

The Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1896.

THE Annual Excursion of the Society took place on Wednesday, the 10th August, 1896. The arrangements were undertaken by the Treasurer, Mr. Williams. The members and their friends numbered about seventy. Assembling at Aylesbury, they made their way through Leighton Buzzard, *en route* for Woburn Abbey, a beautiful drive through some characteristic Buckinghamshire scenery. On arriving at Woburn Abbey, which was opened to them by the kind permission of the Duke of Bedford, the party was shown through the picture galleries, library, Venetian room, and the statuary galleries. Unfortunately some interesting portions of the Abbey could not be seen as they were under repair. The picture galleries, however, are well worthy of attention, specimens of the works of Holbein, Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other masters are to be found on the walls. The majority of portraits are of the members of the Russell family. Those which claimed special attention were the portrait of the William Lord Russell, who was executed on the charge of being connected with the Rye House Plot, and of his wife, the Lady Rachel, who showed her heroic devotion to her husband at his trial; and one of Lord John Russell, evidently painted soon after the passing of the great Reform Bill. In the statuary gallery were found objects of archæological interest, particularly a sarcophagus from Ephesus finely sculptured in relief. The present mansion, chiefly erected by Flitcroft, and largely added to by Henry Holland, is disappointing. If it may be termed a dignified, yet it is a very gloomy structure, every vestige of the Abbey of the Cistercians, of any interest, was destroyed in 1747, and their once famous religious house has given place to a building the chief attraction of which is its connection with a distinguished and historic family.

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the town of Woburn, the Rev. T. J. Williams, Rector of Waddesdon, presiding. After the reading of the minutes, the President and Vice-Presidents were re-elected, and the Rev. R. H. Pigott, who had for many years acted as one of the Honorary Secretaries, was elected an additional Vice-President. The members of the Committee, who are subject to annual election, were re-elected with the addition of Mr. R. E. Goolden, Mr. S. Darby, and Mr. J. E. Copland Griffiths; the Rev. R. H. Pigott being elected Standing Chairman. Mr. J. Parker and Mr. A. H. Cocks were re-elected Honorary Secretaries, and Mr. J. Williams, Treasurer.

Mr. J. Williams made his financial report, showing a balance in hand of £36 10s. 4d., and pointed out that this was the largest balance the Society ever possessed, and enabled him to discharge the printer's bill which had in the past been generally two or three years in arrear. Mr.

John Parker reminded the members that the increased subscription of 10s. had been the means of placing the Society in a much healthier financial position. He then gave a report of the literary working of the Society, and announced the papers which would appear in the forthcoming RECORDS, which would be of exceptional interest.

Mr. Cocks made a few remarks upon the pile-dwelling which had been discovered at Hedsor—the only one known to exist in the South of England, and mentioned that it was interesting as being of a later date than others that had been found. Last autumn, whilst making excavations, those in charge of the work were completely flooded out, and Sir John Evans, in his character as President of the Society of Antiquaries, had promised them a steam-pump, but his (Mr. Cocks's) application was sent too late in the season, so they would have to wait till another year. The pile-dwelling had existed for many centuries, and one year would not make much difference. They might, however, discover that there was not only one dwelling, but many, covering some acres of ground. They had found remains of bones and curious objects cut out of oak, objects altogether new to Bucks. The Chetwode barrow which had been opened was somewhat disappointing, as it yielded nothing but a negative result. A windmill had stood upon the barrow, the foundations of which had been removed, and disclosed the largest amount of wood ashes he had ever seen in an aboriginal burial spot, but no bones were found. Referring to the Museum, he thought it was not a credit to the county, to the Society, or to himself. Only recently a gentleman had offered to present them with a collection of shells and minerals, but when he saw the place where they would have to be deposited he would not leave them, but withheld his intended gift. If they could get more cases the prospects of the Museum would be greatly improved.

The following were elected members of the Society:—Mr. and Mrs. Walter Baily, Terrier's Green, Wycombe; the Rev. J. W. W. Booth, Prestwood Vicarage; Mr. Charles Pigott, Brook House, Aylesbury; the Rev. C. O. Phipps, Aylesbury Vicarage; the Rev. W. B. Banting, Little Brickhill Vicarage; Mr. Thomas Hedges, Heywood House, Stewkley; and the Venerable the Archdeacon of Buckingham, Taplow.

Votes of thanks were passed to the Chairman and to Mr. Williams for organising the excursion.

After the Annual Meeting, some delay was occasioned by the conveyances not being in readiness, and, unfortunately, the intended visit to the three Brickhill Churches had to be abandoned, this was the more to be regretted as Mr. Banting, the Vicar of Little Brickhill, had prepared a paper to be read on the history and architecture of his church. A drive was consequently taken direct to Leighton Buzzard, and a visit was paid to the fine parish church of All Saints. Those of the members and their friends who had to catch the train at Aylesbury on the Wycombe branch line could only, in a cursory manner, view the church, the remainder were able to inspect it at their leisure, and also to examine Dr. Lawford's collection of antiquities.

The members and their friends were met at the church by Dr. Lawford, Mr. H. Pettit, Mr. Richmond, and other gentlemen, who pointed out its principal features. The elaborate ironwork of the west door was first examined, and excited much interest. It is supposed to have been made about the year 1290, by Master Thomas de Lightone, who is also credited with having made the iron screen for Queen Eleanor's tomb in Westminster Abbey. It is in an excellent state of preservation, and was evidently the work of no mean craftsman. Upon entering the church, Dr. Lawford made a few introductory remarks, after which Mr. Richmond read some extracts from a paper he had prepared.

He said the first authentic record they had of Leighton was in "Domesday," under the name of Lestone, and it was supposed to have been the Lygeanbirg of the "Saxon Chronicles." The earliest reference he could find to the second name—Buzzard—was in a letter in the muniment room of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, dated 1242, by the Bishop of that See to the Prebendary of "Lecton Buzzard," and again in the ordination of the vicarage in 1277. Buzzard was supposed by some to be a corruption of "Beau Assart" (a good clearing), by others to be taken from the family of Bozart, who were of some note in the county in the time of Edward II. and III. (1307-77). The Rectory of Leighton was originally possessed by the Bishop of Dorchester, as part of the endowment of that See, which was removed to Lincoln in 1073. The present building dated from the end of the 13th century. Mr. James Parker, at a meeting here of the Oxford Archæological Society in 1891, stated that there was nothing earlier in the present fabric than the work of the reign of Edward I. (1272-1307). The tower, spire, and most of the walls of the aisles and chancel were believed to be Early English; the nave, piers, arches, and chancel, Early English or very Early Decorated; and the windows nearly all Perpendicular, some of them having very good tracery. The font—a very solid piece of masonry—is Early English, and probably of earlier date than any portion of the fabric of the church. The vestry was thought to have been an anchorite's cell or priest's chamber. The remains of the stone staircase to the rood loft were on the south side of the chancel arch. The church was carefully restored in 1886 by Messrs. Bodley and Garner. The porches, which had been closed since 1841, and used for staircases to the galleries, were re-opened and the galleries removed. Some interesting details were brought to light in the transepts. The nave roof was a good specimen of its kind, the stone corbels having the instruments of the Passion carved upon them. Some of the woodwork of the church was specially worthy of notice, the base of the lectern being, with other specimens, of the earliest date. The oak stalls in the chancel were naturally associated with the Cistercian House which existed at Grovebury from 1177. The pulpit was a dated specimen of Jacobean work, and the folding board in the south transept bore a record to the effect that in 1638 Edward Wilkes "gave the cedar pulpit and a purple velvet cushion for the use of the minister." The altar table and altar rails, as well as the monuments, were also worthy of note.

The party, after an inspection of the principal objects to which attention had been called, proceeded to Dr. Lawford's residence, where they were entertained to tea in his garden, and afforded an opportunity of viewing his collection of Anglo-Saxon coins, ancient pottery, and other objects found in the immediate neighbourhood. Mr. H. Pettit also exhibited a very interesting collection of old coins and pottery, some of the coins being of very early date and excellent specimens.

The thanks of the members having been given to Dr. Lawford for his kindly reception and entertainment, the proceedings of the Society concluded.

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RECORDS
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