

EXCURSIONS AND VISITS MADE BY MEMBERS OF THE SURREY ARCHÆ- OLOGICAL SOCIETY 1854-1953

BY

DR. W. B. BILLINGHURST

THE inaugural meeting of the Society was held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 12, 1854, at the Bridge House Hotel, Southwark. Mr. Henry Drummond, M.P., F.R.S., was in the Chair. The 200 members present heard a comprehensive address from the Chairman on the aims and objects of Archæological research, and the hopes that were entertained of stimulating interest in, and adding to our knowledge of, everything of historical value in the County. This theme was further developed in an address in the following month by Mr. W. J. Evelyn, who presided at the 1st annual general meeting, on June 30, 1854, at Kingston. At this meeting, following the Chairman's address, and the general business and election of officers for the year, members sat down to a cold collation at the Griffin Hotel. In the afternoon, a visit was paid to places of interest in the town, and at Teddington, and to a temporary exhibition of local antiquities in the Town Hall, which was kept open for the public until the July 4.

Twelve months later, on June 28, 1855, the 2nd annual general meeting was held at Guildford. Mr. W. J. Evelyn again presided and addressed the members. In the afternoon Mr. R. A. Godwin-Austen conducted the company over the Castle and the Rev. Charles Boutell described St. Mary's Church. At 5 p.m. 120 members sat down to a cold collation at the White Hart Hotel and afterwards Mr. George Russel, the Master, showed members over Abbot's Hospital, the Town Hall and the ancient crypts in the High Street. In the evening a dinner and *Conversazione* were held in the Public Hall; the band of the 2nd Surrey Militia performed during dinner, by permission of Lord Lovelace.

For the next ten years the excursions were taken in this way after the annual general meeting in June or July. One or

other of the distinguished Vice-Presidents of the Society presided over the day's proceedings, which terminated with a dinner or supper at which usually from one to two hundred members were present. Local exhibitions were prepared on several occasions and papers read on subjects of local antiquarian interest, many of which were subsequently printed in the *Collections*.

The meetings were planned to include gradually every known object of archæological or historical interest in the County. The details were arranged by the Council with the help of local Secretaries. In this way it was hoped to interest as many members as possible in the ancient monuments and architectural treasures of the County and to take steps where necessary to preserve such objects as were of beauty or historical value. The chief of these, in the case of Surrey, were the beautiful small Parish churches, of which nearly a hundred remained essentially as they were at the time of the Reformation.

During the first ten years visits were paid to Chertsey, Richmond, Kingston, Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon in the northern part of the County. In the central area, Waverley, Farnham, Guildford, Dorking, Reigate and Crowhurst were included. In later years the central area was more thoroughly explored, and visits to the southern border of the County from Haslemere to the Fold country and Charlwood were made. After the 22nd annual excursion on August 5, 1875, which included visits to five churches on the east side of Croydon, and a reception at Addington Palace by the Archbishop of Canterbury, a dinner was held at the Public Hall, Croydon. Mr. Seymour Teulon, M.P., took the Chair and in his speech stated that the Society had now practically completed their exploration of the County. In his reply, Mr. J. W. Butterworth said that old excursions would have to be repeated, and he was sure that new sources of pleasure and interest would always be found. This prediction has been amply justified in the many years that have passed since it was made.

At the 10th annual general meeting on July 22, 1863, which was held at St. Mildred's Court, Poultry, with Mr. J. W. Butterworth in the Chair, it was decided that in future the business meeting should be held separately from the excursion meeting, and that a whole day should be allotted to the annual

excursion. After this meeting the Society's headquarters were removed to 8, Danes Inn, Strand, where rooms were shared with the London and Middlesex Archæological Society. This arrangement held for the next thirty-five years until in 1898 the house at Castle Arch, Guildford, was let to the Society at a nominal rent by the Guildford Municipal Council for its meetings, and for housing its Library and Museum.

Following the decision made at the 10th annual meeting a whole day excursion arranged by Mr. R. A. Godwin-Austen took place on July 23, 1863. The company assembled at Chilworth Station. Tangley Manor was visited in the morning and papers were read on the history of the Manor and its owners by Mr. Godwin-Austen and Mr. Charles Bailey. As the weather precluded an open-air lunch in Albury Park, Mr. Godwin-Austen and Mr. Samuel Sharp invited the members to their homes in Chilworth where refreshments were provided. In the afternoon the hill to St. Martha's Chapel was climbed and the Chapel described by Mr. Godwin-Austen. The walk was then continued to the old Church and gardens in Albury Park and thence to Shere Church, all described by the leader. The company finally repaired to the home of Mr. Reginald Bray to take coffee, and await the departure of their train from Gomshall station.

The hospitality shown to members on this occasion was of an impromptu order. On many occasions planned hospitality on quite a large scale was enjoyed at these meetings. The 5th annual meeting at Farnham Castle on July 13, 1858, may be taken as the first example. The Chair was taken by the Bishop of Winchester, a Vice-President of the Society, at 12 o'clock. Three papers on Farnham and the neighbourhood were read, and then the company adjourned to the Hall of the Castle, where "a very handsome collation" awaited them. The guests of the Right Reverend Chairman numbered nearly 500.

At the 15th annual excursion on July 23, 1868, the company assembled at Dorking Station, visited Milton Court, built in the reign of James I for a member of the Evelyn family, and then proceeded to Wotton Church. The Rector, the Rev. Edmund Boscawen Evelyn, described the church, and subsequently invited the members to an "elegant dejeuner" in the Rectory grounds. In the afternoon, Anstiebury Camp and Pippbrook House were visited and at Sondes Place Farm an

excellent dinner was provided by George Cubitt, Esq., with Mr. Seymour Teulon in the Chair. In the evening, the company separated, "highly gratified with the investigations and enjoyments of the day."

As a third case may be quoted the meeting on August 5, 1874, when members of the Society visited Old Woking and Pyrford Churches, Pyrford House and Hoe Place, a mansion built in 1708 by the Zouch family. The owner, Mr. W. Wainwright, J.P., who was not a member of the Society, provided a cold collation in a spacious marquee erected in the grounds. "Considerably more than the number expected were present, the arrangements were, nevertheless, of the most satisfactory and agreeable nature and 150 guests partook of the luncheon."

Mr. Wainwright took the Chair and proposed the toast of success to the Surrey Archæological Society. Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower, M.P., responded. In his speech he stated that the County was not so rich as others in objects of archæological interest, and it was our duty, and purpose, to explore and protect those that did exist, particularly our old Parish churches.

An interesting meeting was held at Guildford on Wednesday, July 5, 1882, when Lord Onslow presided. Members were received in the Town Hall by the Mayor, Alderman Triggs, at 11.30 a.m., where Mr. D. M. Stevens read a paper on the Corporation Records and Plate. A temporary Museum of antiquities, archives, pictures and books of local interest, lent by a number of Surrey residents, was opened at Abbot's Hospital and proved a great attraction. The Rev. F. E. Tower, a Governor of Abbot's Hospital, and Mr. Stevens the local Honorary Secretary, were responsible for this display, which was considered probably the best of its kind that had ever been seen in Guildford. In the afternoon the members proceeded in vehicles to Sutton Place, where Mr. Frederic Harrison read a paper on the history of the Weston family, and showed the treasures the house contained. Later the party drove to Clandon House, where Lord Onslow had kindly provided refreshments. It returned to Guildford at 6 p.m. In the evening a dinner was held in the Eastern Hall, the Mayor presiding. The Rev. F. E. Tower, speaking after dinner, said that the local interest evoked by the meeting had resulted in upwards of thirty residents applying for membership of the Society.

Mr. G. C. Williamson, who with Mr. J. Mason, Mr. G. Randall,

Mr. Evershed and Mr. F. Lasham, had assisted in collecting the exhibits, suggested that a permanent Museum of antiquities should be formed in Guildford. Twenty-nine years later, on February 15, 1911, this hope was fulfilled, when the Museum at Castle Arch, designed by Ralph Nevill, was opened and formally taken over by the Mayor of Guildford. The Society's Museum, which had been housed at the headquarters at Castle Arch since 1899, formed the basis of this new Municipal Museum, of which Mr. F. Elsley continued as Curator.

The Jubilee celebration of the Society on April 28, 1904, took place in Guildford, and was more or less planned on the meeting in 1882 above described.

A local exhibition of Surrey antiquities was opened at the Society's Museum, by the Mayor, Ald. H. Nevill. Visits to the Castle, Town Hall and Crypts in the High Street were conducted by Mr. H. E. Malden, Mr. G. C. Williamson and Mr. Ralph Nevill. At 1.30 p.m. luncheon was served in the Borough Hall. Viscount Middleton took the Chair at the luncheon and 100 members took part, including Mr. W. J. Evelyn, who had presided at the first and second annual general meetings, in 1854 and 1855. The guests included the Mayors of Guildford and Kingston. Later in the afternoon, the Mayor and Mrs. H. Nevill entertained the company at tea in Abbot's Hospital.

During the first forty years the names of W. H. Hart, R. A. C. Godwin Austen, F.R.S., Rev. Chas. Boutell, Major A. Heales and Granville Leveson-Gower appear constantly as lecturers at the annual excursions, and many of the papers read on these occasions are printed in the early volumes of the *Collections*.

Mr. W. H. Hart, Mr. R. A. C. Godwin-Austen, F.R.S., and Major Heales joined the Society at its inception and Mr. Leveson-Gower a few years later. All served for many years on the Council and rendered conspicuous service to the Society. Mr. Godwin Austen died in 1884. His son Lt.-Col. H. H. Godwin Austen, F.R.S., F.G.S., succeeded him on the Council in the following year. He was a most active member until his death in 1924.

Ralph Nevill, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., joined the Society in 1865 and served for forty-two years on the Council. He died in 1917, leaving a fine legacy in the contributions he made to the *Collections*.

Major Heales was a leading authority on Monumental Brasses, and on his death in 1898, his rubbings were presented to the Society.

Granville Leveson-Gower, who followed W. J. Evelyn as High Sheriff of the County, was a man of wide interests with extensive knowledge of the local history of the County parishes. For thirty years he took great interest in the County excursions, imparting generously of the knowledge he had gained. His death in 1895 was a great loss to both the Surrey and Kent Archæological Societies.

At the end of the century, Mr. H. E. Malden, and Mr. P. M. Johnston joined the Society, Mr. Malden in 1890 and Mr. Johnston in 1898. The researches carried out by these two members are of outstanding importance. Our present knowledge of the architectural treasures, and the development of the Parish churches in the County, is largely due to the work of these two men. For over thirty years the annual excursions were mainly carried out under their guidance.

Mr. Malden acted as Honorary Secretary of the Society during the 1914-18 War. He was an assistant editor of the *Victoria County History of Surrey* and wrote the article on the "Political History of Surrey" in Vol. 1. He died in 1931.

Mr. P. M. Johnston, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., was elected to the Council in 1902 and became a Vice-President in 1930. He died in 1936. He was responsible for restoration and preservative work in many of the County Parish churches, and described over thirty churches at the annual excursions.

In 1913, it was decided to arrange a yearly expedition out of the County in addition to the annual County excursion. Stonehenge and Old Sarum were chosen for the first visit, on August 25, 1913, and fifty-four members attended.

One special extra-county visit had been made on July 27, 1892, to Silchester to see the excavations which were being started. Mr. G. E. Fox, F.S.A., who was in charge of the work, showed the members over the site.

During the First World War, all was in abeyance. The Council decided that "Not only did other preoccupations render it unfitting to undertake an excursion, but had it been attempted it would probably have been found impossible to provide conveyances, or even refreshments, for such a purpose."

The effects of the war, and the diminished activity during

the war period, resulted in a considerable fall in membership, and it was early recognized by the Council that for a large proportion of the members the County visits were the chief attraction. An early resumption was decided upon, and an interesting meeting arranged, for Thursday, June 26, 1919, when Lambeth Palace was visited. Members were received in the Library by the Librarian, Rev. C. Jenkins. Papers on the Chapel, Undercroft and Collard's Tower were read by P. M. Johnston. The company was entertained at tea by Miss Tait, in the unavoidable absence of the Archbishop and Mrs. Davidson.

In the following year, motor coaches were used for the first time for transport at the Summer excursion to Blechingley and Godstone.

Two years later, in 1922, the first visit outside the County since 1913 was to Chichester. In this year, a Saturday afternoon meeting was arranged in April, and again in October, in addition to the two Summer excursions. At the April visit, Mr. P. M. Johnston took the party to Ashted, Leatherhead and Mickleham Churches, and in October to Farnham Castle. The popularity of the meetings was fully restored in 1923, when 200 members took part in a visit to Send, Ockham, Sutton Place and Clandon Park, where Lord Onslow entertained the members at tea. Three Saturday afternoon visits were also undertaken during that year.

In 1926 an Honorary Excursion Secretary was elected for the first time, with a small Sub-Committee to assist him. The Honorary Librarian, Mr. G. Bridgmore Brown was the first to hold this office, but was unable to continue after the first year. In 1929, Mr. R. W. Strickland was elected to the post.

In the two years following Mr. Strickland's election, an active development took place in the excursion programmes. It was decided that a half-day visit in London should take place every winter in addition to the Summer excursions, and in the ten years following the Tower of London, Lincoln's Inn, Whitehall Palace, Merchant Taylors' Hall, Westminster Abbey, Tallow Chandlers' Hall, Grocers Hall and St. Stephen's, Walbrook, were visited. The Guildhall had been visited in 1929.

In 1933, six fortnightly walks on Saturdays during the winter months were arranged. These walks became a popular feature of the excursion programmes for the next six years.

The first series were along Stane Street from the County boundary to Epsom, conducted by Mr. S. E. Winbolt. The next series, starting on November 3, 1934, explored the Pilgrims' Way from Farnham to Maidstone and were under the leadership of Mr. Edwin Hart. They were finally completed on February 20, 1937.

The Roman roads on the Kent-Surrey boundary, and the Croydon Portsedale line, were also explored on foot, as was the country from Wotton to Abinger, and the Maulthway on the Hampshire border. Mr. I. D. Margary, Dr. Wilfrid Hooper and Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Gibson all took part in directing these walks.

The year 1934 may be taken as an example of the increased activity of the Society during Mr. R. W. Strickland's term of office. On March 1, a visit was paid to Merchant Taylors' Hall, where members were received by the Master of the Company.

On May 24, an afternoon meeting was held at Merton and Wimbledon, directed by Mr. P. M. Johnston and Mr. A. Bonner, F.S.A. On June 21, the out-of-county excursion was to Maidstone, where the Archbishop's Palace, the Museum and Corpus Christi Hall were visited. Mr. Norman Cook, Curator of the Museum, acted as guide. On July 19, the annual County visit was to Leatherhead and district. The Parish churches of Walton-on-the-Hill, Leatherhead, Great and Little Bookham, and Fetcham, were described by Mr. P. M. Johnston. The Manor House at Walton and the Badmington College at Fetcham were visited. Tea was taken in the Village Hall, Fetcham. A really stupendous day!

On September 20, Thursley and Frensham Churches were visited under the guidance of Mr. P. M. Johnston. Thence the party drove to Haslemere and were shown over the Museum by Mr. E. W. Swanton, the Curator. On November 3, Mr. Edwin Hart started fortnightly Saturday walks along the line of the Pilgrims' Way. Four of the walks took place in November and December, and they were continued in the Spring. The great interest taken in this branch of the Society's activities was maintained until the beginning of 1940, when a period of hesitancy set in. Mr. Strickland, owing to failing health and the difficulty of transport, found it impossible to continue as organizing secretary, and in 1941 his place was taken by Mr. J. Wilson-Haffenden.

During the First World War, owing to real or imaginary

difficulties, all excursions were abandoned. A very different policy was now pursued, which was much appreciated by all who were able to take part. This resulted in a considerable increase in membership, which reached the figure of 924 at the end of 1947.

The County was systematically explored in small areas during six months from April to September each year. A timetable of trains and buses was given each month to enable members from London, East, and West Surrey, to assemble at the starting point at 10.30 a.m. The places of interest in the chosen area were then visited on foot under the guidance of one or two members with local knowledge. In this way the most beautiful parts of the County were thoroughly explored and acquaintance with all the historic sites and buildings renewed. Picnic lunches were taken and wherever possible a combined tea arranged to complete the day's proceedings. The popularity of these visits was great: as many as 160 applied for tickets, in May 1944, for a visit to Braboeuf and Tanglely Manors, which had to be duplicated. More often than not over 100 were present at the meetings, which for many were almost the only relaxation available during the war years. For expert description of the various churches and houses visited, Mr. C. D. Hawley, F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Sidney Toy, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., were mainly responsible. Interesting talks on the local history were given by several members chosen by the organizer.

On April 11, 1942, a whole day was spent in London visiting the bombed City churches under the guidance of Mr. Edward Yates, F.S.A. In April 1946, a second day in London was arranged to visit the Museum and Chapter House of the Knights of St. John in Clerkenwell, where members were received by the Curator and Assistant Librarian. In the afternoon, the Vintners' Hall was visited and described by the Clerk of the Company, Commander H. B. Tuffill, R.N.R.

The first extra-county visit after the war was made on June 15, 1946 to Lewes, when motor coaches were again available. In 1947 two visits were made to Windsor and Eton. The first, on April 18, was limited to twenty-eight members who had assisted in organizing the meetings during the war years. The company were shown over the Royal Library at the Castle by the Sub-Librarian, who gave an interesting talk on the more important books and treasures in the Royal Collec-

tion. On Friday, May 16, St. George's Chapel was visited and, seated in the Stalls of the Knights of the Garter, members heard a lecture by Canon A. S. Crawley, on the history of the Order and the building of the Chapel. In the afternoon, members attended a special service in Eton College Chapel, and were subsequently shown over the College by the Vice-Provost.

During the last three years of the war and for the two years following, large meetings were held in March and October in the hall of the County Technical College at Guildford. Lectures were given in the morning and afternoon and lunch served in the college. The most popular of these lectures were:

1. "The Hidden Sculptures in the Roofs of our Cathedrals and Churches," by C. J. P. Cave, F.S.A, with lantern illustrations of the bosses and carvings (taken with a telephoto lens camera), and spot-light illumination.
2. A Lantern Lecture on the progress of Elizabeth I in Surrey, by Mr. O. Sallman.
3. "The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial," with lantern illustrations, by Mr. C. W. Phillips, F.S.A.
4. "Aerial Photography in Archæological Research," by Mr. I. D. Margary, F.S.A.
5. "The Glass of Canterbury Cathedral," illustrated by coloured lantern slides, by Mr. Bernard Rackham, C.B., F.S.A.

Attendance at these lectures varied in number from two to 400. Mr. Wilson Haffenden resigned as Honorary Visits Organizer, a title that had been adopted two years earlier, at the end of 1947. The great service he had rendered in his six years of office was recognized at the next annual general meeting, when a handsome volume recording all the visits he had planned was presented to him, and he was elected a Vice-President of the Society.

For the next two years, Mr. H. V. Everard, who had hitherto been one of Mr. Wilson Haffenden's chief assistants, undertook the duties of Honorary Visits Organizer. Six excursions were made each summer and several lectures arranged during the winter months in the Centenary Hall, Guildford. The programmes had now become so extensive that it was decided in 1949 that a Visits Committee should be appointed to make all future arrangements. Six members were appointed, with

power to select their own chairman, and add to their number if considered advisable. The year's programme should be decided in full Committee at the end of October, and further details worked out at a subsequent meeting in early spring. One or two members of Committee should then be made responsible for each meeting in turn, with the help of the Assistant Secretary, Miss D. Sumner, who also undertook arrangements for transport.

During the winter months of 1950, 1951 and 1952, a course of lectures in Guildford was arranged by Mr. E. S. Wood on the Neolithic and Bronze age, the Iron age, Roman period, Saxon, Norman and Mediæval periods. Visits to sites illustrating the various periods were arranged in the summer months of 1952-53. The sites chosen were Avebury, Mount Caburn at Lewes and Lewes Museum, Silchester and Stratfield Saye, Reading Museum, Old Sarum and Salisbury Museum.

At Stratfield Saye, the Duke of Wellington received the members in person and kindly allowed a full inspection of all the State apartments with the personal relics of his great ancestor, as well as the Silchester treasures preserved in the mansion. In 1953, the final year of the Society's centenary, a wider programme of visits was undertaken, five of the six summer excursions being taken in the neighbouring counties, and only one, to Weybridge and Esher, in the Home County.

Visits were made to Sussex to explore the early settlement at Caburn, and to Wiltshire, for the Roman settlement and early Norman remains at Old Sarum. Cowdray, Sussex, and Hever, Kent, were visited for their Tudor mansions, and Selborne, Hampshire, and Westerham, Kent, for their 18th century associations.

The excellent private motor coaches available for East and West Surrey residents made these more extensive tours easy of accomplishment, and the added interest derived in the wider field has been much appreciated. Whether this break with tradition will be followed up in the future remains to be seen, but the Committee has decided that in 1954 the Centenary should be observed by following as nearly as possible in steps of our predecessors, and repeating excursions made during the first ten years of the Society. It is also hoped that the homes of prominent early members of the Society may be visited, and in this way continuity maintained, and the spirit of the early leaders of the Society rekindled.