

Miscellanea and Reviews.

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LOCAL HISTORY RECORDING SCHEME. (BERKSHIRE BRANCH).

This Report covers the period from January 1st to December 31st, 1938.

From our Local Correspondents during the year 20 Records have been received, and up to the end of 1938, 512 approved Records have been sent in, relating to 137 Parishes in the county. 10 new Local Correspondents were enrolled during 1938, and our Correspondents now number 253, representing 184 Parishes. We again regret to report the death of several valued Correspondents, while others have left the County and are no longer able to give us active help. The Committee, therefore, wish to take this opportunity of asking all Local Correspondents and members of affiliated societies to make a special endeavour to spread knowledge of the Scheme and of its aims among those who are interested in Local History and to obtain their help as Local Correspondents.

The Berkshire Branch of the Scheme continues to make steady progress in its attempt to preserve valuable facts of local history which might otherwise be lost, either owing to their being previously unrecorded, or to existing records being lost sight of or forgotten. In former times, old legends and traditions were handed down from generation to generation. Now, owing to changing social conditions and habits in the life and work of the countryside, much of the traditional knowledge and local lore which have come down to us through the ages is rapidly being forgotten. Fortunately, however, there is a remarkable awakening of interest in local history at the present time throughout the country, and we therefore urge our Correspondents to bring to the attention of their friends the advantage of assisting an organisation such as the Local History Recording Scheme, which endeavours to link together those anxious to preserve systematically the fast vanishing records of the past.

Some idea of the practical results obtained by the Scheme may be gained by considering the number of Records which have been sent in relating to certain Parishes. To give a few instances : 28 Records have been received concerning Caversham ; 22 of Sutton Courtenay ; 20 of Thatcham ; 18 of Long Wittenham ; 13 each of Kintbury and White Waltham ; and 12 each of Earley and St. Laurence's, Reading.

The range of subjects covered by these Records is very wide, and a considerable amount of otherwise unrecorded information has been gathered together relating to many of the subjects represented, for instance 78 Records refer to Memorials and Memorial Inscriptions ; 51 to archæologically important discoveries by workmen ; 50 to ecclesiastical buildings and fittings ;

37 to Bibliography, MS. references, Deeds, etc.; 30 to Roman and Romano-British remains; 28 to Barrows and Burials; 25 to Maps and Illustrations; 24 to Pottery and Glass; 23 to Place-Names; and 19 to Coins and Tokens.

The Committee would again take this opportunity of indicating some of the work which is waiting to be done, and which should be commenced without delay:—

(a) It is advisable to obtain as soon as possible photographs of all the existing Toll Houses in the County, and any details relating to them, as it is probable that many will be demolished shortly owing to road-widening operations.

(b) Photographs and descriptions of interiors as well as exteriors of old houses, cottages and other buildings should be recorded, as there are surprisingly few illustrations available of the often interesting details of old cottages. In this connection, old inns should not be forgotten, for many are now being demolished, and a number contain noteworthy features.

(c) Illustrated inventories of old household goods and furniture and of examples of local craftsmanship should be compiled; old farm waggons, local ploughs and farming implements of bygone times are now becoming very scarce, and special efforts should be made to preserve such as exist, either in Local Museums or elsewhere.

Work on the transcription on Memorial Inscriptions has proceeded steadily during the year, and up to the end of 1938, lists of Inscriptions in 117 Parishes had been received or promised. As has already been pointed out, the inscriptions on many tombstones are rapidly becoming obliterated, and on this account the Local Correspondents in each Parish in which the Memorials have not been copied are asked to make a special effort during the year to have them transcribed; should they not be able to copy the inscriptions themselves, they can perhaps find others to undertake this very important and necessary work. At the end of the year, a request was received from the Society of Genealogists for a list of the Memorial Inscriptions already copied in Berkshire for inclusion in their Register of the whole country, and this fact may enable Correspondents to realize the importance now attached to this branch of our work.

During 1938, the whole of the 512 Records received under the Scheme, together with the duplicate copies deposited in the British Museum, were carefully checked, and where necessary, reclassified and re-indexed in order to bring them into line with the extended Records Subject Index mentioned in last year's Annual Report. A new Subject Index has been provided for both sets of Records, and additional cross-references added, together with useful notes to facilitate the consulting of the Records. Additional binders were purchased, and the Records now occupy three volumes.

With regard to finance, the Hon. Treasurer reports that there was, at the end of the year, an adverse balance of £5 15s. od. This deficit is accounted for by the cost of the additional binders and by the publication of a new edition of the "Notes for Correspondents." In normal years our income is sufficient to cover expenses.

The thanks of the Committee are again due to the various affiliated Societies for their constant interest and support; they also wish to thank the Chairman, the Hon. Director, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer, and to express their gratitude to the various Correspondents who have sent in Records during the year, and in other ways have furthered the work of the Scheme.

MEDIEVAL FLOOR TILES.

One of our Members, Mr. P. D. R. Williams-Hunt, is making a record of all the existing medieval floor tiles in Berkshire (see article on Hurley tiles in last number of the journal.) He wishes in particular to trace tiles in private hands and also records of old tiles which have disappeared in the church "restorations" of the last century. If any members have records of this description he would be grateful if they would communicate with him at his home address, "Courtlands," Maidenhead, or through the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. F. M. Underhill.

WHITE HORSE HILL AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY. By L. V. GRINSELL. pp. xii,-65, with 8 half-tone and line illus. and folding map. St. Catherine's Press, 1939, bound 4/6, in paper covers 3/6.

In this booklet Mr. Grinsell has produced an account, at once authoratative and attractive, of the downland which stretches from Lambourn northwards to the Vale of the White Horse, with Ashbury and Sparsholt as the boundaries to west and east. It is intended primarily for the walker or cyclist who, in this magic tract of country, finds himself with the Ridgeway beneath his feet, an entrenchment on the hill-crest and barrows all around, and asks the inevitable question—"What do they all mean?" Too often the answer is not forthcoming, or if at all, it is in the dubious form of vague tales of Roman Camps or Druid Stones gleaned from the dog-eared pages of some forgotten pamphlet written by the Vicar's daughter half a century ago and now lying with fly-specked faded covers in the window-sill of the pub tea-room. But Mr. Grinsell's book is of another sort. It is distinctly of the open air: its format is right for the pocket and its weight would not disturb the most carefully balanced rucksack. It is full of enthusiasm and equally full of sound information, and

Major Allen's air-photographs enable the pedestrian to take metaphorical wings and see the landscape from a novel angle. The archæological information is imparted with unobtrusive accuracy, and does not stop at a description of the field monuments, for there are chapters on the Battle of Ashdown and on the Compton Beauchamp Saxon Charter (with a most interesting facsimile of the XIII MS. of the Bounds), while the curious possibilities of place-names associated with the Wayland legend are discussed. Nor is humour wanting, as witness the entertaining account of the famous White Horse controversy of 1738-42, and the Muse is represented by verses by the nineteenth century shepherd-poet, Job Cork. Altogether this is an ideal book for the wide public to whom it is addressed.

S. P.