ditchfield gave an address on the history of the abbey, and then the party drove on to Long Crendon which, Mr. Ditchfield stated, appeared in Domesday as Credendon. Roman remains have been found in the village. The manor belonged to Walter Gifford, first Earl of Buckingham, and in the sixteenth century to the Dormers. The bells were brought here from Notley Abbey, and one was dedicated to St. John and bore the inscription, 'In multis annis resonat campana Johannis.' The members visited the old Court House adjoining the church, which is four centuries old,

and where manor courts were held by Walter Beauchamp, steward of Queen Catherine, the consort of Henry V.

Dinton Hall was visited by the kind permission of Lady Currie. The house was built by Archbishop Warham, in the reign of Henry VII. It formerly contained many portraits of celebrities in the time of the Commonwealth period, but these were removed by the late owner, Colonel Goodall. The house is chiefly associated with Simon Mayne, the regicide, and his secretary, John Bigg, the Dinton Hermit.

By the special permission of the Right Hon. Lord Leith of Fyvie Castle, the members were permitted to see Hartwell House, the home of the distinguished family of the Lees, from whom it is rented by Lord Leith. Mr. Ditchfield read a paper on the subject, which will be found in his volume of 'Memorials of Old Buckinghamshire.' The house is especially memorable as having been the home of Louis XVIII, King of France, and his court during his exile in the days of the first Republic and the Empire.

Aylesbury was reached at a somewhat late hour, and the company stayed for the night at the Bull's Head Hotel. Later in the evening the party proceeded to the Council Chamber, where they were officially welcomed by the Mayor and corporation. The Mayor said that on behalf of the corporation and burgesses generally of the borough of Aylesbury, it gave him very great pleasure to welcome them into the town. Alderman G. J. Thrasher, the Deputy Mayor, remarked had they visited Aylesbury 50 years ago it might have been more interesting from an archæological point of view, inasmuch as it had a larger number of old-world buildings than it possessed now. All the shops in the Market Square had been modernised. Still, there remained a few old houses of interest. He hoped they would be able to visit their glorious old parish church. The Prebendal was another place of interest, owing to its association with John Wilkes.

Mr. C. E. Keyser, on behalf of the society, thanked the Mayor and corporation of Aylesbury for their very kind reception. They had seen some historical buildings in the county that day,



RYCOT CHURCH.
Drawn by Miss Beach.



OLD COURT HOUSE, LONG CRENDON.
Drawn by Miss Beach.



GREAT HASELEY.
Drawn by Miss Beach.



OLD COTTAGES AT AYLESBURY.
Drawn by Miss Beach.

and they hoped to see more on the following day. The members then visited the Town Hall, and inspected some of the corporation's deeds.

On Friday morning Aylesbury Church was seen, and then resuming the journey, Wendover Church was the next place visited. There is a curious legend about this church. It is said that originally the building was commenced on the low ground and during the night the fairies moved the building to the present site. The church is a fourteenth century building. Lingerling a short time at Ellenborough whence glorious views of the Chilterns are obtained, the members then journeyed to Little Kimble, and were much interested in the mural paintings, which were described by the President and the vicar. The company then drove through the Happy Valley, which separates the two Kimbles, and saw Cunobeline's or Cymbeline's Mount, where the British king is said to have opposed the Roman General Aulus Plautius.

Princes Risborough, which derives its name from Edward the Black Prince, was the next place at which the party stopped. The church existed before the thirteenth century but was lengthened in 1290, of which date is the chancel, and the windows were inserted in 1340. The arcades consist of seven bays; one is modern, the others were erected in 1240. The east window of the south aisle and the doorways are early fourteenth century work. There is a range of beautiful sedilia and piscina of late thirteenth century date, and a Jacobean pulpit. Driving onwards, the famous Whiteleaf Cross was seen on the hillside, which according to some authorities is believed to commemorate a victory of Edward the Elder over the Danes; by others it is said to have been made as a guide to pilgrims. Bradenham Church was visited. In it is a monument to the author of "The Curiosities of Literature," Isaac d'Israeli, who at one time resided at Bradenham House.

Passing by West Wycombe and the curious church erected by Sir Francis Dashwood, the pilgrims arrived at High Wycombe. Luncheon was served at 'The Red Lion,' after luncheon the President expressed the thanks of the society to Mr. Morley

for the arrangements he had made in organising the excursion ; and the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield received the thanks of the members for obtaining permission to visit several of the houses which otherwise might have been closed to them, and also for his descriptions of them. The vicar met the party and conducted them to the church, part of which was erected in 1273 by the Abbess of Godstow. The nave was added in the fourteenth century, and the tower in 1522 ; most of the brasses were destroyed in the Civil War.

Journeying into Oxfordshire the members visited Lewknor and from thence to Shirburn Castle, the home of the Earl of Macclesfield. The castle dates from the fourteenth century, it is surrounded by a mote over which are drawbridges. From here they drove to Pyrton Manor, the Jacobean residence of Mr. Hamersley, then to Watlington, with its quaint Town Hall. The vicar welcomed the party and conducted them round the church. This being the last place in the itinerary it brought to a conclusion a most enjoyable excursion and one which will linger in the minds of those who took part in it for a long time.