

## Notes and Queries

### ANTIQUARIAN FINDS AT ABINGDON.

IT is not often that close watchfulness of growing crops brings more than its own reward, but fortune has been kind to Mr. Longford, of Abingdon. The plough and spade breaking old turf land for the commercial planting of daffodils and tulips has recently brought to light a number of 'finds' which, apart from their antiquarian interest, help to disprove the historical fable that Julius Cæsar found Britain a land inhabited by skin-clad savages, and that our British civilisation dates from his arrival. Silver Roman coins all found within a foot of the surface have been submitted to the British Museum, who have dated one of them as far back as the year B.C. 90. Other silver coins are dated B.C. 89; B.C. 71; B.C. 48; B.C. 18 (Augustus); bronze coins Constantine I (A.D. 337), Constantine II (A.D. 350). The find also includes a bronze ring set with crystals, and a prehistoric armlet, Anglo-Saxon lead tokens, several Ecclesiastical fifteenth century reckoning tokens, a number of Tudor coins, and a heavily gilt figure of the Virgin, which the British Museum state once formed a part of a processional crucifix. There is little doubt that these latter ecclesiastical items formerly appertained to the ancient Abbey of Abingdon, dismantled by Henry VIII.

Other interesting finds brought to light by the plough are a twelfth century pike head and many human bones which bear silent testimony that the land now covered by nodding daffodils and tulips in tens of thousands has witnessed more grim and rugged times.

The land upon which these finds have been made is within two minutes' walk of Abingdon station and unquestionably formed part of the Abbey grounds. The close observation of the contents of the soil necessary at the planting and lifting times of the bulbs have invariably produced interesting finds. Interested visitors are at all times made welcome and during the month of May a very large number of garden lovers take the opportunity of seeing one of the most extensive collections of daffodils and



tulips to be found in England. It is a sight never to be forgotten in the early days of May to see some 300 or more varieties of garden tulips growing to perfection.

#### DISCOVERY OF A DISC BARROW, ETC.

The remains of a Disc Barrow (?) were found in 1909 at Marshall's Hill, Grosvenor Road, Reading. Part of the Barrow, to the east of the hedge, was levelled at about the same date. The remaining portion is about 65 feet from north to south and 42 feet from the western side to the hedge. The Barrow is about 102 feet from Grosvenor Road. Just within the Barrow, near the most northern point, was found a much broken Bronze Age burial urn. The pieces were taken to the Reading Museum, and were found to be similar to another urn which had been pieced together by the then Curator, Mr. Colyer. Fragments of a black Romano-British cinerary urn were found when Grosvenor Road was being made in 1907, between Marshall's Hill and 'The Meadow,' exact spot unknown. A bronze spear head was found in the same road, opposite 'Wynyates.' L.A.G.

*Berkshire Local History Record.*

#### UNDERGROUND CELLARS IN READING, ETC.

In 1924, an underground chamber or well was discovered at the back of No. 78, Castle Street, Reading. The chamber had apparently at one time been filled in and the corner of the existing house built over it, but subsequently the filling had sunk and the brick walling of the chamber had fallen in and when examined in October, 1924, only the brick vault was in place. The vault was apparently of early Georgian brickwork (bricks  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick) except that on the east were traces of an arch of probably Tudor brickwork (bricks  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick). On the south side of the chamber was a brick floored, walled and vaulted niche with, on the west side, a small recess in the wall, such as are found in many old cellars. Embedded in the earth in the chamber were a few fragments of red and green pottery of 1700-1750 date. As the cavity was not safe it was filled in. This discovery is more interesting in view of the



fact that in about 1912, when excavating for a stanchion an underground chamber was discovered in the adjoining yard. The chamber was about 10 feet by 7 feet by 6 feet high, and was brickwalled and had a segmental brick ceiling, the crown of the arch of which was only just below the surface of the ground. From the chamber a passage with brick walls, paving and vaulting, about 2 feet wide and 6 feet high, led towards the chamber before described. This cellar was filled in, but the passage could probably be again exposed with little difficulty. About the year 1907, when some adjoining new walls were built in the excavations were found several mammoth bones. In 1920, when excavating for the foundation of another wall an old glass bottle of about the 1750 period was found. C.B.W.

*Berkshire Local History Record.*

#### GOthic TILE AND HUMAN REMAINS ON SITE OF READING ABBEY.

In August, 1925, when excavating for the foundations of the new ambulatory round the east end of St. James's Church, Reading, about 5 feet below the present ground level was found the foundation of an old wall, and nearby, about 7 feet below the ground level a piece of paving in situ. The exposed tiles were unfortunately all broken up except one specially perfect encaustic one of thirteenth-fourteenth century date on which the glaze was practically intact. Near the tiles were found the remains of several coffins which rested on the same level as the tiles. When excavating for the new sacristy a number of human bones were found seven to ten feet below the surface, and when excavating for the narthex similar bones were found 2 feet 6 inches below the surface resting on gravel. Some years previously when excavations were made for a pipe in the North Forbury Road, opposite St. James's, a number of human bones were found. S.E.B.

*Berkshire Local History Record.*

#### ABINGDON COUNTY HALL OR MARKET HALL.

I have recently returned from a long motor-drive almost straight across Berkshire to the ancient and ever-interesting town of Abingdon. It is a charming old-world place almost



unspoilt by modern innovations or industrial enterprises, save that a ready-made clothing factory is the modern representative of the ancient cloth-making industry ; and recently its quietude has been disturbed by the advent of a new industry, fell-mongering, leather-dressing and the making of gloves. But then only how quiet and peaceful the town is, very different to what it would have become if its former inhabitants had not resisted strenuously the advent of the Great Western Railway and refused to welcome it to the town. The reason for my visit was that the Mayor of Abingdon had invited me to join a Committee for the purpose of discussing the ways and means for restoring the very beautiful gem of English architecture which looks down upon the Market Place, and is known by various names, the Town Hall, County Hall or Market Hall. It appears that time and weather have been troubling the old building, and that some repairs are necessary. Gems and jewels are a great responsibility, and although the Corporation of Abingdon is responsible for the building, inasmuch as it was built partly for the county for the holding of the Assizes, before Reading ousted Abingdon from its position as the County Town of Berkshire, it was thought that the County ought to assist Abingdon in the preservation of this noble structure.

The Mayor has shown a keen interest in the work, and has obtained estimates for the reparation. He has been in communication with the Office of Works, the officials of which recommend a modest outlay of about £50 for work that is absolutely necessary. A local firm of architects and builders suggest a larger expenditure, including the adaptation of the building for some local needs, and the Mayor thought of an appeal for £2,000. However, the Committee, which met under the Chairmanship of the Earl of Abingdon, and included most of the leading noblemen and gentlemen of the Shire, decided to consult some experts before taking any further steps in preparing a scheme.

A few words may be added about its history. It is a matter of dispute who was the architect who designed it. Tradition says that Inigo Jones built it. If that is the case his designs



waited a generation after his death before they were carried into execution. I have examined the records of the borough, but no great name is mentioned as the architect. 'In 1677, on September 29th, in the 29th year of the reign of Charles II, and when Robert Sellwood was Mayor, this Mayor, bailiffs and common council of the said borough, taking into consideration the want of a convenient house wherein His Majesty's Justices, assigned to take the Assizes for the County, may here sit, and conceiving that upon the ground where the Market House now standeth, and next thereunto a house for that purpose may be most fitly erected, Do order that the said Market House be demolished, and that a House for his Majesty's Justices to take the Assizes in be there, and next thereupon erected and built: One Jonathan Hawe did protest against the order.' So the good work was begun. In the next year they resolved to cut down certain trees in Bagley Close for the next building. The actual builder was Christopher Kempster, who was also engaged in the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral, and it has been suggested by the late Rev. W. J. Loftie that Sir Christopher Wren may have been the architect. The building took place between 1678 and 1683. A full record of the cost of the work has been preserved. It amounted to £1,543, and surely no better expenditure was ever made. Mr. A. E. Preston, of Abingdon, possesses the actual accounts.

The building is very lofty and is constructed of ashlar and freestone in the Renaissance style. The open arcades of the lower story formed a market, where butter and poultry were sold by the farmers' wives within living memory, and above this is a fine hall. The projecting roof, with its wooden balustrade and cupola, and the square tower, is a striking feature from many points of view. In the eighteenth century the Town Hall or County Hall was a favourite theatre for dramatic companies which settled down to a winter's programme of tragedy and comedy.

It is an ancient custom at the local celebration of royal coronations for the Mayor and Corporation to proceed to the roof of the Market House and throw down buns to the populace.



At the coronation of George IV a thousand penny cakes were ordered. This custom was continued at the coronation of William IV, Victoria and George V, and at the two jubilees of Queen Victoria. Some local enthusiasts have preserved a whole series of these buns of loyalty, varnished and duly labelled.

P.H.D.

#### MARLSTONE MANOR AND CHAPELRY IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

The following interesting document was shown to me by Mrs. George William Palmer, widow of the late Right Hon. George William Palmer, P.C. and M.P. for Reading, when I was staying at her beautiful home, Marlstone House, near Newbury. The original deed is in Latin, and the following is a translation made in the seventeenth century. The document is framed and hung up in the vestry of the church or chapel adjoining the Manor House, Marlestone. This vestry, with the west end, has been beautifully built by Mrs. Palmer, in memory of her husband, and added to the older church. We can learn much from this document. Bucklebury, the parish church, was held by Reading Abbey. Abbot Adam was ruling the monastery from 1239 to 1249. Sir Geoffrey Martell, who was lord of the manor of Marlstone, erected the chapel or church at Marlstone between those dates, and made the arrangement for the serving of the chapel by the Vicar of Bucklebury. The names of the Vicars of the three Reading parishes and of other parishes in the neighbourhood in the early part of the thirteenth century, will prove interesting to those who wish to complete the list of incumbents in their respective parishes.

P.H.D.

To all Christian people to whom this present writing shall come Adam\* by ye grace of God Abbot of Reading and of the same place sendes greeting in our Lord God everlasting : Knowe all you that we in respect of godly Charity and at the instance of Jeffrey Martell or Martenall Knight, have granted to the foresayd Jeffery and his heires the celebration of Divine Service in ye Chapell of the sayd Jeffery the which is builded in his

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\* Abbot of Reading, 1239-1249.



Fee or Lordshippe, being in the parish of Bucklebury to be donne by our Vicar or some other his Assignes in forme following, that is to say, that the sayd Vicar or his Assigne shall celebrate Divine Service in ye sayd Chappel every Sundaye and every fourth or sixth Fery.

And if the Holy daye shall happen to fall generally in ye weeke dayes, and that the sayd Jeffery and his heyres will that Divine Service be celebrated to themselves in the said Festival daies, as in the ffourth or sixe ffery, it shall be reckoned for the ffourth or sixte Day : Or if two Feasts doe come to be kept in one week, then in the three foresayd accustomed our Vicar or his Attourney shall celebrate Divine Service there on one of those Festivall dayes.

Furthermore we do grant that our Vicar or his Assigne in the foresayd Chapel shall doe full Service in the daye and night of All Saints, and in the day and night of the Nativity of our Lord, of the day and night of the Purification of our Lady Mary and of Easter. And the sayd Jeffery and his heires granteth that the said their heires and their Family and their Servants to come to the Mother Church of Bucklebury these Solemn Dayes in the yeare that is to say, in ye day of the Dedication of the Church, in the daye of Pentecoste, in the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And the sayd Jeffery, Knight, for celebrating Divine Service, in free, pure and perpetual Almes to the Church of Bucklebury parishe, which is called Labreech neare unto Kineward-hach. And Richard of Standford in like manner One acre of his free tenement that he holdeth of the sayd Jeffery by writing in the sayd tillage. Also the sayd Jeffery, Knight, hath given to the Church of Bucklebury and Vicar there All manner of Tithes, Also the Tithe of Mills, of Fishings, Gardens, and all other small Tithes. Also the sayd Jeffery, Knight, granteth for ever to the Church of Bucklebury, and our Vicar there serving yearly One Quarter of Wheate and one quarter of Misling of his Grange of Bucklebury to be payd at the Feast of St. Andrew before Christmas to the Sustentation of our Chaolaine serving our Chappel. And to the end that our Grant may stand firme and in perpetual strength, we have



corroborated the same by this Testimony of this present Writing and apposition of our Seales these being witnessed.

Robert Parson of the Church of Thatcham.

James the Vicar of St. Giles' Church of Redding.

Richard Vicar of the Church of Blessed Laurence.

Martin Chaplain of the Church of Blessed Mary in Redding.

William our Clerke.

William of Englefield.

Roger of Hide.

Robert of Bradfield.

Robert of Burgfield.

Robert of Upton.

John of Hole.

Roger of Whitchurch.

Simon of Waye.

Robert the sonne of Adam of Thacham, and many others, etc.

#### QUERY : A VANISHED EARTHWORK.

"Near Little Coxwell are the remains of a camp, which appears to have been of a square form. Its double ditch is nearly entire on the west side : few traces of the works remain in other parts. This camp commands a very extensive view of the vale of White-Horfe, and the upper parts of Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire." (Lysons, Berks, p. 214). It is clear from the context that neither Badbury Hill nor Coles Pits is meant by this. Where and what is it? I do not remember that it is even mentioned in the V.C.H. Berkshire.

G. W. B. HUNTINGFORD.

Kâpsabet, Kenya Colony.