

Proceedings of the Society, 1876.

THE ANNUAL MEETING and Excursion took place on Thursday June 8th. The Members and their friends met at Aylesbury, and started by the 9.20 a.m. train for Bourne End, whence they embarked in a Saloon barge, "The Star of the Thames," and proceeded down the River Thames to Magna Charta Island, where it was proposed to hold the Annual Meeting. The progress down the river was not so rapid as was expected, and therefore it was determined to hold the Meeting on board the barge.

The Ven. the Archdeacon of BUCKINGHAM was called upon to take the chair. The first business on the agenda was the election, or re-election of the Vice-Presidents. They were unanimously re-elected.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES, the Rev. B. BURGESS, and Rev. J. WOOD, were then re-elected as Honorary Secretaries, the Rev. C. LOWNDES as Treasurer, and the Rev. A. ISHAM as Auditor.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES read the Report of the Committee:—

"Your Committee have the gratification of again presenting a favourable report of the progress of the Society. The list of members continues steadily to increase, the accessions to the list exceeding the loss by death and retirement.

"Your Committee have been deprived of the future aid of a most valuable member of its body, through the promotion of the Very Rev. Edward Bickersteth, D.D., to the Deanery of Lichfield. They cannot allow this opportunity to pass without expressing their deep sense of the interest he has always taken in the Society from its commencement, and the assistance he has rendered it by his presence at the annual meetings, and by his contributions to the Records. While, however, they very much regret the loss of him as a member of their body, they cannot but add their hearty and respectful congratulations upon his promotion, and hope that as he is still linked to them as a life member of the Society, they may have the honour of welcoming him at some of their annual meetings.

"Your Committee have much pleasure in reporting several gifts to the Society's museum. The Very Rev. the Dean of Lichfield has made the following presentations: viz., a bronze figure of the Saviour, found in the sacristy of St. Mary's Church, Aylesbury, during its restoration; collection de la sine de Roches de la chaine de Mont Blanc; some medallions, fossils, and pamphlets

"The museum has also been enriched by Z. D. Hunt, Esq., with two cabinets full of fossils from the Portland bed and Kimmeridge clay near Aylesbury, and with the publications of the Palæontographical Society from the year 1849 to the year 1856."

On the motion of Mr. T. LUCAS, seconded by Mr. MCCONNELL, the Report was received and adopted.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES then read the Treasurer's Report, which showed receipts by subscriptions in 1874, £61 12s. 6d.; 1875, £38 16s. The expenditure showed a total of £107 15s. 3d., leaving a balance of £7 6s. 9d. due to the Treasurer.

This report was also received and adopted.

The following gentlemen having been previously proposed and seconded

at a committee meeting, were elected Members of the Society:—Mr. C. Lamborn, Bierton; Mr. S. Grist, Bierton; Mr. W. F. Taylor, Bierton; Mr. R. S. Downs, High Wycombe; the Ven. the Archdeacon of Buckingham; Rev. T. Green, Stanbridge, Leighton Buzzard; Rev. E. K. Hanson, Stoke Mandeville; J. E. Frazer, Esq., Seabank House, Inverness; G. E. Burton, Esq., Dinton; E. W. Willmott, Esq., Eggington House, Leighton Buzzard; Rev. S. S. Crutch, Lee, Tring; Rev. G. A. Shaw, Aston Sandford; W. Wildes, Esq., the Moor, Wooburn, Beaconsfield; C. Threlfall, Esq., Wendover; Rev. A. T. Lloyd, Aylesbury.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES said the Archdeacon being now a member of the Society was *ex officio* a Vice-president.

The Rev. C. LOWNDES read a Paper on "The Facts relating to the Signing of Magna-Charta." A vote of thanks was given to the Rev. C. Lowndes for his Paper.

The Rev. J. WOOD read a Paper by Walter De Gray Birch, Esq., of the British Museum, on the Nunnery of Ankerwyke. A cast of the seal of the Nunnery was exhibited, and also a cast of the seal of the Priory of Iedes, in the county of Kent, of the same date.

J. PARKER, Esq., of High Wycombe, exhibited two thumb signet rings, which were used in the early part of the 13th century. One of them was a massive ring in silver, and on the sides, in black letter, were the words "In domino confido;" the seal was a crown with initials below that could not all of them be satisfactorily deciphered. This ring was found in Marmerswell Field, High Wycombe. The second thumb ring, in bronze, which was of lighter make, had a deeply-cut capital T under a royal crown. It was found at Wycombe Heath, near High Wycombe. Mr. Parker also exhibited a parchment mandate of the possession of the church of Lansant (supposed to be in the diocese of Exeter), of the date of May 16, 1355, and issued by Pope Innocent. A vote of thanks was given to W. De Gray Birch, Esq., for his Paper, and to the Rev. J. Wood for reading it.

A description of the most interesting places on both sides of the river was given by WM. LOWNDES, Esq., one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society

By the kind permission of Wm. Clifford, Esq., the party on their arrival at Magna Charta Island were allowed to land, and were welcomed, during Mr. Clifford's absence, by his nephew, R. C. Poulter, Esq. A cold collation having been provided by Leighton Brothers of Windsor, the party were soon at high festival under the old walnut tree on the lawn. The repast being ended, the Archdeacon read a letter which the Rev. C. Lowndes had received from Mr. Clifford.

"Bettws Newydd, Usk, Mon., 30th May, 1876.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am very glad to hear that all your arrangements have been so successfully made, and hope that your expectations of a day's enjoyment may not be disappointed. The only regret about it we have (and it is a regret) is, that we cannot have the pleasure to be at home to receive you. We have, however, left directions that all the accommodation our little place is capable of shall be afforded you; and my nephew, Mr. Reginald Poulter, who is the son of one of your members, will be there to receive you, and see that our wishes are carried into effect. You will no doubt take a stroll into Ankerwyke Park, adjoining us, and inspect the ruin of the ancient Priory, and the celebrated yew and cedar trees, under which, tradition says, the sports of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn were carried on. If your friend Mr. Anderson, who occupies Ankerwyke, should not be able to be present to receive you, he will take care that full freedom is given to all your members for the purpose.

"I may notice a matter which may have an interest to some of you, if there is anything in it. We have been told by learned archæologists that in olden times a custom existed of giving a kind of rude consecration to venerated spots by surrounding them with a circle of trees after the Druidical manner, and that a circle of walnut trees was planted round the exact spot where the Charter was signed, at the time or soon after the event. You will observe that evidence of this circle is afforded by the existence of modern trees, which have been planted from time to time on the line of the original circle; and old people in our own time have described the stools of old trees which the existing trees are said to have replaced. Indeed, one Dendrologist told us we might claim the picturesque ruin on the lawn for one of the original trees; and that its antiquity might reasonably date with the signing of the Charter. No doubt that when your Committee are within the charmed circle, in full festival, you will be able to settle this great question; and with our best wishes for your complete enjoyment on the occasion, I remain, my dear Sir, yours truly, W. CLIFFORD."

Thanks were voted by acclamation to Mr. Clifford, and then the party entered the cottage to inspect the stone upon which the Charter rested when it was signed, and which is placed in a room appropriately fitted up, and decorated with the armorial bearings of the Barons. The stone is fixed in a massive oak frame, and bears the following inscription, "Be it remembered that on this Island, 25th June, 1215, John King of England signed Magna Charta; and in the year 1834, this building was erected in commemoration of that great and important event by George Simon Harcourt, Esq., Lord of the Manor, and the High Sheriff of the County."

By permission of J. Anderson, Esq., of Ankerwyke, it was intended to have paid a visit to the ruins of the old Priory, and the celebrated yew trees referred to in Mr. Clifford's letter; but time would not permit. The party were therefore compelled to embark again on board "The Star of the Thames," and return to Windsor, whence they took the train home.