

RECORDS
OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,

OR PAPERS AND NOTES ON THE
HISTORY, ANTIQUITIES, AND ARCHITECTURE
OF THE COUNTY;

TOGETHER WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

Architectural and Archæological Society

FOR THE

COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM.

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PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.  
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Contents of No. 1.—Vol. VIII. :—

Preface. By THE EDITOR.

The Church Plate of Buckingham-
shire. By JOHN L. MYRES, M.A.,
F.S.A.

The Church Bells of Buckingham-
shire. (First Notice.) By E. J.
PAYNE, M.A., Recorder of
Wycombe.

Stained Glass from Westlington
House. By F. G. LEE, D.D.

The Parish Church of High
Wycombe. (Third Notice.) By
R. S. DOWNS.

The Disused Church of St. Mary,
Stoke Mandeville, and the Bru-
denell Monument. By THE
EDITOR.

Proceedings of the Society.

List of Officers and Members.

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RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

PREFACE.

THE commencement of the Eighth Volume of the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE gives a tangible proof that the Architectural and Archæological Society of the County has been doing some practical work since its formation. The ponderous folios which were required by a past generation to embrace a county history of acknowledged authority cannot be expected to be reproduced in an age so busy and restless as our own. It is all the more important therefore that the isolated articles which appear in archæological publications should be distinctly of merit either historically or archæologically; that each Society's object should be to secure papers in its journals from those best acquainted with different districts, so that in time valuable contributions may be brought together to form a continuous history of the particular County which the Society represents. It is of much consequence to bear in mind that antiquaries of undoubted learning who have compiled their histories during the last century were for the most part imperfectly acquainted with mediæval architecture. They lived before the Gothic revival and were preoccupied in their tastes with the spirit of the renaissance, so that even down to the early part of the present century there were but few amongst the well informed who could distinguish the different styles of Gothic architecture, and still fewer who could single out the successive periods during which these styles flourished and declined. Besides this,

archæologists of a past generation were absolutely unacquainted with the proofs from the river drifts and cave dwellings of the antiquity of man, and therefore the wide field of prehistoric enquiry was unattempted. Whilst attention might be given to the weapons and ornaments found in the opening of a barrow and classifications might be made through these excavations connecting the former with races living on the borders of historic periods, the implements of palæolithic man in the river drifts or the skilful bone carving of the cave men or the objects scattered in all directions over these islands, whether on the hills or in the valleys, clearly proving the presence of vast populations in the neolithic age, were either undiscovered or unperceived. The recent biography of Pengelly reminds us of what this century has learnt from the opening of ossiferous caverns such as those in Devonshire, and how completely the discoveries made have revolutionised previous conceptions as to the date when man made his first appearance on our globe.

One of the greatest defects of our County history, without reflecting on its author, for the reasons which may be gathered from the previous observations, is that Lipscomb supplies so meagre and often so inaccurate an account of the architecture of the parish churches. The church is for the most part the only building in the parish the history of which is the primary guide to the history of the district in which it stands. We want to trace its earliest features. We may or may not have been told who was its founder, whether it was built by a Lord of the Manor for his retainers, or whether it was originally reared by the monks for the parish in which they held the great tithes, or the church of a priory, the cell of some religious house. We need to know in detail the points in its history, the font, the arches, the windows, the screens, each is significant of the past. And what a

ascinating study the history of a parish church is when we make up our minds to find out by the aid of the mouldings, the masons' marks, in a word by the construction of the edifice, and its subsequent alterations, all that can be known of a building which may have been founded as far back as the Saxon period, and examples of Saxon work are in Buckinghamshire not far to seek, without referring to Wing, which has a fame of its own distinguishing it pre-eminently and apart among the early buildings of this country. As an illustration of what I am desirous to convey I will refer to the Church of Newton Longueville, which was visited by the Society during the past year. This was an alien priory, the gift of Walter Giffard, Earl of Buckingham, to the Abbey of St. Faith at Longueville in Normandy, on which I propose to say more in my second paper on "The Giffards." Now, it is reported to our Society that when Sir Arthur Bloomfield inspected this church he recognised the moulding of the north-west pillar of the nave as similar to some mouldings he had seen at the ruined Abbey of St. Faith at Longueville; the eminent architect only threw out this hint, but had he pursued his investigations the spirit of enquiry would have naturally led us to follow out his conclusions—a slight allusion of this kind only leads one to reflect on what we lose in the history of our Parish Churches through the lack of competent and patient investigation.

To bring the history of a County to which even exceptional attention may have been given in the past up to the standard of modern requirements there needs constantly the recruiting of investigators prepared to labour in the wide fields of research which a County affords.

In the latest Volume of the RECORDS it has been the purpose of the Editor to associate together, not only those who are the best able to impart knowledge gleaned

from the respective districts to which they have given attention, so that North, Mid, and South Bucks may be well represented, but also to enlist the co-operation of those who have special qualifications of affording to the reader the advantages of their researches on some definite subject, and it is confidently felt that this purpose has been accomplished, and that the Society, no less than the Editor, is fortunate in having secured the services of Contributors to the last Volume to whom both are under no little obligation. To pursue a similar method is proposed for the present Volume. By this means the Society's publication should attain the definite purpose of becoming the main resource for, if not of itself, constructing the future history of the County.

It will be fitting here to make a passing allusion to the completion and publication of Mr. Cocks's work on "The Church Bells of Buckinghamshire," the review of the volume in this number of the RECORDS renders it only necessary to say a few words on this important undertaking which cannot be excelled for the zeal and enthusiasm by which the work has been achieved. It is distinctly a matter upon which to congratulate the Society itself that one of its most active members should have brought to completion a standard authority for years to come on the history of the bells of this County. The work, it should be remembered, originated with a paper in the fifth volume of the RECORDS on the bells of the Churches of the hundred of Desborough, the paper appearing in the year 1884, and from that time Mr. Cocks continued his labours till his task was successfully accomplished.

The Society is indebted to Mr. J. L. Myres for undertaking to bring together, with considerable care and trouble, an account of the Church plate of the County. The second of the series of papers on this subject appears in this number. It is needless to say

that the work is in able hands, and that when it is completed it will form not only an interesting but a very requisite record, which will be as useful as it will be suggestive to the future investigator of this branch of ecclesiastical history. It is, by the way, of the utmost importance that the Clergy should make a careful return of the plate of their parish Churches, remembering that complete accuracy is essential to insure a perfect account, and that the enquirer is performing his task as a labour of love, and, therefore, will rely on sympathetic co-operation.

It appeared to me that special attention should be called to that which Mr. Cocks has accomplished, and to that which Mr. Myres is prosecuting in the cause of archæology, although there are single papers in the last volume to which special reference might well be made of marked originality of research that will be readily recalled to the mind of the reader.

Before passing, however, from subjects specially connected with our own Society, I must not omit to allude to the opening of the pile dwelling at Hedsor and to the discoveries that have been already made, and to the proposals for further excavations at the site with the aid, it is hoped, of the Society of Antiquaries, to which attention has been called in the past volume. These discoveries are of considerable interest, connected as they are with the races that occupied the Thames Valley in prehistoric times. I need only say in passing it is earnestly desired that adequate help will be forthcoming to prosecute the investigations, which are only delayed for lack of funds.

A decided advantage has been gained by bringing our Society into union with the Archæological Congress. Every meeting of this Congress proves the important and varied work before the members. The late President of the Antiquaries, Sir Wollaston Franks, in

his last address to the Society, gave some striking information bearing on the legislation in different European countries and in the United States in regard to the preservation of ancient monuments, and in summing up the facts he had ascertained, he says—"As a general survey of the information, given in response to the Society's inquiries, it appears that every State in Europe except Russia does more for the preservation of its historical monuments than our own." This may well be read with surprise by those of our countrymen who are unacquainted with the facts, but the contrast of the care bestowed on the monoliths at Carnac, with the indifference with which Avebury is treated by our Authorities, although at length recognised as a monument to be preserved, is at the very least disheartening.*

It is satisfactory, however, to know that the Society of Antiquaries is in communication with our Government with a view to the better understanding in influential quarters of our relative position on this question, and to provide well-considered legislation for the protection of our national monuments, and that the steps which are being taken were brought to the notice of the last meeting of the Archæological Congress.

The value of our own Society's union with the Congress will be apparent to the members, as it places

* *Note.*—"In France the vote for preserving or purchasing antiquities is usually £50,000 per annum, and in the Colony of Algeria antiquities belong to the State. In Austria there is a central commission for preserving monuments which works with local societies. In Switzerland there is a federal commission, and over £2,000 per annum is voted for Swiss antiquities, while rich England can only afford, under Sir J. Lubbock's Bill, £100 for expenses and £250 for inspector's salary. In Denmark, in 1895, the grant for this purpose was £1,500. In Italy the destruction of antiquities is a legal offence. In Spain the Government acts with the provincial authorities in cataloguing and preserving antiquities, and even in Russia there exists a similar commission."—*Extract from a Paper read at the British Archæological Association, appearing in "The Atheneum" for June 11, 1898.*

in their hands the index of archæological papers published each year; the index shows the varied work and extended fields of enquiry by different societies, the subjects treated of by different writers, gives some insight into the remarkable activity that is being displayed in this particular branch of literature, and at the same time affords useful references to investigations which may be engaging special attention.

It would exceed the limits of a preface to enumerate and explain all that is projected by the Congress. I will therefore merely mention some other prominent undertakings. A Committee has been in existence for some years for promoting the transcription and publication of parish registers, and in its report in 1896 the Committee holds out a hope that at no great distance of time the whole of the parish registers of the Kingdom may be transcribed; it is needless to expatiate on the desirability of accomplishing such a task. Then there is a project for the photographic survey of England and Wales; faithful representations of architectural objects, and of various relics of historic value, from the shape of a tumulus to the exquisite finish of a canopied tomb, will be a great gain, not only to students, but to archæology itself in various ways. I must also not omit to refer to a national catalogue of portraits, the formation of which was resolved upon at the Congress meetings of the past two years. It is explained that the primary object is the compilation of a general reference catalogue to be deposited in the National Portrait Gallery. By each Society assisting in making returns from its own locality, it will be at once seen what an opportunity is presented for reviving the memories of families who have contributed to the history, not only of their own County, but who may have taken a prominent part in the history of the nation. "The Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War," and the illustrations of the portraits at Claydon House

adorning these volumes, give an example highly suggestive of what may be brought to light by carefully prepared catalogues of portraits on the walls, more especially of country seats or Municipal buildings. It is not so much as works of art that portraits of men and women who have been more or less distinguished in their day are valuable, but because, by calling attention to their existence, a revived interest in past generations throughout an entire County is gained, the advantages of which, from an historical point of view, it would be difficult to gauge. To the imagination, a portrait brings us perhaps in nearest contact to life itself; as an illustration of the depth of this impression on the mind, will not the well-known inscription on the vessel in Voltaire's Villa at Ferney, in which his heart was intended to be deposited, placed in the room surrounded by portraits of familiar faces, furnish an example, "*Mes mânes sont consolés puisque mon cœur est au milieu de vous*"? An account of the work before the Congress would not be exhausted by the reference already made to the subjects that are engaging its attention; but enough has been said to show that the range of our Society's prospects of usefulness is considerably broadened by its association with a number of societies, headed by the Society of Antiquaries of London, having kindred aims and objects.

Since the commencement of the last volume of the RECORDS the deaths have been recorded of Dr. Bickersteth, Dean of Lichfield, one of the most prominent members of the Society in its early days; of Mr. Robert Gibbs, F.S.A., who took a deep personal interest in the working of the Society, and whose familiar presence at our meetings has been greatly missed; of Sir Harry Verney who was one of the Vice-Presidents for a lengthened period, and whose efforts in the last years of his long life were devoted to the founding of a museum worthy of the County in which he was so highly respected.

There is much important work for the Society to accomplish; in the front rank are, as just alluded to, the proposals for a museum of suitable proportions, although the project is still in abeyance, and without particularizing at length, we have only to be reminded that the Archæological Map of the County has yet to be undertaken.

The difficulties which the Society has to encounter are in the lack, to a certain degree, of the recognition of a central influence in Buckinghamshire, arising mainly from two causes, the one its nearness to London where the absorbing influence of three great archæological societies is all-powerful, and the other the imperfect railway communication, rendering it all but impracticable to bring together at one given spot members resident at the two extremities of the County for a day of investigation, but in spite of the difficulties the Society shows unmistakable signs of its vitality, it never was in a more healthy position financially, and, perhaps, never could reckon on a more able number of archæologists to give their ungrudging aid to the Editor by their contributions to the pages of this publication.

JOHN PARKER.

DESBOROUGH HOUSE, HIGH WYCOMBE,
June 30th, 1898.