

THE BRITISH ARCHÆOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
AT LEICESTER.

[Re-edited from the *Athenæum*.]

THE Congress of this Association for 1900 commenced at the Museum Buildings, where the Members were welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress (Alderman and Mrs. Windley), the High Sheriff and Members of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society.

The Mayor said that Leicester was a town of great antiquity, and was, for some considerable period, the seat of a Bishop, and a city for over twelve centuries.

The late Mr. Smith-Carrington, D.L., F.S.A., the High Sheriff, in the absence of the President, the Marquis of Granby, delivered the inaugural address. He dealt with the history of the town to comparatively recent days, through the Roman, Saxon, and Danish occupations, and mentioned the many relics of its ancient inhabitants which had been discovered in excavations in the town. He also briefly touched on the history of some of the places to be visited. The High Sheriff has recently passed away, to the great regret and loss of the local Society.

The Mayoress also joined in welcoming the visitors, and mentioned the great part which the guilds played in mediæval life, especially the Guild of Corpus Christi, which was strong in Leicester.

The Roman and other antiquities in the Museum were then examined under the guidance of Mr. Montague Brown, the Curator, and the Museum was pronounced by experts to be a model of what a provincial museum should be. The Samian ware found in the town and neighbourhood, and the Roman milestone discovered on the line of the Foss way in 1771, and marking a distance of "two" miles from "Ratae," *i.e.*, Leicester, attracted special attention.

On Tuesday, July 31st, Belvoir was visited. Modern Belvoir, though magnificent, is of slight archæological interest. Of the ancient castle, founded by Robert de Todeni, standard bearer to the Conqueror, nothing now remains but a few fragments discovered in the foundations of the present building; it was probably erected on the site of a British encampment. At the foot of the Castle Hill, Robert de Todeni, in 1077, founded a priory for four black monks, which in later days became a cell of the monastery of St. Alban's. Recent excavations have disclosed some interesting remains of the foundations of the priory Church,

including nave, apsidal choir, and side chapels; but these are too fragmentary to enable any idea of the architecture of the building to be formed. The Church formerly contained many monuments of the Todeni, Albini, and De Roos families, but all are gone.

At the evening meeting, held in the Town Hall, Dr. W. de Gray Birch gave an account of the Charters and other historical records of the Borough of Leicester. He said that we know nothing of Mediæval Leicester until the end of the twelfth century, the first charter being dated in the first year of King John, who, with all his faults, certainly recognised the value of more closely knitting together the interests of the sovereign and people. In this charter the first mention is made of the "burgesses" of Leicester. It is short, but grants most important privileges. In those days, unless specially permitted, every man was compelled to remain in the town in which, and to follow the trade to which, he was born. This charter runs:—

"John, King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou, &c., To all whom it may concern—Know ye that we have granted to our Burgesses of Leicester that freely and without any impediment they may go and perform their businesses throughout all our land, with all their matters of merchandise, saving to us all the dues and just customs which belong to us."

Henry III. granted three charters, Edward III. twelve, and Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., and Charles II. granted a great many. Among others James I., about 1623, granted one giving "the power of purchasing houses, tenements, lands, rectories, tithes, and hereditaments of all kinds in the Kingdom of England," a most important one, as these things could not be done except by virtue of a grant. Charters are above all law, hence the importance of their careful preservation. In conclusion, Dr. Birch said he was glad to notice that, with one or two exceptions, the charters of Leicester had been well cared for, but all should be copied in the original and translated.

The second Paper, by Mr. W. A. Carrington, Archivist of Belvoir, entitled "Belvoir Castle and Priory," was read.

On Wednesday, August 1st, a large party started for Kirby Muxloe Castle, Groby, Ulverscroft Priory, and Bradgate, and a most enjoyable day was spent in this interesting series. Mr. J. A. Gotch read a paper descriptive of Kirby Muxloe. He commenced by saying that this was not so much a military stronghold as a fortified dwelling-house, though the distinction was not at first, perhaps, very great. As civilisation advanced and security increased, the fortified castle or manor-house gave way to the comfortable mansion. In early days the great hall occupied the

centre, and was as much protected as the rest of the buildings; later on it was placed in one of the wings with larger windows, and later still it was placed on the outer walls, protected only by the moat. Mr. Gotch went on to say that here we have the remains of a fortified house built round a court and surrounded by a moat. Nine-tenths of the fabric have disappeared, the parts that remain belonging only to the defensive positions, so that any restoration is largely conjectural. In the centre of the front, approached by a drawbridge over the moat, still stands the great gateway, flanked by two canted turrets; at each corner stood a tower, of which one still remains. Halfway on each side is a projection in the shape of a tower. Opposite the entrance, but not in the axial line, is another projection, which was probably the bay window of the great hall, and the moat is wider on that side. Kirby in point of date comes midway between Haddon Hall and Burghley House. Unlike Haddon, it was built at one effort, and unlike Burghley, at a time when defence of a kind was still needed. To judge by the work and the symmetrical arrangement it was built at a fairly late date, and from the fact that the detail is entirely Gothic, it could not have been very late. It is built throughout of red brick, with a diaper of blue brick. There are stone dressings to the doors and windows, the detail of which is rather large and simple.

By a series of brilliant inductions, founded on the letters W. H. over the gateway, and from the figure of a maunch which can be made out in the blue diaper work on one of the turrets, Mr. Gotch concluded that the castle was built by Sir William Hastings, who succeeded his father in 1456, was a devoted adherent of Edward IV., was made a baron in 1461, and beheaded by Richard III. in 1483, and from the absence of a coronet he fixed the date between 1456 and 1461. The plain barrel vaulting of the lower rooms and the brick work of the staircase are very fine. Each room contained a fire-place, though Henry VII's palace at Richmond later on still had none.

There are no signs of plaster, the walls being probably covered with tapestry. Each of the turrets contains a round hole, with stone dressings, for cannon, commanding the approach, and low down, so that the cannon could rest on the floor. The place has no historical associations. How long it was inhabited is not known, but it is most interesting as showing the domestic manners of the fifteenth century.

A move was then made to Groby, where Mr. I. C. Gould described the manor-house and ancient castle. The former is but a child, even in its oldest part, in comparison with the latter. In the thirteenth century the estate of Groby came into the possession of the Ferrers family, who held it for 200 years, until in the fifteenth century the line ended with an heiress, who married

Edward Grey, who became Lord Ferrers of Groby, and from whom descended Thomas, first Marquis of Dorset, in the latter part of the same century. The house is a patchwork of stone and brick. There is no reason to doubt the statement that a Ferrers built the oldest portion, but in that case the windows are insertions, while the brick part is due to the first Marquis of Dorset, who died in 1501. Leland visited it in 1540, but much that he saw is gone. The most interesting associations of the place are connected with Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV., whose first husband was Sir John Grey, son of the first Lord Ferrers, slain at St. Albans in 1461. At the back of the hall the keep mound and a few adjoining earth works may be seen; all that now remains of the once important Castle of Groby. We know that it was destroyed by Henry II. after the feudal revolt, 1173. But who shall say when the mound was first raised? There is evidence of solid masonry upon it, in which case it must have existed for many years before it would solidify sufficiently to carry a shell keep of stone. Perhaps this fort, like Bakewell, owes its first existence to the trouble between Saxon and Dane early in the tenth century, though for any evidence to the contrary, it may be that the Normans threw up the mound in the eleventh century. But whether due to Saxon, Dane, or Norman, its first defences were wooden stockading or palisading, and the stone keep was in all probability due to the time of anarchy in King Stephen's reign.

The next place visited was Ulverscroft Priory, which was described by Mr. George Patrick, Hon. Secretary. Osolvescroft or Ulverscroft is situated in the midst of the forest of Charnwood, described by Burton (1622) as "a solitary place," and by Leland (1520) as "a wast twenty miles in cumpass and in the forest is no good towne nor scant a village." The priory was founded in 1134 by Robert Bossu, second Earl of Leicester, for "Friars Eremites." The Order is not certain; they "professed a regular life" and "elected their prior by common consent of the brethren according to the rule of the Blessed Augustine." The Order of Austin Friars was not founded till 1220, nor the Austin Canons till 1139, when Pope Innocent III. ordered all regular canons to adopt the rule of St. Augustine. The Dominicans and Franciscans commenced in 1215-16. These Friars Eremites therefore belonged to one of many independent brotherhoods, without any distinctive denomination. The ruins are mainly of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; there are some Early English features, but nothing remains of the original building, which was semi-Norman or Transitional. The buildings of 1134 were probably of wood, of which there was plenty in the forest. There were only three inmates originally, and never more than eight. The whole was surrounded by a lofty wall, moated outside for protection.

The Church is at the north end, the domestic buildings on the south, an arrangement dictated by the drainage and water supply. The later Church, the ruins of which remain, consists of a nave, chancel, north aisle, and western tower. The earlier Church would have no tower, as towers were then forbidden. The north walk of the cloister and the conventual buildings abut on the south wall of the nave. There is no chancel arch; an "upper storey" ran all round without break from west to east. The roof must have run in one unbroken length, for there are no traces of wall-pieces or shafts. About the end of the fifteenth century the west end of the nave was taken down, to allow of the insertion of the tower. The western portion of the Early English south wall of the nave remains alongside the tower, with a space between, and the canopied top of an Early English buttress over the roof of a shed at the angle. Part of the west wall of the nave, with remains of a diagonal buttress, is probably of the same date as the tower. On the east face of the tower may still be seen the weathering of the old nave roof, that is, the roof before the "upper storey" was added. There are remains of thirteenth century work in the south wall of the nave and in two doors on that side, and a mutilated two-light window, high up for the cloister roof to run below. There are more traces of the domestic buildings than of the Church though they are but fragmentary, and they probably followed the usual arrangement. A building to the south, now a farm-house, was the parlour or day-room. The walls are very thick, of Early English work, and the windows and doors are fifteenth century insertions. The floor, of red tiles, has in the centre a circular stone, 1 foot 7 inches in diameter, from which the tiles radiate in a figure something like a cross. Due south stood the refectory, with the projecting steps to the pulpit still visible. On the west was the guest hall, with Early English windows. This is now a barn, and parts of the old timber roof, of late fifteenth or early sixteenth century work, remain. There is no trace of the cloisters above ground. The moat, broad and dry, remains on the north, east, and south sides; on the west it is merged in the fishponds. The bridge was on the east. The priory received such high testimony from the commissioners of Thomas Cromwell in 1536 that it secured a brief respite, but in 1539, the prior and canons said mass for the last time, and signed its transfer to the king. It is now, as we have said, a farm; but it is sad to see a building once sacred to religious uses given over to cattle, pigs and fowls.

After lunch, the party drove through the Park to Bradgate House, which was described by Col. Bellairs. Only the outer walls, the chapel, and one tower remain of this once splendid mansion, which belonged to the Greys of Groby, and here

Lady Jane Grey is said to have been born. It was here, at any rate, that her tutor, Roger Ascham, was amazed to find her engaged in study, while all her young companions were tilting in the yard, which may still be seen. The house remained until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it was burned to the ground by the then Countess of Stamford. Writing to her sister in London, in answer to a question as to how she liked the place, she replied that the house was tolerable, the country a forest, and the inhabitants all brutes. Her sister thereupon advised her to "set fire to the house and run away by the light of it," which she is reported to have done. A fine monument to the first Lord Grey of Groby, who died in 1614, and to his wife, is to be seen in the chapel, which has been recently re-roofed.

On the drive back to Leicester, Thurcaston was passed, where a cottage, said to have been the birthplace of Latimer, was noticed. But this is modern, Latimer's house having long since disappeared.

At the evening meeting, a most interesting Paper, giving an account of all that may be known of the Abbey of St. Mary de Pratis at Leicester, was read by Mr. C. H. Compton, and an exhaustive Paper on "The Roman Roads of Leicestershire," was read by Col. Bellairs. We shall hope as space permits to publish some of these Papers *in extenso*.

Thursday, August 2nd, was devoted to the town of Leicester, and an inspection of its most noted objects of interest, under the guidance of the Hon. Secretaries of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society. The first visit was paid to St. Margaret's Church, which was described by the Rev. Canon Rendell, M.A., R.D., the Vicar. A Church is said to have been founded here in 731 as the seat of a Bishop, whose simple dwelling stood near by. The present Church was founded by Robert Bossu, second Earl of Leicester. There are remains of late Transitional work (*circa* 1190), in the eastern respond of the first arch. The south aisle and south arcade are Early English, 1250, while the south doorway is a little later. The north aisle and north arcade, with two curious trefoil windows above the chancel arch, date from about 1300, while the chancel, tower, porch, clerestory, and vestry with hagioscope, were erected about 1400 to 1450. North of the altar, within the sacrarium, is a fine monument to Bishop Penny, Abbot of Leicester, and Bishop of Bangor and Carlisle. A remarkable huddled-up figure in the niche to the north of the east window is said to represent Robert Bossu. Bell-founding was an industry in Leicester during three centuries, and for the most part in one family—that of Newcombe.

The six bells of St. Margaret's were cast by a Thomas Newcombe, who died in 1594. His monument is in the Church, bearing three bells above his name.

The next Church visited was that of All Saints', an interesting little building, also founded by Robert Bossu, in 1199. A curious clock, with two figures which strike the hours, formerly in the west front, has been restored and placed over the south porch, under a small gable, which hardly affords sufficient protection against the weather.

Passing the old Grammar School in Highcross Street, in which a capital collection of antiquities, chiefly Roman, belonging to Mr. J. W. Spurway, a citizen of Leicester, was inspected, the party proceeded to the ancient Church of St. Nicholas', at the east end of which is the district known as Holy Bones, said to have been the scene of sacrifices in Roman days, and of martyrdom at the time of the Reformation, while at the west end are the remains of a wall of Roman construction, known as the Jewry Wall. The Church was described in a most elaborate paper by Mr. Charles Lynam, which we are publishing *in extenso*.

After a brief visit to the newly-found Roman pavement, with its beautiful guilloche border, geometrical pattern and central peacock figure, partly destroyed—the whole suffering also, as was noticed with regret—from the depredations of visitors, the party inspected the ancient Hall of the Guild of Corpus Christi, the windows of which still contain some ancient glass, and the Old Town Hall, where Shakespeare is said to have played, and proceeded to St. Martin's Church, which was described by the Vicar. This was the Municipal and Corporation Church, as St. Margaret's was the Ecclesiastical. Here the Archdeacon held his Court in the South Chapel, which was formerly that of the Guild of Corpus Christi. The Church is said to stand on the site of the Roman Temple of Diana, and many relics have been found.

After lunch the Roman pavement, which is now under the Great Central Railway Station, was visited, and subsequently a move was made to the Church of St. Mary de Castro, situated within the Castle precincts. This was described by Col. Bellairs. The Church is a splendid structure, and was founded by Robert de Beaumont, father of Robert Bossu, in 1107. Several Norman details may be seen in the present walls. The south aisle is disproportionately large, but this is due to its having been the parish church, while the nave and chancel were originally conventual.

A visit to the Castle, part of which is now used as a court-house; to the mound which is all that remains of the Norman

keep; and to Trinity Hospital, founded in 1330, by Henry, Earl of Lancaster, but of which the present building is chiefly modern, brought a long and interesting day to a close.

At the evening meeting, Mr. I. C. Gould read a valuable Paper entitled, "Notes on Early Fortifications."

On Friday, August 3rd, the Association joined in an Excursion with the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society, under the guidance of Mr. Thomas Harrold. The start was made in carriages and brakes by a large party, for Market Bosworth and Bosworth Field. The first halt was made at Newbold Verdon, where the moated manor-house and Church were visited. The latter has been practically re-built. It was noticed with some regret that the ancient font had been discarded.

At Market Bosworth, the Grammar School, rendered memorable because Dr. Johnson was once an usher there, was inspected, after which a visit was paid to the Church. This has been well restored. The tower arch is a beautiful example of the Transitional style of the early fourteenth century, the arch itself being Early English, while the mouldings are Decorated.

After lunch, the drive was continued to Bosworth Field, the principal features of the battle being pointed out and described by Mr. Harrold. In opposition to Mr. Gairdner, Mr. Harrold maintained that not only Richmond, but Richard III. had a morass on his right, *i.e.*, there was one on the right flank of each army. Four hundred years have made an enormous change in the aspect of the country; hedges and fields exist now, where all was open common then, and the smiling country looks as though it could never have known the "bloody gage of battle." The one small monument of the fight was viewed with interest, a pyramid of stone 10 feet high, erected, it is said, by Dr. Parr, with a Latin inscription, over the well from which Richard drank on that fateful day, August 22nd, 1485.

At Stoke Golding is a splendid Church, scarcely touched by the hand of the "restorer." He is said to be on the way, and we wish him well, but it is to be devoutly hoped that only necessary repairs will be executed; for this Church, as it stands, and with the weathering of 600 years on its stones, is a magnificent example of one period throughout, *i.e.*, the Decorated or Geometrical Gothic. It was founded, as an inscription tells us, by "Robert de Champaign and Margaret his wife, in honour of St. Margaret the Virgin, in the time of Edward I.;" and the founder's tomb may be seen in the south aisle, prolonged into a chapel, extending to a level with the east wall of the chancel. There is a fine west tower and spire. The south

aisle originally ended at the chancel arch, and the south wall of the chancel was an exterior one. In this wall there are remains of Early English work, and a beautiful little lancet window, now looking into the chapel. The nave arcade is very fine, the caps of the piers being elaborately adorned with foliage, interspersed with grotesque figures. The western pier bears the representation of marguerites on the cap, and the font tells the story of St. Margaret and St. Catharine.

At the evening meeting, a Paper on "The Early History of the Stocking Frame," was read by Mr. W. T. Rowlett, in which the invention of the first stocking machine, by the Rev. W. Lee, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and the progress of the industry down to the present day, were described.

A Paper on "Wickliffe and his Times," by the Rev. W. S. Lach-Szyrma, M.A., was then read. In it Wickliffe was described as a social, moral, and political philosopher, rather than as a Reformer, and a highly interesting parallel was drawn between him and Professor Jowett, both Masters of Balliol. He owed his immunity from persecution, no doubt, to the all-powerful influence of John of Gaunt, but the Church of the fourteenth century was really marvellously tolerant of Wickliffe's Utopian and idealistic opinions.

On Saturday, August 4th, the final Visit of the Congress was paid to Lutterworth, the quiet country rectory to which Wickliffe retired in 1381, and where he died in 1384. The Church is well known, and is a very fine one, but it is all of later days. Wickliffe's Church has disappeared, but the associations of the place remain, and a portion of his cope which is shown, would greatly interest, and possibly shock, some of those who now call themselves his followers. The Church was described by Mr. G. Patrick, and Mr. Andrew Oliver read a short Paper upon, and described, the interesting Fielding monument and brasses. The figures supposed to represent members of the Fielding family are placed upon an altar-tomb, over which is a four-centred arch, having in the place of one finial, a figure of an angel holding a representation of the soul. The male figure shows, with armour at the elbows and lower arms as far as the wrists, a portion of a breastplate and gorget, and pointed shoes or sollerets. Over the figure is worn a large flowing cloak, an anelace secured by a belt being passed through the side. The hair is worn cut short across the forehead. The wife's effigy is also in a cloak, secured by a cord passing across the breast, and terminating in tassels. On the outside are to be seen an "Inkhorn and pennes." On the opposite side, on the side of the effigy and next to the back of the tomb, there is a rosary. A veil is thrown over the head. Both

the figures have small animals at the feet. The front of the tomb is panelled in seven compartments, alternately a rose and a canopied compartment, the latter containing angels' figures holding shields, from which the heraldic bearings have entirely disappeared. There is neither date nor inscription, but the date may be placed approximately at *circa* 1460, but the armour being so completely hidden, it is difficult to say exactly. Close to this monument, on the floor, are two small brasses, to John Fielding (1402), and his wife Joanna (1418). They call for no special remark, being characteristic of the period. There is also another small fragment, consisting of a butterfly head-dress (*circa* 1485), the remainder of the effigy and that which accompanied it being now lost.

The final meeting was held in the afternoon, at the Museum Buildings, and the Congress was pronounced a great success. Amongst others, the Hon. Corresponding Secretary of the Leicestershire Archæological Society (Major Freer) received especial thanks for the trouble he had taken in making the necessary arrangements for the Society's visit.
