

Material for the history of places in Berkshire in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries.

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IN 1857 the Master of the Rolls proposed to the Treasury the publication of materials for the history of Great Britain and the following year was published the *Chronicle of Abingdon*, a tribute to the national importance of one of the records of a county which has not yet a Record Society of its own. This chronicle is a detailed and honest account of the Abbey written by a monk for the use of the inmates and covering a period of about 500 years which ends with the accession of Richard I in 1189 though written in the handwriting of the following century. The writer was especially interested in property and the chronicle is a rich mine of local history for an unusually early period, though the facts recorded in the chronicle are not as well known in the localities concerned as they would be if the text were not in Latin or if the parochial histories in the *Victoria County History* were not of necessity so brief. If a single document had to be named as the most outstanding for the history of Berkshire this chronicle would be the one most people would select and no account of Berkshire material in the British Museum would seem proper without mention of it.

The British Museum is extraordinarily rich in Berkshire cartularies and the *Abingdon Chronicle* has worthy companions. Indeed, the *Guide to the Victoria County History* lists as Berkshire cartularies no less than ten among the collection of manuscripts amassed by Sir Robert Cotton, six among those of Lord Harley and there are also one each among the Egerton, Stowe, Lansdowne, Sloane and Additional manuscripts. These relate to Abingdon, Bisham, Reading, Wallingford and Windsor.

Despite its earlier foundation and its proximity to the county boundary the *Short List of Chartularies of Religious Houses in the Bodleian Library* contains no Berkshire references, but amends have been made by Mr. J. P. R. Lyell's bequest of an Abingdon cartulary written about 1300. This he discovered in an Oxford bookshop, though Dr. H. E. Salter had concluded that it must have long perished.¹ Shortly after its arrival in Bodley some missing leaves belonging to this cartulary were found in a Buckinghamshire estate office by the National Register of Archives and were restored to their place in the volume thanks to Miss Cecily Baker of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and Miss Agnes Baker of the Friends of Abingdon.

It is not, however, individual volumes of outstanding interest which this note proposes to discuss and in a brief space it is

¹ *Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Journal*, xxiv (1918), 28-34.

impracticable to provide an inventory. I shall indicate briefly how Berkshire material may be located in the British Museum and the Bodleian libraries in the hope that others may make detailed bibliographical guides for the use of students of county topography.

Most Berkshire material in the British Museum is readily found, for the various printed catalogues have been cut up and the entries classified under broad subject heads. Fortunately, there is a heading for each county in a topographical section so that Berkshire entries are brought together.

In the Bodleian there is no such short cut. There are two series of printed catalogues which must be consulted: the "quarto" catalogues which cover a few large collections in considerable detail and the "*Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*" which describes the others more briefly. For the history of Berkshire the Ashmole, Rawlinson and Gough collections are the most important.

Mr. Brian Enright has compiled for the Berkshire County Record Office a list of references to Berkshire among the Rawlinson manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. Ten general references include papers relating to Ashmole's visitation of Berkshire in 1665 (D.865) and material for 42 places is indexed alphabetically. This is followed by six general genealogical references and references to pedigrees of fifteen Berkshire families. The quarto catalogues of the Digby, Tanner, Rawlinson and Ashmole manuscripts each have separate printed indexes and for convenience these have been cut up and combined in a general index of all the "quarto" catalogues in the Bodleian. In 1953 an index was published of the *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts* and this includes the Gough collection, but for accessions received since 1915 it is still necessary to consult two slip indexes in manuscript in the Library. These indexes are readily usable by students in a particular place, but Berkshire material is, of course, scattered throughout the indexes.

Berkshire manuscripts received since those described in the *Summary Catalogue* have been normally referenced 'MS. Top. Berks.' This series contains manuscripts referenced with letters according to size, MS.Top.Berks a.1-7, b.1-39, c.1-48, d.1-31, e.1-22, f.1-3, g.1. Of these, b.1-7, c.1-24, d. 1-15, e.1-15, and f.1-3 are described in the *Summary Catalogues*. Of all these there is a handlist in manuscript, available on application, and fuller descriptions of many are available in typescript.

ECCLESIASTICAL RECORDS

Although the Bodleian Library is primarily a Library to which collector's pieces have come as to the British Museum, it is a record office so far as the central records of the Diocese of Oxford and the Archdeaconry of Berkshire are concerned. Canon Oldfield

compiled indexes by parishes for many Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire ecclesiastical records in the Bodleian and Miss M. Hedges completed a similar volume for Berkshire in 1952 under the supervision of Miss D. M. Barratt. There is a copy of this in the Berkshire County Record Office. The Archdeaconry of Berkshire covers the whole county and is now administered from Reading where the marriage bonds are believed to have been destroyed by the *Luftwaffe*. But the archidiaconal registry was in Oxford up to the 19th century and in 1878 many of the other early records were transferred to the Bodleian. They were described in the *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts* as nos. 25579-26120 in vol. v, pp. 157-184 and, of course, go back before the transfer of the archdeaconry from Salisbury to Oxford in 1836. A fine series of court books are valuable for local history, but the index is confined to churchwardens' presentments, faculties and licences, inductions, sequestrations and terriers.

The probate records found their way to Somerset House under the Probate Act of 1858 and the Salisbury Diocesan Registry houses institutions to benefices and parish register transcripts, diocesan series of visitation and court books, and churchwardens' presentments and terriers up to 1836.

CHARTERS

There are 1,211 Berkshire charters and 44 rolls in the Bodleian Library. Of these, 172 charters and 5 rolls are described in W. H. Turner's and Rev. H. O. Coxe's *Calendar of charters and rolls preserved in the Bodleian Library*, 1878, pp. 2-23. These consist mainly of the charters of Holy Trinity Priory, Wallingford—of which others at Corpus Christi College have been printed by Mr. M. L. Milne in *Oxoniensia* V (1940), 50. The charters and rolls received after the publication of Turner and Coxe's catalogue are described in MS. in a slip index available in the Library.

Before the formation of the Berkshire County Record Office the Bodleian was approved by the Master of the Rolls as a place of deposit for manorial records. The Library accordingly happens to contain court-rolls for Aldworth, Buckhold alias Child's Court (Ashampstead), Cumnor, Eling, Frilsham, Grazeley, Hampstead Norris, Hinton Waldrist, Horner, Radley, South Hinksey, Sulhamstead Abbots, Ufton, Wokefield and Wytham.

The charters in the British Museum are described up to accession of 1900 in the *Index to the Charters and Rolls in the Department of MSS. British Museum*. There are two volumes containing places arranged alphabetically irrespective of county, but places in Berkshire are listed in vol. i, pp. 861-2 and vol. ii, pp. 845-6. This is especially notable for the large number of Saxon charters of Abingdon Abbey brought together in the index from the Cotton,

Harleian, Stowe collections. Many reproductions are available in *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in the British Museum* with transcripts at various dates in the nineteenth century.

VIEWS

W. P. Ellis (d. 1928) compiled a catalogue in one volume of prints and drawings relating to the Diocese of Oxford in the Bodleian Library. Foll. 77-98 deal with Berkshire prints and foll. 100-133 with Berkshire drawings. It would be in the interest of Berkshire topography if at least the catalogue of drawings were revised and printed.