

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.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.

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RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

PREFACE.

IN commencing another Volume of the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE an opportunity is afforded of bringing before the members of the Society briefly and by an imperfect sketch its objects, its working in the past, and the future which may be before it. The preface is not written by one who has first gone through a completed volume, but is an introduction to that which is to come. It should therefore, though, of course, the method is far less satisfactory, be a substitute for a presidential address.

Before the completion of the last volume of the RECORDS the Society had to lament the loss of its President, Dr. Stubbs. It could not be expected, from his multifarious engagements as a Bishop and a great historian, that he could take an active part in the working of the Society, but notwithstanding this his position as President was highly appreciated. Among the Members who have passed away the Society has lost the Rev. Randolph Henry Pigott, a former honorary secretary, who took a warm interest in its welfare, and the Rev. Thomas Williams, whose knowledge as a genealogist was very considerable. Obituary notices of Mr. Pigott and Mr. Williams will be found in the last volume.

Perhaps the most significant work that has been accomplished in connection with the Society during the period from the commencement of Vol. VIII. has been the attention given to the remains of religious houses in the county. The site of the small Benedictine Nunnery of St. Mary, Little Marlow, has been excavated under the superintendence of Mr. C. R. Peers, F.S.A. Mr. Harold Brakspear, F.S.A., has superintended the excavations of the remains of

Burnham Abbey, a religious house of Augustinian Canonesses, he having previously excavated the remains of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, a religious house of the same foundation as Burnham. These excavations at Little Marlow and Burnham have been recorded in two valuable papers in the last volume of the Society's publication. The illustrations to the paper on Burnham Abbey are of exceptional interest. Mr. Brakspear was desirous to continue his work of investigation by excavating the remains of Bitlesden Abbey, but it was found that all vestiges of this Abbey had been completely obliterated. Indeed, it has been in contemplation that a complete scheme for excavating the religious houses of the county should be organised, if the owners could be prevailed upon to sanction operations on their different properties. And here it may be remarked that a thorough investigation of the ruins of the important Abbey of Notley is greatly to be desired by archæologists.

Mr. Forsyth's series of papers on the Churches in the Hundred of Desborough, accompanied by his excellent and fascinating illustrations, reveals a type of small village Churches in out-of-the-way parts of the beautiful Chiltern district. All indicating their Norman origin from the impressive and unique tower of Fingest to the diminutive nave of Ibstone Church. And here, whilst considering the value of systematic treatment of the subject of ancient buildings, we must not omit to recall the beautifully-illustrated paper of Mr. Charles E. Keyser, F.S.A., on the Norman Doorways in the county, described by one possessing complete acquaintance with his subject. Special acknowledgments are due to those who have thus contemplated and to some extent carried out a scheme for systematically investigating and recording buildings of historic interest and that can be distinctively classified in this county. Indebtedness is no less felt to the writers of papers in the past volume on subjects that needed elucidation, and which will be readily recalled.

Thanks to the energy of Mr. A. H. Cocks, to the generosity of General Sir Henry Smyth and other friends of the Society, a distinct improvement is to be noticed in the Museum, as the additional cases and

the objects now to be seen will prove. Yet it only needs a visit to the Museum to realise how inadequate the building itself is for the purpose to which it is intended, and how unworthy it is to be deemed a county institution. For a well-organised Museum, comprehensive in its scheme and the objects exhibited is, it will be conceded, an institution of no slight importance, and when thus well-equipped its use or neglect will surely indicate the tone of society in which it is placed. We may rest assured that with intellectual progress the needs-be of a Museum will be increasingly felt. Experience will prove that it instructs in an unlooked-for way, and that the student is often assisted in his researches when books have failed him—this, of course, seems so evident that the truism might probably have been omitted, and yet, with notable exceptions, the coldness with which the project for an improved Museum has been often received argues the necessity for calling to mind a great defect among the institutions of Buckinghamshire. It may be that the contemplated Loan Exhibition at the Society's approaching Jubilee celebration will stir up greater interest in a subject to a degree dormant at the present, and if it does the Jubilee will have accomplished one of the main objects for which the celebration is intended.

Local archaeologists will be looking forward with keen expectation for the issue of the Victorian County History. Judging from the history of other counties already published under similar auspices, it may be anticipated that the history of this county will be the work of experts, treated with accuracy and in a scholarly manner. And it may at first sight be concluded, on the completion of the volumes, that which this Society undertakes will have been accomplished. This is not so. It would be an impossibility to deal exhaustively with the history of each parish in the forthcoming work, welcome as undoubtedly it will be to archaeologists. But the history of a county in its fullest sense means the taking into account of the different peoples that have from the remotest times inhabited it. The Thames valley will supply the earliest evidences of the presence of prehistoric man.

and later races, we are reminded, have left their remains on the hill-tops of the Chilterns. When we reflect on the peoples that have dwelt in this county from the dawn of history onwards—the Celtic tribes—the Roman occupiers—the Saxon invaders—the Danes during their predatory incursions, how much to be gleaned from this early period, early, that is, when treating of the history of this island, has to be examined with patient care. Not only have these peoples left traces of their occupation, but the names of many a village and homestead have their origin from one or other of these early settlers. We must not forget, too, as an evidence that this county was the scene of early historic developments in the struggles between Britain and Saxon, that Aylesbury was one of the four British towns that maintained its independence till towards the close of the 6th century. An inexhaustible field of enquiry is thus before the patient archæologist. Taylor has enticed many to the fascinating study of place-names, but he has simply led the way. If we want to know who were our early settlers and the circumstances of their location, we must isolate each name difficult of interpretation for scrutiny with all available resources, local records, Domesday, and so forth. We may expect from the Victorian history accounts of the churches and ancient buildings of the county as the work of experts, and this part of the undertaking will be of extreme importance, having regard to Lipscomb's totally inadequate treatment of the subject. Still, it cannot be expected that churches and domestic architecture of an early period will not need more exhaustive investigation than can be bestowed on them in a work dealing with the ancient buildings of an entire county.

In the year 1902 the Parish Register Society was founded under the auspices of this Society, of which Mr. A. H. Cocks and Mr. William Bradbrook are the honorary secretaries. It is doing a useful work: already the registers of Walton, Thornton, and Great Marlow have been published and issued to its members. This passing reference to an important archæological undertaking will bear testimony to the impulse that is being given to research, an undertaking which will

tend towards the preservation of documents so often lamentably neglected in the past.

In looking forward to the future some mention should be made of the Jubilee celebration already alluded to. The Society's first formation was at a meeting held in January, 1848, but the complete organization and working of the Society would date from the publication of the RECORDS, issued for the first time in the year 1854. It has been felt, therefore, that the Jubilee of the Society might well be celebrated in 1904. When, however, it was proposed that a Loan Exhibition should be its chief feature it was found that such an exhibition as was desired could not be properly organised unless ample time were allowed. It was consequently determined that the celebration should be postponed till 1905. It is intended that the Loan Exhibition shall be on a comprehensive basis to display the resources of Buckinghamshire, such as its prehistoric and mediæval antiquities, its flora and fauna, its geology, and its industries. It may be inferred that an exhibition of the kind will be of no slight advantage, that it will be the means of awakening an intelligent interest, and of spreading a truer knowledge on subjects intimately connected with the localities which surround us; that historic enquiry will be stimulated by illustrations in the pictorial and photographic series of ecclesiastical buildings, such as the Church of Wing, one of the earliest and most remarkable churches in the kingdom; the perfect Norman Church of Stewkley; the Chapel of Eton College, reminding us of the piety of its royal founder, Henry VI.; of mansions, such as Hampden House and Gayhurst; of the homes of foremost men in more modern times, such as Stowe and Cliefden.

As an instance of individual effort in the cause of archæology in the county, a reference should be made to "The History of Denham," recently published by the Rev. R. H. Lathbury. It is a painstaking work, showing a great deal of careful research on all points connected with the past history of the village, and is a pleasant evidence of what can be done for a parish during the leisure hours of its Rector.

And here may be added a few words on the future

of the Society. Its existence now for so many years will be some guarantee that its work will be continuous. Gaps have to be filled in among its active members. Mr. J. L. Myres has left the county, and although he is taking a prominent part in archæological research, notably in the remarkable excavations of the palace of Knossos in Crete, his wider sphere necessarily precludes him, since his severance from among us, from giving us his valuable aid. We are looking with some anxiety for our younger members to continue the work that some have yielded up, and some must sooner or later relinquish, for the Society entirely depends on its active members for its permanence. New life may be thrown into this work by a successful Jubilee celebration, and suggestions for fresh investigations may result from the Loan Exhibition. As already pointed out, Buckinghamshire offers exhaustless subjects for enquiry and research, but to take advantage of these must depend on the energy and enthusiasm on which we may trust it is not too sanguine to place reliance.

JOHN PARKER.

DESBOROUGH HOUSE,
HIGH WYCOMBE,
October, 1904.