

Proceedings of the Society.

THE SOCIETY made its annual excursion on July 29th, 1873. The first place visited was DUNTON Church, which is dedicated to St. Martin. In the north wall of the nave, on the outside, is the arch of an early Norman doorway, of great beauty, with the chevron and other ornaments. It was filled up with mortar, so that the tympanum could not be seen. This was, probably, the doorway of the old Church of the time of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, who received this and several other manors from William the Conqueror. The doorway dates from about 1070. The tower is Early English, and also the chancel, which has a Queen post roof, of the Decorated period, the design being bold, and worked out with considerable freedom. Two Early English windows remain; the others have been replaced with fourteenth century work. The piscina is still very perfect. There are several brasses in the floor, one dated 1518, to the memory of John Sutton, and Agnes his wife. In 1824 several coins were dug up in the parish; one was of the time of Antoninus Pius, one of Justinian, and one of Constantine. Bishop Blomfield was rector of the parish in 1811, and two of his children are buried in a corner of the chancel. The Ven. Archdeacon BICKERSTETH, Vice-President of the Society, expressed a hope that ere long the church would be restored in memory of that good Bishop. He related an amusing story of the Bishop. When he first came there, fresh from Cambridge, he thought it his duty to begin his ministry with a course of argumentative discourses on natural religion, and preached upon the existence of the Deity from the text—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Asking a farmer afterwards how he liked the sermon, the reply was, "I like the style very much, but I don't like the doctrine. You may say what you like, Muster Blumfield, but I believe there be a God." The Bishop's name, with the date of his presentation (1811), is painted on the front of the gallery, also the names of several successive rectors, from Thomas Cock, in 1576. The Archdeacon remarked that the name Dunton used to be spelt Dodentone, which was supposed to have been derived from Dodda, a famous Earl of Mercia, who had extensive possessions in the country.

STEWKLEY Church, the most interesting object seen during the day, was next visited. Whether we consider the interior or the exterior, this edifice is certainly magnificent. Lysons remarks—that "it is the rival of Iffley, amongst the most ancient and most perfect Norman structures in England." Stewkley is situated upon the high ground, about 500 feet above the level of the sea, dividing the water-shed of the Ousel from that of the Thames. A copious spring rises in the neighbourhood; and the Archdeacon said that he always contended that Stewkley had the honour of being the source of the Thames. He also stated that some thought that Stewkley was a corruption of "stiff clay," from the nature of the soil in that neighbourhood. He, however, believed that a more probable derivation was that of Stig-lege, or "the place of the path." The company would have observed that the street was a long one. It was formerly spelt Stukeley. There is a remarkable absence of monuments here, which is explained by the fact that during the Civil War Cromwell's soldiers quartered their horses in the church. The church has been supposed by some to be partly of the Saxon period; but there are no evidences of that. Archæologists are agreed that it is of about the same date as the Norman fragment which had just been seen at Dunton, *i.e.*, A.D. 1070. This church in its past and present state has been fully described in a paper read April 19th, 1862, before the Society, by the Rev. C. H. Travers, the late vicar, and printed in the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE (Vol III., page 77).

The Rev. C. L. ALEXANDER, vicar of the parish, said he was about to take

a bold step before a gathering of archæologists; but the necessities of the place made him bolder than he otherwise would have been. The population of the parish was 1500, and there was barely accommodation in the Church for 312. The Church was, no doubt, admired by the whole of England; but, after all, its utility was the great consideration rather than its contemplation as a monument of architectural beauty. His idea was, that if anything were done by way of enlargement, the characteristic features of the building ought to be maintained, every portion of its architectural details ought to be preserved, and the useful be made to combine with the ornamental. When the church was restored, one idea was to throw out transepts, but Mr. Street objected, because it would involve danger to the tower walls; and because, when the work was done, the result would be so small that it was not worth while to incur the danger and the cost. Another proposal was to lengthen the nave about eighteen feet, but that was objected to because it would destroy the proportions of the building. However, he had seen Mr. Street, and made some suggestions to him, but was at first met with a very blunt refusal. Mr. Street said he could not touch the Church. He did not feel inclined to take Mr. Street's no without a fight, and he showed him a model which he had prepared of the suggested alterations. The model was intended to show how the Church would look with a north aisle. Mr. Street, after seeing the model, said that if the enlargement were absolutely necessary he would carry out any design that might be agreed upon, as well as he could. The model being exhibited showed the addition of a north aisle and a vestry; a row of arches would run between the nave and the new aisle; the present walls, windows, etc., would be carried out and built up afresh, and every scrap of material would be preserved. The organ would then be removed from the chancel, where it is an eyesore, and placed beneath the tower. The new aisle would seat 180 additional people.

The members present expressed an opinion that, as archæologists, they were bound to protest against the proposal; though as churchmen, perhaps, they might look at the matter in a different light. This was one of the few perfect Norman churches in England, and, in an archæological point of view, it would be dreadful to disturb so fine a monument of antiquity.

The party then drove to SOULBURY Church. Archdeacon BICKERSTETH explained that the manor of Soulbury had been for 500 years in the possession of the Lovets, whose ancestor, Richard de Lovet, came over with the Conqueror. Their armorial bearing, the wolf, was to be seen on many of the monuments. The chancel was of the Decorated period, of which the windows were beautiful specimens. The tower and the nave belonged to the Perpendicular period, dating from about the fifteenth century. Much of the church was built of clunch, or Totternhoe stone, the quarries of which were still in existence. These beds of stone form a lower part of the cretaceous system, and were formerly much used for building purposes. The Church was restored about eleven years ago by Mr. Street. The chancel is enriched by the tombs of the Lovet family, one dating as far back as 1304. The altar and reredos are beautifully worked, and in thorough keeping with the other portions of the edifice. One feature of note is a hagioscope, or oblique opening, to enable worshippers in the aisle to see what was going on at the altar. On the floor of the nave is a brass in memory of some members of a family named Bunyan, who claim to be descendants of the great John Bunyan. The derivation of Soulbury was Sahlbury, Sahl being the old British word for willow. In some places willow withs are still called sallies to this day, particularly in Ireland, where the word willow is not known. The derivation, therefore, of Sahlbury, or Sahlburg, would be *willow-camp*; and there was a great deal of low land in the parish, which may have been covered in ancient times with willows. Liscombe is derived from Lys, a palace, and combe, a hollow; so

that Liscombe would mean "the palace on the edge of the hollow or low-land," a description which exactly answers to its position.

Leaving the church, and driving through what was once a noble park of 200 acres, a part of which is now enclosed, the party arrived at LISCOMBE HOUSE, where they received a warm and hearty welcome from the Misses Sergison, the present occupiers. Here the archæologists found objects of interest on all sides. The old ancestral house is, in itself, a treasure to antiquaries, and on its walls are numerous pictures of family and historical interest. The rich vegetation, the fine timber, the oaks and the spreading yews—one of the latter covering as much as twenty-five paces—were much admired. The Chantry Chapel is now used as a laundry. Archdeacon Bickersteth said that in the year 1301, as appeared by an extract from Bishop d'Alderby's register in the archives of Lincoln (see RECORDS OF BUCKS, Vol. I., p. 288), Robert Lovet, Lord of Liscombe, obtained permission of the Bishop of Lincoln to found a Chantry. The existing Chapel, however, evidently dates from about 1370, and was probably erected on the site of the first one. It contains some very beautiful Decorated work, but the appearance of the fine east window within has been spoiled by the construction of a low ceiling. The tracery, however, can be easily seen outside, and is a good specimen of the Decorated style. At one time this chapel was frequently resorted to for the solemnization of marriages. It would be very desirable to restore it, and make it the Chapel of the mansion.

The party were sumptuously entertained at luncheon by the Misses Sergison. Before leaving, Archdeacon Bickersteth gracefully conveyed to the ladies, who had with so amiability and courtesy done the honours of the house, the grateful thanks of all the company.

A start was then made for LEIGHTON BUZZARD, and the party halted at Queen Eleanor's Cross, which has been restored. A brief visit was made to the entrance gate of the monastery, which, with a window, are the only remains. The party then proceeded to the very magnificent old church, which is a spacious cruciform structure, and was without doubt attached to the monastery. The massive tower is surmounted by a fine octagonal spire 193 feet high, springing from the intersection with scarcely a break. The sedilia in the chancel eastwards have very perfect Purbeck marble shafts, with a piscina, both of the thirteenth century. Over the vestry there is a parvise, or priest's chamber, from which, through a hole in the wall which is still in existence, the priest in charge of the night service was enabled to see whether the lights were all burning, and whether everything was safe. A hope was expressed that if the vestry were restored extreme care would be taken to preserve this feature. The vestry is of the Decorated period, but the doorway of the vestry, and indeed the original church, is of the Early English period. The beautifully designed wrought-iron scroll work on the door of the south transept excited great admiration. It is of the late Perpendicular period, and was made at Leighton, as was also, according to tradition, a great part of the ironwork of Henry the Seventh's Chapel, at Westminster. In olden times, the country around Leighton being covered with large forests, afforded facilities for smelting and working iron, for which it became famous. The open-worked screen beneath the rood-loft is of the Perpendicular period, fifteenth century, and exists entire. The organ has been placed above it, and ought to be removed. In the chancel are the original massive oak stalls, curiously carved with the arms of abbots and patrons. The seats are made to turn up, and underneath is a small ledge on which the monk, when weary of standing for discipline, could rest; but if he were not watchful, or gave way to drowsiness, the ledge was so small that in all probability he would slip off. The old pulpit, placed near the vestry, is curiously carved; one panel at the back represents, in rude figures, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the putting off of the old and the assumption of

a new life. A subterranean passage is said to have existed between the monastery and the church.

At LINSLADE National School Dr. Lawford exhibited several interesting curiosities. One was a remarkably perfect flint, found near the river Ouse, in the gravel, about six feet deep. It was exhibited at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, and was pronounced by a great authority, Mr. Evans, to be the genuine work of human hands. A great number of flints has been found, but none so perfect as this. Dr. Lawford showed some other flints, one of which was a facsimile of those found on the banks of the Somme. One specimen was mounted in wood, to show how it was used as a weapon of offence. These flints were found in a field, south of Leighton, belonging to Mr. Page. An urn was also found, almost entire, containing the bones of a child, and several pieces of another urn. They showed a rude attempt at ornamentation, and one was evidently made with straw. One bore very distinct marks of decoration by the thumb nail, referred to by Sir John Lubbock. There were lines of beauty about the one which was not ornamented. The bones found inside it were not calcined, although very nearly so. The urns were found in the sand-pit on the heath. On the banks of the Ouse were also found elephants' teeth, a piece of a tusk in a perfect state, and a lid of an urn of Samian ware.

Mr. Page kindly produced several rare books and coins, but the day had worn so late that there was not time to examine them. One prayer-book contained the prayer against Popery. Another book contained a verbatim report of the trial of King Charles.

THE ANNUAL MEETING.

The Ven. Archdeacon BICKERSTETH having taken the Chair, the Vice-Presidents were re-elected, as were also the Treasurer and the Secretaries—the Rev. C. Lowndes, the Rev. J. Wood, and the Rev. B. Burgess. With the latter resolution was conveyed a cordial vote of thanks for the interesting, pleasant, and profitable excursion that had been provided; and this, it is needless to say, was carried with applause.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES, after responding, read the Treasurer's statement of accounts for the past year, which showed an expenditure of £65 16s., and a balance due to the Treasurer of £14 7s. 4d. Many arrears of subscriptions have since been paid, and this debt is now cleared off.

A letter was read from Sir H. VERNEY, who said he was unable to attend because Buckingham flower-show fell on the same day as the excursion. He also stated that the Kent Archæological Society having exhausted Kent had joined themselves with a society in an adjoining county. It struck him that as Bucks was a much smaller county than Kent, it was likely to be much the same here, and he asked if it is not worth while to consider the propriety of uniting with some neighbouring society.

The Rev. CHAS. LOWNDES considered that they had better remain as they were. There were plenty of places in the county which had not been visited, and they had plenty to do at present in looking up those nooks and corners. Besides, if they joined another society, there would be a very large company, and the result might not be satisfactory.

Archdeacon BICKERSTETH said he agreed with Mr. Lowndes. It would be well to have active means of communication between other local societies, but they had by no means exhausted Buckinghamshire, therefore it would be well for the present to remain as they were. Sir Harry Verney's letter would however be considered in committee, and the hon. baronet would be communicated with.

The following new members were elected:—Miss Sergison, Liscombe House; Dr. Parr, Little Kimble; J. W. Williams, Esq., 5, Valentine Road,

South Hackney, London; Sir Edward Lee, Rathmines Road, Dublin; Mr. T. Taylor, Newport Pagnall; Mr. F. J. Taylor, Newport Pagnell; T. F. Fremantle, Esq., Swanbourne; Dr. Lawford, Leighton; the Rev. D. Carson, Soulbury; the Rev. W. Roberts, Northall, Edlesborough; F. J. Morrell, Esq., St. Giles's, Oxford.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES then exhibited some Roman articles—two silver spoons, a pin, a ring, and a brooch—found between Great Horwood and Winslow (see further particulars, page 209); also, two bronze fibulæ, of a common Saxon type, which were found at Long Marston in a grave, when the ground was excavated for the foundations of a stable at the new vicarage. The Rev. W. C. Masters, the Incumbent, has presented them to the Society's Museum.

The Rev. R. H. HOOPER moved a cordial vote of thanks to the Ven. Archdeacon Bickersteth for his great kindness in presiding at their meeting. They were the more obliged to him for attending their excursion that day, because they all knew that he with the whole body of the church was suffering from the loss by death of Bishop Wilberforce.

The Ven. Archdeacon BICKERSTETH said:—I thank you very much for your grateful words. I assure you that I have seldom gone through greater pain and sorrow than I have suffered during the past few days. (Hear, hear.) But my departed friend, Bishop Wilberforce, the late President of this Society, always taught me that we ought not to allow any private sorrow or trouble to interfere with what concerned the interest, the pleasure, or the satisfaction of others. Therefore, I do not think I should have been doing right in abstaining from attending on this occasion; and I was the more anxious to come, because I should not like this, the first meeting of our Society after the death of that eminent man, to pass without an expression on our part of our deep sense of the great loss we, in common with the whole country, have sustained. (Hear, hear.) Not only was he warmly interested in the subjects to which we have been devoting ourselves to-day, but I may add that he knew something of almost every object of general interest and utility. No conceivable subject which could concern the intellectual, the moral, or the religious advancement of the country was alien from his mind. The Bishop had it in his power, in a way which we may admire, but which we can never hope to imitate, to throw an interest into everything which he touched; and to make the proceedings at a meeting highly agreeable and satisfactory to every one who might have the opportunity and the privilege of being present. I have attended meetings of this Society in former days, when the late Bishop Wilberforce presided, and I recollect well what brightness he shed over the proceedings; and I know that since he has left us he has continued his interest in the pursuits of archæology. It is not long ago since he presided over an influential meeting of this kind at Chichester, taking the place of the Bishop of Chichester; and there was the same sunny presence, the same genial, intelligent appreciation of everything that was brought before him; the same desire to add to the stock of information in an agreeable way. His loss to every class, from the highest to the lowest, is untold. I always said, whilst the Bishop was living, that he would never be appreciated in his life as he would be appreciated after his death; and I am very certain that the longer we live, the more we shall see what a heavy loss every intellectual society, every Church Congress, every Diocesan meeting, every social, literary, or religious gathering, has sustained by his removal, in God's mysterious Providence. All we can now say is, that we who have had the privilege of his acquaintance, must do our very best, must do all we can, to supply the great and irreparable loss which has befallen us; and I trust that his example may long be present to our memories as a bright and beautiful pattern of what a man, living all his life for God, and with all his heart devoted to God, can do for the intellectual, social, and moral improvement of his generation. The Archdeacon then said: I

am sure that all present will join with me in an expression of their best thanks to the Misses Sergison, for their extremely kind reception of us this day. (Applause.) We have learnt to appreciate them very much since they came into the county, and it is with great regret we hear that they are about to leave us. (Cheers.) It is, however, a little mitigation of that regret, as showing that they will not forget Buckinghamshire, to find that although Miss Sergison is leaving us, she has just enrolled herself as a member of the society. (Cheers.) By the hospitality which she has exercised, at a short notice, Miss Sergison has shown the possession of administrative powers of the highest order—(cheers)—and the Archæological Society join in conveying their best wishes for the health and happiness of herself and her sisters in the county which will be so fortunate as to have them as residents.

At Linslade there was a general breaking up of the party, consequently only a few visited WING on the road home. The derivation of Wing, Wenge, or Wang, the Archdeacon said, was Saxon, and it means "a separate piece of land." The church contains some Saxon work. It is remarkable for its apsidal, polygonal chancel, raised high above the nave. A crypt, which exists beneath this, was filled up with rubbish at the restoration effected by Mr. Scott some years ago. It was said to contain some good Saxon work, was 8ft. high, and was entered by steps from the nave. The entrance is now unfortunately closed. A rude arcade runs round the exterior of the apse, which is considered by some good authorities to be also of the Saxon period, perhaps of the eleventh century. The windows are much later. The mass of the nave appears to be Norman, and the Archdeacon said that in his opinion the heavy massive arches which connect the nave with the aisles are Norman also. The base of an old Norman font is to be seen in the south porch, with the cable ornaments. There are several fine tombs belonging to the Dormers. This family came into possession of the manor on the disgrace of Cardinal Wolsey, who had held it since the suppression of the monasteries; and the Dormers held possession till 1709. Some of their tombs have full length, recumbent figures; one bears date 1552. There is another monument said to be the work of Roubiliac. In one of the aisles is a curious brass to the memory of Thomas Coates, porter at Ascot Hall, in 1648. Ascot Hall was built by the Dormers, one portion being the work of Inigo Jones, but in 1720 it began to fall into decay, and now it has wholly disappeared. Only the remains of fish-ponds, moats, and bowling alleys can now be discerned. The churchwardens' account-books, which go back as far as 1527, contain many curious entries, especially those referring to the period of the Reformation. One order was to read Bishop Jewel's "Book of Sports." The notorious Dr. Dodd, who was executed for forging the name of Lord Chesterfield, was once vicar here, and his old pulpit is still in use. He is said to have preached but four sermons in the parish, and the last one was from the following words:—"And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of the foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shall have none assurance of thy life; in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even, and at even, Would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

On leaving Wing the company finally separated, after a long but instructive excursion.

ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY,

FOR THE COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM.

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