

Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1884.

THE Annual Meeting and Excursion of the members of the Society took place on the 11th August last. The President, his Grace the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, had kindly invited the members to visit Stowe. The programme arranged, however, included visits to places *en route* to the Duke's historical residence; but owing to the short time at the disposal of the members, their investigations were necessarily of a cursory nature. The members and their friends were conveyed to Buckingham by a special train. On reaching the town the members drove to the first halting-place, which proved to be the old Buckingham churchyard. The site of the church which formerly stood there was pointed out, and the visitors hurried on to the church which was built in its stead, and is now the parish church of Buckingham. The Vicar, the Rev. F. G. Kiddle, was present, and displayed great anxiety to explain everything of interest relating to the building, the interior of which was much admired. In the porch were deposited a few local objects of interest from the collection of the late Alderman Harrison, J.P. In the vestry were displayed other objects of interest, including views of the interior and exterior of the present church prior to its restoration. Subsequently, the Vicar, taking up a position in the open air, welcomed the members of the Society, and proceeded to read the following paper:—

“The town of Buckingham is doubtless one of great antiquity. Historians tell us that about A.D. 44 a Roman general under the Emperor Claudius surprised the Britons on the banks of the river Ouse, at or near Buckingham. And further, on the first spreading of Christianity, in the Saxon times, it became remarkable as the burying-place of S. Rumbold, who was born at King's Sutton, November 1st, 626, where he also died, appointing his body to rest there the first year, the next two years at Brackley, and at Buckingham for ever after, where, as the historian and antiquarian (Browne Willis) informs us in his interesting history of the county, a shrine was made for him in the parish church, to which great resort was made by pilgrims, and many miracles are reported to have been wrought by him there.

“The same historian tells us that this town is mentioned in the reign of King Alfred, on his division of the kingdom into shires, when he fixed on this place as the capital of his newly-erected county, and that his son, King Edward the Elder, took up his quarters here A.D. 918, caused two forts to be built and garrisoned on each side of the river Ouse, and then, advancing towards the Danes, struck such terror into them that they were glad to make peace. Subsequently to the survey of Domesday Book, in which mention is made of the town, few records are to be found until of more recent date. Tradition, however, preserves some memories of a castle, and adds, besides, ‘a local habitation and a name;’ for we have Castle House, Castle Street, Castle Mills, Castle Farm, Castle Fields, and Castle Hill; yet no written record is extant of the building of a castle, nor, as far as I

can ascertain, do any traces of a foundation remain, although we read that in A.D. 1484 Richard III. made a grant to John Grey, of Wilton, of certain moneys 'for the food of the king's hawkes,' secured upon the Castle and Manor of Buckingham. My learned predecessor, the Rev H. Roundell, tells us that the bailiff and burgesses of the Corporation were summoned in King Edward III.'s time to send three representatives to the Council of Trade held at Westminster by that prince; and in Henry VII.'s time the county weights and measures were ordered by Act of Parliament to be kept here. He informs us also that the gaol delivery of felons and all county business was transacted here until (as it was supposed), by the influence of Chief Justice Baldwin, a native of Aylesbury, the assizes were removed to that town during the reign of Henry VIII.

"In 1552, Queen Mary granted a charter of incorporation to this borough. A second charter, with increased privileges, was granted by Charles II., A.D. 1684, under the authority of which the government of the borough was conducted until the new Corporation Act came into force in 1835.

"The year 1568 is memorable in the annals of our town from the fact that, on the 25th day of August (as we learn from a mem. in the Corporation Book of that date), 'the high and mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth, came in progress to the Burrow of Buckingham, and at the utmost part of the limits of the liberties of the said Burrow . . . the Bayliff and the 12 principal Burgesses of the said Burrow made their most humble submission and received her Grace. Whereupon her Highness did admit the said Bayliff to be her Chamberlain within the said Burrow by delivering him one white wand. And to pay proper honour to the said Burrow her Majesty had, in a most triumphant manner, her sword royal and maces borne, and trumpets blowne, until she came to the mansion house of the Rector or Prebendary of the said Burrow, where her Highness rested dinner time; and after dinner ended her Grace proceeded forward to the town of Bicester.'

"During the civil wars of the seventeenth century, Buckingham, unlike all the other towns in the country, refused to espouse the side of the Parliament; and from a document in the Bodleian Library we learn that 'this corporation preserved its integrity and was eminently serviceable in assisting the University and City of Oxford, which were the chief support and assistance of King Charles I.'

"Time will not allow us to quote from the interesting records which are preserved to us of this time, and we pass on to mention the great fire of 1725. In a handbill circulated at the time, it was stated that 138 dwelling-houses, and a great many barns and stables and other out-buildings, were totally destroyed, and that the loss, over and above all money recovered from any insurance office whatsoever, amounted to £32,6² 13s. 6d. Unhappily for the appearance of the town, the Corporation did not apply for an Act of Parliament whereby the rebuilding of the houses would be regulated—a step strongly urged by Browne Willis, of Whaddon Hall, to whom we have already referred. The mention of this name induces me to quote once again Mr. Roundell's words. Mr. Willis, he says, 'must ever be reckoned among the best friends Buckingham ever had. By his exertions a large sum of money, of which he contributed the major part himself, was expended on the repair of the church tower, the spire of which had fallen down on the 7th February, 1599. He originated the plan for building the present gaol, of which he witnessed the completion by Lord Cobham. He procured the restoration of the assizes to Buckingham, strenuously resisted an intended removal of them to Aylesbury, and persuaded both the Bishop of Lincoln and the Archdeacon of Buckingham to hold their visitations here. Indeed, he devoted his best energies through fully half a century to restore to Buckingham its ancient honours.'"

After this sketch of the town, attention was called to the Church, the Latin School, and Castle House.

“THE CHURCH.

“The old Parish Church of the town stood in the old churchyard, the entire length of the building being 163 feet, and consisted of chancel, nave, and side aisles, with two large transepts and a square tower, supporting a spire of wood covered with lead. If the engravings extant of this church are correctly drawn, the date of tower, spire, and nave may be attributed to the thirteenth century. The chancel was built by John Ruding, Archdeacon of Lincoln, upon his appointment to the Prebend of Buckingham, in 1471, of which date also we have preserved to us a MS. Latin Bible, presented to the church by him, and which, through the liberality of Mrs. Roundell, has once again come into our possession. On February 7th, 1699, the tall wooden spire was blown down in a gale of wind, but no material damage was done to the rest of the building. In 1753 the tower was raised in height about 24 ft.; but the increased weight of masonry proved too great for the old piers which supported it, and on March 26th, 1776, the fall of the tower took place only a few minutes after the ringers had left it. The only articles now preserved to us of this church are the brass chandelier given by Browne Willis, 1705, the vestry chest, the Communion plate, bearing date 1639, and the Parish Registers, commencing 1561. At the request of the town, Earl Verney gave a site on Castle Hill for a new church, and upon the payment of £4,000, raised upon the security of the poor-rates and the assignment of the old materials of the former church, Earl Temple undertook to build the present edifice, the first stone whereof was laid November 25th, 1777, and the building consecrated by the Bishop of Lincoln, December 6th, 1781; but from the present appearance of the church we should with difficulty picture to ourselves the building of which I am speaking. My immediate predecessor, the Rev. W. F. Norris, now Rector of Witney, says, when he succeeded to the vicarage in 1862 he found the church much out of repair. There were sixteen large cracks in the walls, indicating the faulty construction of the windows and scamped foundations, and that the church was altogether in so dilapidated a condition as to be unfit for its purpose. Sir G. Scott designed a method of support by buttresses and a general remodelling of the exterior and interior, and after a period of twenty years the work has just been concluded, at a cost of about £10,000, exclusive of the vestry and organ chamber, the gift of the Right Hon. J. G. Hubbard, M.P., and of the handsome chancel, which was the gift of the present Duke of Buckingham, and built at a cost of over £2,300, the foundation of which was laid by the lamented Duchess of Buckingham, July, 1865.

“THE ROYAL LATIN SCHOOL,

which is without doubt the oldest building in the town, was erected by Matthew Stratton, Archdeacon of Buckingham, 1260, who dedicated it a chapel to Thomas à Becket, probably in memory of that prelate's visit to Buckingham as Chancellor, 1169. After the lapse of 200 years the building became dilapidated, and the chapel was partially rebuilt by Archdeacon Ruding between 1479 and 1480. After its restoration the building was used as a chantry chapel till 1546, when it was presumably used for the Grammar School founded here by the Royal Commission at that date, in augmentation of a gift of Dame Denton's for the education of six boys in Latin, English, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. In the lapse of years this chapel became for the second time dilapidated. The roof fell in, and the ground floor was dug up and used as a garden. In 1776 a new roof, constructed principally from the timbers of the old church, was placed upon

the building by Earl Temple, and the chapel used for divine service during the erection of the present church. Since that time it has been again used for educational purposes. It is an interesting building, and will well repay a visit to it.

“CASTLE HOUSE.

“It is only necessary for me to mention that this house was the headquarters of King Charles I. during his stay in this borough, A.D. 1644. Here it was that the Lady Richardson, mistress of the house, received and paid homage to her sovereign and gave him a hearty welcome, which could only be surpassed by the genial manner in which the present owner and his hospitable wife, Mr. and Mrs. H. Hearn, will welcome any of the members and their friends who will cross the threshold of their door and inspect the dining-room used by that king, which they have so generously thrown open to the members of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society.”

The paper concluded,

Sir Harry Verney, M.P., said he was sure they all wished to thank the Rev. F. G. Kiddle for his kindness in preparing and reading to them so interesting an essay. It added very much to the pleasure of their visit, and no doubt many of them had learnt from it much with which they were hitherto unacquainted. He thought they might also offer to Mr. Kiddle their most sincere congratulations on the beautiful building which was now his church. It had been, up to lately, a far from interesting building, but now it excited their admiration, and he could not help offering Mr. Kiddle his sincere congratulations upon it. He would also take the opportunity of saying that he hoped on some future occasion Lady Verney and himself would have the happiness of receiving the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society at Claydon.

The party then proceeded to view the school referred to in his paper by Mr. Kiddle, and admired the traces of Norman work in the exterior of the building. Unfortunately, on account of the keys not being at hand, they were unable to see the interior. From the school the visitors went to Mr. Hearn's interesting residence, where they met with a most hospitable reception. On assembling in “King Charles's room,” Mr. Hearn read the subjoined notes on the history of the house:—

“Browne Willis records that in the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. this house, called the Castle House, was the seat of John Barton, senior, one of the Knights of the Shire. By his will made in 1431 it passed to John Barton, junior, his brother, and to his sisters Margaret and Isabel. Afterwards it became the property of William Fowler, Richard Fowler, and Edward Fowler successively, the latter of whom entertained Catherine, first Queen of Henry VIII. She received here the news of the victory of Flodden Field, 1513. About the year 1592 one Theophilus Adams successfully claimed the estate, under a grant from the Crown, as having been given to superstitious uses, a sum of £6 13s. 4d. per annum having been charged upon it by John Barton, senior, in favour of a priest who was to celebrate Daily Mass at Barton's Chantry in the Church of Buckingham. The trial is reported at length in Coke's Reports.

“In 1719 (time of James I.) William Lambard and Mary, his wife, were the owners of the property, and made considerable alterations in it. They erected part of the carved mantel over the fire-place in what Browne Willis calls the ‘Great Parlour,’ and they put up several stones about the premises bearing their initials and the date 1623. They also built a conduit house over S. Rumbold's well, which had then fallen into disrepute as a holy well, and brought the water in leaden pipes half a mile for the service of Castle House and the appurtenant premises.

"After William Lambard's death his widow married Sir Edward Richardson, and in June, 1644, they received Charles I., who sojourned with them four days. A council of war was held during his Majesty's stay here. The details of this visit were fully described by the late Rev. Henry Roundell in an interesting lecture written and delivered by him during the time of his incumbency of the Vicarage of Buckingham.

"The house was greatly altered about the year 1708 (time of Queen Anne) by Mr. Matthias Roger, the then owner, all the front rooms being then rebuilt. About the year 1835 the property was purchased by Mr. Thos. Hearn from Mr. Philip Box, the representative of the Irish branch of that family. The house was then quadrangular, but the north side was so dilapidated that upon the advice of Sir Gilbert Scott it was pulled down and the house thrown open to the garden terraces on that side. Nothing further was done to the house until 1881, when, under the direction of Mr. E. Swinfen Harris, as architect, the present occupiers restored the Great Parlour by adding an oak beam to those already spanning the room, and by throwing open the north window, which for a period unknown had been shut off by a partition from the other portion of the apartment. They have also put fresh glass into the two windows on the west side of the room."

At the conclusion of the paper, Canon Evetts, on behalf of those present, thanked Mr. Hearn for his cordial reception of the members of the Society, and also for his interesting annotations.

The members then drove to Maidsmoreton.

The Rev. R. H. Pigott, one of the hon. secs. of the Society, read a few extracts from Lipscombe, in the church, and remarked that its founders appeared to have been two maiden ladies, whose names were variously spelt, although it was believed that the correct rendering was Peover.

The church is a handsome structure in the Perpendicular style, consisting of a nave, with two porches, a chancel, and a beautiful embattled tower at the west end. The tower has angular buttresses, and a curious doorway in the west side, under a projecting panelled battlement, which is supported by rich fan tracery, springing from the jamb-mouldings. In the upper story of the tower are four large and lofty windows, with cinquefoil heads, under a pointed arch decorated with a moulding, a very strong angular mullion dividing each window vertically. At the north-west angle is a very singularly arranged stair turret, embattled. The north porch is in two bays, with rich fan tracery on the ceiling, and a fine oak door, with rich panelling. On the south side of the chancel is a range of three stone stalls of equal height, having a demi-octagonal canopy divided into compartments, arranged in regular series of trefoiled arches with transverse mullions; between each stall is a clustered column with pinnacles and lofty finial. The canopy is divided into three portions over each stall, forming a lofty bracket arch with cinquefoil border richly carved, and terminating above in a beautifully flowered finial. Fragments of stained glass remain in the windows; and there are numerous objects of interest in the church, including some quaintly-worded inscriptions, and a parish register with entries of a strong Royalist tendency, made during the time of civil strife in England, and on the restoration of Charles II.

The Rev. R. H. Pigott having drawn attention to the characteristics of the building, added that the tracery already referred to had a similarity to that in Hillesden Church, both of which churches had been damaged during the Civil Wars.

Mr. E. Swinfen Harris, in the course of some observations, said the tower was almost identical with those to be seen in West Brittany, and there was some possibility that the mediæval architect of Maidsmoreton Church had seen churches there.

In entering the church, the visitors noticed the date 1637 over the

porch, and inside they read the inscription, "Sisters and maids, daughters of the Lord Pruet, the pious and munificent founders of this church." Interest was also manifested in the epitaph on a tablet to the memory of the Honourable Penelope Verney :—

" Underneath this stone doth lie
As much virtue as could die,
Which when alive did virtue give
To as much beauty as could live."

The next drive took the members through Akeley, towards Lillingstone Dayrell, where the church was to have been inspected, but on account of the lateness of the hour, the party pushed on to Stowe. Passing through Stowe Park, the visitors were welcomed at the mansion by his Grace, the President, and Lady Mary Grenville, with much kindness and urbanity. There was a short delay, during which a hasty observation was made of the hall, with its finely painted ceiling, by Kent, representing the seven planets allegorically, Mars, the principal or ruling one, being a likeness of King William III. presenting a sword to Field-Marshal Viscount Cobham, in allusion to the command of a regiment conferred upon him by that sovereign. The company then passed into the saloon, a magnificent oval-shaped apartment, with a domed roof, a cornice of the Doric order, with masks, Bacchantes, and Satyrs, and an attic supporting an alto-relievo, consisting of more than three hundred figures, designed and executed by Valdrè. The figures, most of which are nearly four feet high, are blended with various trophies, spoils, and animals, and disposed so as to represent a triumph or sacrifice. The cornice is supported by sixteen highly-finished scagliola columns, executed by Bartoli, in imitation of jasper; the bases and capitals are of white marble. In the walls are sixteen compartments, with trophies in bold relief, and in the niches a number of antique statues, in white marble. The company were next ushered into the state drawing-room, another handsome apartment, with a richly gilt ceiling, and containing a number of family and other portraits, and then passed into the state dining-room, where luncheon had been very kindly provided. The dining-room is another very elegant hall, fitted up with Brussels tapestry, representing Triumphs of Bacchus, Venus, Mars, and Diana, while over one of the chimney-pieces (which are of Sienna and white marble) are carvings of a goddess conducting Learning to Truth, and Mercury leading the Tragic and Comic Muses to Parnassus. At each end of the room is a finely carved side-board—on one of them an alabaster plateau, with figures of Niobe and her children, from the original at Florence; on the other a large group, in ormolu, modelled for a fountain, by a Prussian artist. After partaking of his Grace's hospitality, the party adjourned to the south porch, where his Grace, with the aid of manuscript notes, then addressed the members, his observations on the history of Stowe, its gardens, and the neighbourhood, being listened to with great attention. The address is printed in this number of the RECORDS.

The formal business of the Society was next proceeded with, the Rev. R. H. Pigott reading the following Annual Report :—

" Since the last annual meeting, which was held at Beaconsfield, changes have taken place in the executive of the Society, consequent on the resignation of our respected secretary, the Rev. Charles Lowndes. The list of new officers will be found in the current number of the RECORDS.

" The Library, together with the contents of the Museum, are about to undergo a thorough re-arrangement under the care of Mr. Gibbs, the hon. librarian, who will be assisted by the Rev. E. K. Clay, of Great Kimble, and a revised catalogue of both books and objects in the rooms of the Society will be prepared for publication.

"It is to be regretted that but few additions have of late been made either to the Library or the Museum; it is hoped that the claims of the Society, being so thoroughly of a local character, will not be overlooked, and that it will be borne in mind the Museum is a depository for any 'finds' which may be classed among specimens, and which may be discovered in the county.

"Three meetings have been held in the Society's rooms since the annual meeting of last year, simply for business transactions connected with the Society—one to consider the appointment of new officers, a second to ratify the appointments made, and a third for the introduction of new members.

"The Society now records upwards of 200 members, a number sufficient to place it in a position of local influence and usefulness for the objects it has in view.

"An additional number of the RECORDS of the Society has just been issued to members, being the 6th part of vol. 5.

"The early numbers of the Society's publications have become very scarce; several members are desirous of obtaining them. The Society is in possession of duplicate copies of some parts of its RECORDS which the Committee would be willing to dispose of to members requiring them, application for which should be made to the Librarian.

"The rooms of the Society have lately been repaired and improved by the Trustees of Bedford's Charity, the landlords; but some further trifling repairs to bookcases, locks, etc., are required, and some bookshelves are needed. These additions and repairs the Committee recommend to be carried out under the care of the Librarian.

"As the library consists mainly of works of reference, the Committee do not think it desirable that Books should be allowed to be taken from the room. Every facility, however, will be given to readers desirous of making extracts from the Society's books. The Committee, at the same time, do not wish to make this rule absolute, and will, in exceptional cases, allow works to be taken under special arrangement with the Librarian."

The President's kindness and hospitality were warmly acknowledged by the Hon. T. F. Fremantle, M.P., and the Rev. R. H. Pigott, on behalf of the Society.

His Grace then led the way to various objects of interest in the grounds, till the time arrived for the members and their friends to take their homeward journey.