

# The Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1901.

The annual excursion of the Bucks Archæological Society took place on Thursday, July 18, and the locality visited was St. Albans. Among the members of the Society who took part in the day's proceedings were the following:—Mr. J. Parker and Mr. A. H. Cocks (hon. secs.), Mr. J. Williams (the treasurer and organising secretary), the Revs. J. C. Farmborough, M. Graves, F. H. Tatham, E. D. Shaw, and J. L. Challis, Sir Henry Smythe, Messrs. J. F. Armstrong, F. H. Deverell, R. Richmond, A. Vernon, G. Weller, F. C. J. Long, S. Payne, F. W. Bull, H. Arnatt, J. T. Harrison, G. Wilson, R. H. Barrett, W. Bradbrook, the Misses Giles, and several other ladies. They assembled at the Cathedral soon after noon, and, arranging themselves in the seats at the East end of the nave, they were addressed by Mr. W. Page, F.S.A., who had kindly consented to act as guide to the party while viewing the church. He said that before going round the Cathedral it might be appropriate to say a few words as to the origin and history of the Abbey. It was generally stated that the martyrdom of St. Alban took place A.D. 303, under the persecution initiated by the Emperor Diocletian, and the event was assigned to that year by most of the ancient authors; but there was an earlier date given in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, viz., 286, which he considered the more likely. At that time Asclepiodotus commanded in Britain, and recovered it for the Roman Empire after the revolt under Carausius and Allectus. It was afterwards under Constantius Chlorus and Constantine the Great, and it was difficult to believe that either of them would have sanctioned such a persecution in any part of their dominions. Alban had given shelter to Amphibalus, a Deacon of the Christian Church, by whom he was converted to the Faith. The martyrdom of St. Alban took place on the spot where the church now stands. In 429 A.D. St. German visited Verulam, where a synod or council was held to refute the Pelagian heresy. Before returning to France he caused the tomb and coffin of Alban to be opened, and deposited therein certain relics of the Apostles and Martyrs. The next event of importance connected with the subject was the founding of an Abbey in honour of St. Alban, in 793, by Offa II., King of Mercia, who is said to have been led to the spot where the remains of Alban lay concealed by a light from heaven. On their being discovered Offa had them conveyed to a little church on the hill, which had escaped the fury of the pagans, until a more worthy edifice could be erected. That little church, according to tradition, stood on the site of the present Cathedral. Very little was known about the Saxon edifice, which was probably constructed out of the remains of the ancient city of Verulam. The oldest portion of the present church was erected by Paul of Caen, the first Norman Abbot, who ruled from 1077 to 1097. The materials used were stones, and Roman tiles from Verulam, and timber which had been collected by his predecessors. One bay on the North side remained just as it was left by Paul de Caen; the others were altered by the insertion of windows in the triforium under the rule of Abbot Wheathampstead, for in the Perpendicular period it was considered necessary to obtain as much light as possible.

The visitors having taken a general survey of the nave, a move was made to the west end, where Mr. Page pointed out the foundations of an Early English tower at the end of the north wall, commenced by Abbot John de Cella in 1197, his idea being to embellish the west end by two flanking towers. He left the work unfinished, and it was completed by his successor, Abbot Trumpington. These foundations were subsequently used as a kind of porch to the parochial church of St. Andrew, destroyed in 1553. The length of the nave of the Abbey Church was abnormal. The Norman church extended as far as the third bay from the west, and was lengthened probably in the Early English period, when there was a development of ritual, and the processions were very long.

After examining the Decorated and Early English arches in the nave, the party proceeded eastward to view the ancient distemper paintings of the Crucifixion on the west faces of the Norman piers, which were executed by the once famous St. Albans school of painting. The oldest painting dates back to the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century, and represents our Lord upon the Cross, with St. John and the Blessed Virgin on either side. Besides the crucifixion two of the piers have representations of the Virgin and Child, two have the Annunciation, and a fifth the Coronation of the Virgin. The paintings on the south faces of the piers represent (1) St. Christopher bearing the infant Christ through a stream; (2) St. Thomas of Canterbury (à Becket), who was collated to his first living, Brantfield, in Hertfordshire, by the Abbot of St. Albans; (3) St. Citha or Osyth, with a rosary in her left hand; (4) Doubtful: supposed to be Edward the Confessor relieving a pilgrim, who has a satchel at his right hand and a staff in his left hand. In 1323 five of the Norman bays on the south side fell down, and were re-built by Abbot Hugh de Eversden in the Decorated style. The hood mouldings rest upon heads representing (1) a bishop or abbot (De Eversden); (2) a Queen (Isabella of France); (3) a King (Edward II.); (4) probably the master mason (Master Geoffrey). The rood screen was erected by Abbot De la Mare in 1330, but has been a good deal mutilated and restored at different times.

On arriving at the east end of the south aisle the visitors had to pass through an oaken screen to gain access to the eastern portions of the church. It is customary to make a charge of 6d. for each person passing through, which goes to the Restoration Fund; but on this occasion, by permission of the Dean, only 3d. was charged. In the south aisle of the choir is the Early English recessed tomb of the hermits, Roger and Sigar. The latter dwelt in the wood of Northaw, and, being disturbed in his devotions by the singing of the nightingales, he prayed that they might never again be heard in that neighbourhood. Tradition says his request was granted, and that these feathered songsters were no more heard in Northaw Wood. Mr. Page, however, said he would not vouch for the accuracy of the story.

The south transept was next visited. Here some very interesting objects were pointed out. A recess in the west wall contains three carved oak livery cupboards, which are filled with loaves of bread every Sunday for distribution to the poor according to the will of Robert Skelton, 1628. Under the great south window is some Norman wall arcading, removed from the Slype, in which is preserved a large quantity of architectural fragments built into the walls. In the east wall of the transept are two recesses, which led into two Norman apsidal chapels dedicated to St. John the Evangelist and St. Stephen. They contain a collection of architectural fragments brought to light at different times, including a curious figure of St. George. The baluster shafts in the triforium are remains of the Saxon Church.

In the choir Mr. Page directed attention to the beautiful 15th century painted ceiling, which was discovered during the restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott. The ceiling is divided into 66 panels, containing heraldic shields representing the principal family connections of Edward III. Two panels in the centre represent the coronation of the Blessed Virgin. Every alternate panel contains the sacred monogram in Greek characters. The north transept, a part of Abbot Paul de Caen's church, contains a monument to Thomas Legh Claughton, the first Bishop of St. Alban, who died in 1892. The rose window was inserted by Lord Grimthorpe. The stained glass in the two Norman windows below depicts the four Latin doctors of the Church of SS. Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome. Here is also a curious painting representing the Incredulity of St. Thomas, which formed one of a pair illustrating the history of the Resurrection. The balluster shafts in the triforium are similar to those in the south transept, and two of them are remnants of the Saxon Church. The pulpit near the north-east pier of the tower was designed by Mr. J. O. Scott, and was presented to the church by the Freemasons of England, who claim St. Alban as their patron. In Abbot Ramryge's Chapel there is some very interesting carving, and some of the panels contain a ram with a collar round its neck, inscribed with the letters "RYGE," forming a rebus upon the Abbot's name.

The screen of the High Altar is of clunch, and was completed in 1484, and is considered one of the finest in this country of that period. With the exception of two, all the statues were destroyed in the 16th century. The restoration of this beautiful screen has been undertaken by Lord Aldenham, who has caused the niches to be re-filled with figures, of which there are 24 large and 41 smaller ones. The centre of the screen is occupied by a large crucifix, and immediately over the altar is a representation of the Resurrection by Mr. Alfred Gilbert, R.A., which is not yet completed. This screen is very similar to that at Winchester Cathedral, and it is considered to be the work of the same artist. The figures are cut in Mansfield Woodhouse stone, and the sculpture was executed by Mr. Harry Hems, of Exeter; the crosiers, sceptres, and swords are of hammered copper. It was before the High Altar here that the body of Eleanor, Queen of Edward I., rested in 1291, when on its way to Westminster. The Eleanor Cross in the High Street was pulled down about the year 1700, and a drinking fountain now occupies its place. In the south aisle of the Saints' Chapel is the tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, protector of the kingdom during the minority of Henry VI. In front of the tomb is an ancient iron screen of the time of Edward I., said to be the only trellis grille in England. A trap door gives access to some steps leading down to Duke Humphrey's vault, and one gentleman, more venturesome than the rest of the party, went down to get a view of the coffin. The shrine of St. Alban has been re-constructed from more than 2,000 pieces, of which it was composed, which were found built up into the walls of the Saints' chapel. They were carefully put together in 1872. The shrine proper, or *feretrum*, which was borne in the processions, stood on the top of the pedestal, and was covered by a wooden canopy, which could be raised or lowered by means of a rope running through a pulley. The Watch Gallery on the north side is of carved oak, and in it a monk was posted to keep continual guard over the shrine. The stairs are made of solid blocks of oak. The lower portion of the gallery contains cupboards, or lockers, in which are several relics and architectural fragments. Among the curiosities preserved here is a bridal garland, which formerly hung in the south aisle of the nave in memory of a bride who died on her wedding day. After viewing

the handsome brass of Abbot de la Mare, circa 1375, one of the finest in England, the visitors passed into the Lady Chapel, erected by Abbot Hugh de Eversden (1308-26) in the Decorated style. After the Dissolution this chapel was converted into a Grammar School. The school has been removed to the Abbey gateway, and the chapel thoroughly restored. The carvings, which are naturalistic, were executed by Mr. John Baker, of Kennington Park Road, and represent the flora of the district. On leaving the Cathedral attention was directed to the four Evangelists at the western entrance, the figure of St. Matthew being a likeness of Lord Grimthorpe. The party, under the direction of Mr. Page, next viewed the old gate house, erected in the time of Edward III., the Cloisters, and other remains, after which they proceeded to the Peahen Hotel for luncheon, at the conclusion of which was held

#### THE ANNUAL MEETING.

over which General Sir Henry Smyth, K.C.M.G., presided. Mr. John Parker said that owing to the death of the late Bishop of Oxford they were without a President. He thought it would be best not to elect anyone to the office that day, but to leave the matter in the hands of the Committee to recommend a President. They wanted someone who would take a personal interest in the work of the Society, and assist in its labours. The retiring Vice-Presidents were re-elected, and Sir Henry Smyth was elected a Vice-President on the proposition of Mr. R. H. Barrett, seconded by Mr. G. Weller. Mr. Cocks proposed, and Mr. J. Parker seconded, the proposition that Mr. E. J. Payne, M.A., should be elected a Vice-President, which was carried unanimously. In seconding the proposal, Mr. Parker reminded the meeting of Mr. Payne's long and valued services to the Society, and of his great literary undertaking as the historian of America. Sir Henry Smyth thanked the Society for the honour they had conferred upon him. Their work was a praiseworthy study—he was too old to do much himself, but he should be pleased to do what he could. The Rev. E. D. Shaw was appointed Chairman of the Committee. All the retiring members were re-elected, and the name of Mr. R. H. Barrett was added to the list. The Hon. Secs. (Mr. J. Parker and Mr. A. H. Cocks), the Treasurer (Mr. J. Williams), and the Auditors (Mr. T. Horwood and Mr. E. Wilkins) were also re-elected.

The Treasurer (Mr. J. Williams) then made his financial statement, from which it was apparent that the Society was in a more flourishing condition than it had been for some time. They commenced the year with a balance of £5:12:5, and had received £2:4 for the sale of books, £13:15 for the launch provided at the last year's excursion, and £77:13 in subscriptions. Their payments had been as follow:—Rent of Museum, £6; caretaker, £4:15; Archaeological Index, £1:13; Archaeological Congress, £1; printing "Records," £50; expenses of last year's excursion, £9:8; Treasurer, £5; commission on subscriptions collected, £3:16; sundries, carriage, stamps, and insurance, £3:9:1; leaving a balance in hand of £14:3:4. They had 21 life members, 15 compounding members, 152 annual subscribers, and 6 honorary members, making a total of 194 members.

Mr. Parker, in his report, said that he regretted nothing had been done towards the preservation of the old Church of St. Mary, at Stoke Mandeville. Mr. Williams had undertaken to make inquiries on the spot as to what steps could be taken towards the preservation of the building. The Archdeacon of Buckingham had recommended the appointment of a small Committee to go into the matter. It was a work which their Society ought to

interest itself in, for surely one of their objects was the preservation of such an object of antiquity as an old parish church. Mr. Bradbrook had prepared a report on the question of the transcription and publication of the Parish Registers of the County, which would be left to the consideration of the Committee, consisting of Mr. Cocks, Mr. Shaw, and Mr. Bradbrook. Mr. Parker then explained the provisions of "The Ancient Monuments Protection Act, 1900," and particularly called attention to the Act recognising the principle that a local authority, such as a County Council, may be called upon to undertake the care of local antiquarian objects of recognised importance. Each member of the Committee had been requested to report to him on any object which came under his observation, and which should be preserved under the provisions of the Act. Mr. Parker next called attention to Mr. Keyser's learned and beautifully-illustrated paper on "The Norman Doorways of Bucks," to whom the thanks of the Society were due. He then referred to the papers that would appear in the forthcoming number of "The Records."

Mr. A. H. Cocks said that he had always on those occasions something to say about their Museum, which would never take its proper place until they had a suitable room in which to keep and arrange their collections; but as it was not the moment to solicit contributions for the purpose, they must do the best they could for the present with the accommodation they had. As far as the building was concerned, it was now in a sound condition. In consequence of his having removed to a new home, he had not been able to complete his account of the ancient Pile Dwellings at Hedsor and the relics discovered during the excavations. He hoped, however, to be able to do so in the course of a few more months. He had purchased a good case to contain antiquarian objects, but when it arrived at Aylesbury they found they could only just manage to get it into their room by something less than half-an-inch. It was a really good case, and would hold specimens from the Hedsor Pile Dwellings and also the specimens of palaeolithic and neolithic relics given them by Mr. Goolden, which were a very handsome addition to their Museum. In conclusion, he proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Goolden for his gift, which was seconded by Mr. Williams, and carried unanimously.

The meeting confirmed the Committee's appointment of Mr. Cocks, Mr. Shaw, and Mr. Bradbrook as a Sub-Committee to take into consideration the question of the publication of the ancient Parish Registers of the County, of which there are about 200 in existence. A conversation ensued upon the subject, and it was the general opinion that there should be a separate organization for transcribing and publishing the Parish Registers, and that the annual subscription on its behalf should not exceed 10s. 6d.

The following were elected members of the Society:—Rev. C. H. Parez, Mentmore; Mr. and Mrs. George Willson, Wendover; and Mr. F. C. H. Jones, Wycombe. A vote of thanks was passed to Sir Henry Smythe for presiding, on the proposition of Mr. Cocks, and the Chairman having acknowledged the compliment, the proceedings terminated.

The members then, under the guidance of Mr. Page, proceeded to the Herts County Museum, where some time was spent in examining the objects of interest exhibited in the various rooms, but time did not allow of a minute examination of all the relics of antiquity which have found a home in this excellently-arranged Museum. On the way to Verulam the visitors stopped a few minutes at the old Clock Tower, erected in 1410, and in which the Curfew Bell had continued to be rung every evening till 1860. Passing southward along the lower part of the city, over the River Ver, the party traversed a raised causeway with a deep fosse on each side, then crossed a corn field into a plantation

of trees bounded by a deep, broad vallum, in order to get a good view of the outer wall of the Romano-British town of Verolanium. The wall was a massive structure constructed of rubble, chalk, and flint, with the lower portion bonded by three rows of Roman bricks. The ancient Watling Street originally ran through Verolanium, but its direction has since been diverted so as to pass through the more modern city of St. Albans. Its former course, however, can easily be traced, as some of the trees which grew on its margin are still existent in a long row across the centre of a large piece of meadow land, and were pointed out to the visitors by Mr. Page as they wended their way to the ancient Church of St. Michael, which stood to the north of Watling Street. This Church was erected at the same time as St. Peter's and St. Stephen's, circa 948, by Ulsinus, or Ulsic, the 6th Abbot of St. Albans, to whom the present town of St. Albans may be considered to owe its origin, as he laid out the principal streets and established a market. The visitors spent some time in examining the numerous points of interest in St. Michael's Church, which exhibits remains of architecture ranging from the Saxon and Norman to the Perpendicular period. The building originally consisted of a nave and chancel, to which were subsequently added a north aisle, and a chantry chapel, dedicated to Our Lady, on the south; and Lord Grimthorpe built the present vestry and tower in 1897. The Jacobean pulpit is of oak, finely carved, and still retains the iron framework in which formerly stood the hour-glass. Under the modern altar is an ancient altar-slab, with the usual five crosses incised upon it. It was found during the restoration of the Lady Chapel. In the north wall of the sanctuary, in a recess, is the monument to the famous chancellor yet greater philosopher, Bacon, who resided at Gorhambury, some vestiges of which mansion are still to be seen near the modern residence of the Earl of Verulam. Bacon is represented seated, and with his hat on. In the vestry is preserved a curious picture that was at one time in the chancel arch. It represents the final judgment, and the figures of different persons are seen rising from stone coffins, such as were in use during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Soon after leaving St. Michael's Church the party separated in order to catch their trains home; but before doing so Mr. Parker took occasion to thank Mr. Page very heartily for his great kindness in accompanying them during the day, and placing at their service the vast stores of knowledge which he has gained respecting the Abbey, and the other places which had been visited. Mr. Page has devoted years of study and research to the history and antiquities of the city and its cathedral, and also to the remains of the ancient British, Roman, and Saxon Verulam, and the members of the Society were indeed very fortunate in being able to have the benefit of his valuable services on the occasion of their visit. The thanks of the members were also due to Mr. Williams for the excellent manner in which the excursion was organized.

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NOTE.—The account of the Society's visit to St. Albans was revised from that prepared by Mr. R. S. Downs for "The Bucks Herald," and to whom the Editor is mainly indebted.

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