

Proceedings of the Society, 1874.

THE ANNUAL Meeting was held on Tuesday, July 21st. The members met at St. Mary's Church, Wendover, at 11 o'clock. The most interesting features in this Church, architecturally, were pointed out by the Ven. Archdeacon Bickersteth, Vice-President of the Society. He called attention to the fact that the piers of the arches had foliated capitals of the Decorated period, about the fourteenth century; but that at the same time the arches beneath the tower and also the chancel arch, were of an earlier period. This circumstance, he thought, pointed to the probability of the centre portion of the church having been injured or destroyed by fire or other accident, and to its re-building, in a different and more ornate style than had previously existed. The Decorated period followed the Early English, and commencing about A.D. 1272, ran through the reigns of the first, second, and third Edwards. One great characteristic of the Decorated period is the ornament called the ball-flower. This ornament may be seen in the moulding of the north door arch in this church in a very perfect state. Wendover church partook of both periods. This church was restored and re-opened June 1, 1869, from the designs of Mr. G. E. Street, the diocesan architect. The chancel retained the old Early English waggon roof; and there is a marked difference in the lines of the chancel and the body of the church—to the extent apparently of two or three feet. Some conversation took place respecting this fact—a fact not peculiar to Wendover, but found in many other churches. It was suggested that formerly there might have been in the minds of their architects, some idea of indicating the position of the Saviour on the Cross, with the head slightly reclining on one side, as generally represented in the pictures of the Crucifixion. The attention of the visitors was likewise drawn to the Bradshaw Brass in the wall of the South aisle.

The party then ascended the Chiltern hills, and visited the old and new churches of Lee. The old church has been converted, since the erection of the new one, into a school-room. The Ven. Archdeacon stated that the old church was founded in the thirteenth century, originally as a chapel-of-ease to Weston Turville. It appeared subsequently to have been given to the Benedictine Abbey of Great Missenden, to the possessions of which it was annexed; and it so continued till the dissolution of that establishment. Amongst its peculiarities are the different levels of the Early English windows in the north wall. The east window, also Early English, is very well proportioned; and in the south wall of the chancel formerly were a piscina and sedile, which have been removed to the new church. There is a little stained glass remaining in the east window, but of no great importance or beauty. In the churchyard is a very fine old yew tree, possibly coeval with the building itself. The new church, which was erected in 1868, is a handsome building, calling however for no particular remark, except that it is enriched with the old sedile and piscina, and also some ancient mural monuments of the family of the Plaistowes, from the old church.

Within half a mile of St. Leonard's the party examined a portion of Grimsdyke, or Gryms Dyke, the remarkable fosse or trench which runs nearly east and west through this part of Buckinghamshire. The Archdeacon said it was his opinion that it was not a military work, but was probably one of the territorial divisions of the island, perhaps of what is called the Saxon Heptarchy—that title being, however, in reality a misnomer. Looking at the direction in which it runs it might have served to divide South Mercia from North Mercia, and it was traceable from the Chilterns in Oxfordshire, across Buckinghamshire, into the adjoining county of Hertfordshire. One strong reason for believing Grimsdyke to have been constructed for boundary purposes, rather than military ones, was its length and position. It is remarkable that throughout its course it never reaches the summit of any of

the higher hills, but it is carried at a uniform distance from the summit. With regard to the name Grims' Dyke, it might have been given at a later time, as synonymous with Wizard's Dyke, under the belief that it was of supernatural origin; Grima being the Saxon for Wizard. It is certainly a most interesting feature in the county. One curious suggestion had been made that it was the work of the Roman Emperor Severus, whose name had been translated "grim" by the Saxons. It was remarkable that though in this district we have comparatively few mediæval memorials, there are many earlier remains reaching back to the remote times of the Saxons and Britons. This Grimsdyke could not have been a Roman work, for the Roman works were constructed in straight lines, of which the old Watling-street was an example, but the course of Grimsdyke was, on the contrary, extremely devious. In a charter given in the reign of Henry III. to a monastery at Ash-ridge, its name occurs.

St. Leonard's Chapel was next visited. The Archdeacon said there could be no doubt that this had been the site of a place of Christian worship for at least eight hundred years. It was originally a cell or hermitage connected with the Abbey at Missenden, and towards the end of the thirteenth century it seemed to have been granted by the Monks to the rector of Aston Clinton. Though it was now independent, it still held a sort of filial relation to Aston Clinton. The present church shows some traces of the Decorated period, and it was still standing in 1491; but its fortunes afterwards fell very low; for during the Civil Wars, when so large a portion of this district of England was overrun by the Parliamentary forces, it was almost utterly destroyed, little remaining of it beside the bare walls. After the Restoration, towards the close of the seventeenth century, it was rebuilt by Colonel Cornelius Wood, who also endowed it, and his brother became its minister during more than thirty years. Very little now remains of the older church. The mural monument to Colonel Wood bears a characteristic representation of that gentleman, in the Ramilies wig of the period, surrounded by various martial trophies, while the accompanying inscription records not merely his restoration of the church, but his military honours and exploits in the wars of the period.

The party then proceeded to Cholesbury. The name Cholesbury is suggestive of cold, as was subsequently explained; but the Bucks Archæologists did not find their reception by any means correspond, for they met with a hospitable luncheon at the Rectory, which would have been much more enjoyed if the respected incumbent, the Rev. H. P. Jeston, who was unfortunately suffering from temporary illness, had been personally able to welcome his guests. After partaking of Mr. Jeston's hospitality, an adjournment was made to the church; and the first point to which the Archdeacon called the attention of his auditors was that this church stands within the limits of an ancient encampment. The name of Cholesbury, Chill wolds bury, or "the fort of the chill wolds," expresses the bleak and high table-land surrounding the encampment. The question was whether that encampment, which they would presently inspect, and which was one of the most perfect and interesting in England, had belonged to the Britons, Romans, Saxons, or Danes. His own impression was that it was Danish, as the British forts were smaller and less regular, and those of the Romans were square, whereas this was oval. It seemed to have been one of a chain of Danish encampments, running from east to west across the country, and of which there were other examples to be met with at West Wycombe, Danesfield, and other places in Buckinghamshire. There were indications in the size of this encampment, enclosing about ten acres, which lead to the belief that it was of the nature of a fortified village. There were other evidences to show that this district was the scene of the great struggle between the Danes and Saxons. That it was largely occupied by the Danes might be shown by the names of places around. For instance, they had a Danish derivation in the

hoe, meaning a hill, which was found in the name of Ivinghoe. The word Desborough, the name of one of the three Hundreds of the Chilterns, is believed to be a corruption of Danesborough. Other Danish terms were also to be found in the district. The church was then entered, and the Archdeacon stated that the present building was erected early in the fourteenth century, and was dedicated to St. Lawrence. It was originally a chapel-of-ease to Drayton Beauchamp. It is said to have been separated from that living, and made independent, in the reign of Henry VIII. The church has been recently restored, mainly by the liberality and exertion of the present incumbent, every regard being paid to the original architecture. The arch of the south doorway is of the Early English period, indicating the existence of an earlier church. Some peculiarities were noted in the windows, and the general date of the present building was fixed at 1310. The architect who planned and carried out the restoration was Mr. W. Glover, favourably known in connection with other churches in the county. On leaving the church, an inspection was made of the encampment. The Archdeacon remarked upon the extent of the encampment, as one great argument in favour of its Danish origin, the Danes having been in the habit of bringing their families and property within their fortified camp for greater security. The strength of this entrenchment must, from the height and thickness of its mounds, and the depth of the fosses, have been very great. Within its limits, Bury Pond—that is, “the pond of the fort”—was pointed out, being the spot from which the encampment was doubtless supplied with water. Dry as the present summer has been, this pond is still full of excellent water, and is said never to have failed.

The next visit was to Hawridge. Here also is the site of an ancient circular encampment, similar to the one at Cholesbury, but smaller, and probably British. The church is a modern structure, built a few years ago by Mr. White, and possesses no features of special interest.

The party then drove to The Bury, Chesham, the residence of Wm. Lowndes, Esq., when they were most hospitably entertained. Previous to the luncheon a visit was paid to the church of St. Mary. This beautiful church has been remarkably well restored under the superintendence of Sir G. Scott. A very interesting and detailed account of the restoration has been published in this volume of the Records, page 24.

The church having been inspected, and Mr. Lowndes' hospitality done ample justice to, the Society adjourned to the drawing-room, and held their

ANNUAL MEETING.

The Archdeacon was called upon to take the chair, and announced that the first business on the agenda was the election or re-election of the vice-presidents. The Lord Bishop of Oxford was *ex officio* president. The vice-presidents having been re-elected, the Chairman suggested the addition to the list of their worthy host, Mr. Lowndes, which was carried by acclamation.

Mr. Lowndes thanked the Society for the honour, and hoped if he were ever called upon to discharge the duties of the office he should be enabled to do so to their satisfaction.

The honorary secretaries, the Rev. C. Lowndes, Rev. B. Burgess, and Rev. J. Wood, were then unanimously reappointed.

The re-election of the Rev. C. Lowndes, as honorary treasurer, was also agreed to.

The Rev. C. Lowndes then read the treasurer's report. The Receipts amounted to £72 5s. 0d. The Disbursements £67 7s. 6d., leaving a balance in hand of £4 17s. 6d.

The Rev. C. Lowndes then read the report of the Committee for the past year.

“In placing before you a short review of the proceedings of the Society,

your Committee are glad to have it in their power to speak in gratifying terms of its general condition and prospects.

"The Society has now been in existence a quarter of a century, and during that period has collected a vast amount of local information, of antiquarian and architectural interest, which your Committee has had much satisfaction in printing in the Society's publications. Several members, who have given their time to the study of history and the deeds of past ages, have kindly contributed the results of their labours for insertion in the 'Records,' and thereby have added materially to the elucidation of those subjects for the advancement of which the Society was founded.

"A County Museum was established in the year 1862 at Aylesbury, in connection with the Society; and though its origin is humble, and it is still but the nucleus of a museum, it has kept slowly and steadily increasing by the addition of a few presents annually. Your Committee have great pleasure, on the present occasion, in reporting a very large addition of interesting objects, which have been presented by Miss Hamilton, of Ivinghoe. These objects consist of 60 cases of stuffed birds and animals, a cabinet of birds' eggs, a cabinet of butterflies, a cabinet of tertiary fossils, a number of other fossils, a collection of shells, and a few coins.

"Your Committee venture to express a hope that the day is not far distant when a building will be erected in Aylesbury worthy of a County Museum.

"Your Committee trust that the annual meetings and excursions in different parts of the county have been arranged and carried out to the satisfaction of those members who have attended them."

The adoption of the report and statement of accounts was carried.

The following new members, who had been proposed at a committee meeting, and approved of, were elected:—The Rev. E. Bunbury, the Gaol, Aylesbury; Miss Chalk, Quainton; Captain F. Peel, Grymes Dyke, Risborough, Tring; Mr. T. Poulton, Lacey Green, Risborough; Rev. C. Shilson, Halton; Mr. R. Webb, High Wycombe; Miss Lawford, St. Mary's Lodge, Linlade; and Mr. Cooper, Aylesbury.

The Chairman then called upon the Rev. W. J. Burgess to make a statement he had promised them upon the earthworks and other antiquities on the Chiltern Hills.

The Rev. W. J. BURGESS said he should say only a few words, as he was really unprepared to say anything on the subject. He was sorry he had not been present when they were inspecting the remains of the Grimsdyke. They must remember that one of the characteristics of the Chiltern Hills district, was that it was a forest country, considerable woodlands still existing on the Chiltern Hundreds. The wildness of the district, in former times, doubtless gave rise to the appointment of wardens or stewards, whose original office was to look after the banditti harbouring in the forests, in the same way as wardens had been appointed in the border country of England and Scotland, to keep a check upon and punish the moss troopers who infested that northern district. The necessity of such an office implied a degree of violence and lawlessness, which proved that the country was then, to a great extent, wild and unreclaimed. As regarded the earthworks to be found in the Chiltern district, he certainly was of opinion that they bore marks of being rather of British than of Danish origin. And though the encampment at Cholesbury might have been occupied by the Danes, he believed it was originally a fortified village of our ancient British ancestors. That it was not a Roman entrenchment was proved by its shape—the Romans being in the habit of making their camps square, while both that and most of the other earthworks in this part of the country were circular. He believed that both the camp at Cholesbury and the one at Hawridge, also called a Danish encampment, were of the same character—ancient fortified villages. He then noticed discoveries which had been made of Roman antiquities, of which the country was full, in the shape of villas and camps,

one of the latter being at Velvet Lawn, while the remains of villas had been found also at Great and Little Kimble, and on the Latimer estate. The vestiges found were of the usual Roman character. He considered it probable that the whole of the Roman colonists might not have quitted Britain at the close of the Roman military occupation, but that some might have remained behind, traces of whose residence were still to be found. Referring to the Icknield Way, he gave the probable origin of its name. That road extended from east to west, and appeared to have been laid down in accordance with the usual custom of the Romans, as regarded its directness from point to point, and its name was probably given to it from the country of the Iceni where it commenced on the eastern side. There were remains of that road at Princes Risborough, and it could be traced in various places in a very distinct and beautiful manner. It was a remarkable characteristic of this road that there must have been a considerable population along its line, as was proved by the number of churches which were built upon it. With regard to the ancient earthwork called Grimsdyke, the origin of its name was lost in the mists of antiquity. An old lady, who built a house upon it, and was proud of its position, said that she had heard that it was constructed by the Roman Emperor Severus, the English of which was grim. Some people were of opinion that Grimsdyke had been a Roman road, but he did not consider it was straight enough, as the Roman roads went direct from one point to another, whereas Grimsdyke had a devious course. It had been traced from the upper part of Risborough across the county into Hertfordshire, some traces of it being found on Berkhamstead Common. As to its origin and purpose, some people thought they were military, but he was of opinion that it was a boundary line, rather than a military work. It had remained comparatively uninjured, through a long lapse of time, which was probably due to the woodland character of the country through which it passed, in consequence of which it had not been interfered with by the operations of the plough. Another of these ancient roads ran from Tring through Aylesbury, in a very straight course towards Bath. It was the Akeman-street, a name which had been ascribed to the aching men on their way to Bath. The fortifications on the Chiltern Hills he thought might have been originally those of Britons, who afterwards gave way to the Roman occupation. The Danish invasion seemed to have run across to the Berkshire hills, to the vale of White Horse. The White Horse is supposed to be a memorial of King Alfred's great victory over them in that locality. In conclusion, Mr. Burgess said that he had committed nothing to paper on the present occasion, but he had taken a good deal of interest in the subject, and it seemed to him to be one upon which a considerable amount of information might yet be gathered.

The Chairman asked Mr. Burgess' opinion upon the White Leaf Cross.

Mr. Burgess said it had been thought that the Monks Risborough Cross commemorated some victory gained by the Saxons. The Cross was what is called a Roman cross, standing on a Calvary, and he thought the chances were that it had been constructed by the monks of the Risborough convent, and may not have been the commemoration of any Saxon victory at all. The Bledlow cross was of a different type altogether. It was of the Greek type, and probably of more modern construction.

The Chairman, in reference to Mr. Burgess' remarks touching the Cholesbury encampment, read a paper given him by Mr. Jeston, bearing upon the subject in which the writer says:—"I am glad to find your neighbours are so careful of ancient monuments—'better late than never.' As to the circle of Cholesbury, it seems to me a Danish Fort; and our old writers are so full of the operations of the Danes in that neighbourhood that they add good evidence of this view. Ralph Higden says, 'The Danes raised fortresses on both sides of the Ouse at Buckingham; and, according to Florence of Worcester, they committed great depredations between Aylesbury and

the Forest of Bernwood. I think this was a fortified camp to keep in check the inhabitants who still held the woodlands to the north of your parish. Our British fortresses in Wilts are irregular as to form, with so much less symmetry; and although Cæsar, in one place, mentions a fort as exhibiting some skill, *locum nacti egregie et natura et opere munitum*; yet this was only 12 miles from the Kentish coast, where the Britons were more civilised than in Bucks, where, it is plain, Cæsar never came, or he would not have said the beech was no native of Britain. The camp at Cholesbury is, I think, the most perfect of the kind I ever saw. This parish, in the Domesday Survey, appears to have been included in Drayton Beauchamp, and in all probability became a separate parish shortly after: for in 1091 Hamon, son of Shamfelon, and Wm. Peveril gave Cholesbury to the Knights Templars. Upon their suppression it passed to the Knights of St. John, with whom it remained until the Dissolution; when, probably, Henry VIII. granted it to Sir John Baldwin, L.J.C., in whose family it continued in James I.'s reign. The Neals, it is likely, purchased it from the Beauchamps. In the 38 Edward III., Cholesbury is called a Hamlet of Drayton. This was a grant from the King to Thomas Cheyne of the Manor of Drayton, "with the hamlets of Chelwaldesbury, Helpsthorp, Massworth, and Saundredon."

Cole, in his MSS., from which these facts are taken, observes, "The Manor of Chowlesbury, as well as the Church, was, as I conceive, originally appendant to Drayton Beauchamp." As Cole was an antiquary of sound judgment, his opinion is of considerable weight. There is a tolerably regular succession of Rectors from 1230 to 1416; after which the Rectory and Vicarage seem to have been swallowed up in the endowments of the Knights of St. John, and the Church has since been served by Curates."

The Archdeacon then remarked that no doubt the Danes did overrun Buckinghamshire; and at the same time it was quite possible that they might have taken possession of some of the fortified villages of the ancient Britons, who might have become, after the time of Cæsar, more civilized. It was remarkable that though they had so many traces of previous history amongst the Chiltern Hills, they knew comparatively little of their history during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, beyond the fact that in the time of Edward the Third, the Black Prince was connected with Princes Risborough. He was glad to find that though Mr. Burgess differed from him as to the Danish character of the Cholesbury camp, he agreed with him in respect of the origin of the Grimsdyke.

The Archdeacon expressed the thanks of the Society to Mr. Lowndes for his kind and hospitable reception of them on the present occasion, and their hope that he would help them on future occasions as one of the vice-presidents.

Mr. Lowndes, in reply, thanked the Archdeacon and the Society for their kindness in paying a visit to the Bury. He moved a vote of thanks to the Archdeacon for his conduct in the chair.

The Archdeacon returned thanks. He said they were greatly indebted to Mr. Burgess for giving them such an interesting account of the antiquities of the county. He also added that there was none to whom the Society was more indebted than the Rev. C. Lowndes, who always made all their arrangements with great care and skill.

The Rev. C. Lowndes returned thanks.

The party then were speedily on their way homewards, stopping by the way at

GREAT MISSENDEN.

Here they inspected the Abbey Church, a fine old building, but disfigured at present by unsightly galleries, which will, doubtless, in due time be removed. The church is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul.

Archdeacon Bickersteth states that there is some confusion in the accounts of the original foundation of the monastery of Great Missenden, and he adds the following particulars from Dugdale and Lysons. The Foundation Charter still exists, from which it appears that it was founded by Sir William de Missenden, Knight, in A.D. 1133. Amongst the witnesses to this Deed is Richard de Urville, Archdeacon of Buckingham, who appears to have held lands adjoining those made over to the Abbey by Sir William de Missenden and his son Hugh. Another record states that the endowment was further augmented by the family as a mark of gratitude for preservation from shipwreck in the fourteenth century. It is this second endowment which seems to have thrown some obscurity upon the date of the original foundation. It is indeed probable that there was some ecclesiastical foundation here previous to that of Sir William de Missenden. It may be further remarked that the style of architecture of the church corresponds with the historical records just indicated: the older portions of the Abbey Church being Early English, coeval with William de Missenden; the later portions being Decorated and Perpendicular, about the date of Thomas de Missenden. That there was a very early endowment for religious purposes here may be inferred from the name of the place. For Missenden, in all probability, derives its name from *missa* or *mass*, thus indicating land charged with payment for masses. Thus Misbourne would signify the *mass-brook*; and Missenden, the *valley* of the *mass*.
