

## Meetings and Excursions.

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An Afternoon Excursion was arranged by the Berkshire Archæological and Architectural Society, on Wednesday Afternoon, October 9th. The party included the following ladies and gentlemen:—Mr. J. O. and the Misses Taylor, Mr. C. W. Taylor, the Rev. J. M. Guilding, Mrs. and Miss Guilding, Mrs. Slocombe, Mr. J. Rutland (Taplow), Captain Goulden (Cookham), the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, Mr. W. F. Blandy, Mr. J. J. Beecroft, Mr. S. S. Stallwood and Miss Stallwood, Mr. W. and Miss Hill, Miss Priddle, Miss Thoyts, the Rev. R. Tomlinson (Finchampstead), &c. The day was delightfully fine. The party started in brakes from the Great Western Hotel, Reading, at half-past one, and drove to Tilehurst Church, where they were received by the rector, the Rev. J. W. Routh. The Rev. J. M. Guilding said he was indebted to Miss Thoyts for his scraps of information about Tilehurst. The parish of Tilehurst was one of those manors situated between the Thames and the Kennet which Henry I. abandoned in the endowment of Reading Abbey. The three parishes of Tilehurst, Sulham, and Purley were closely related. There could be no question that the original church of Tilehurst must have been coeval with the foundation of the Abbey in 1121. Of course, of that church there was not a single vestige remaining. The present church was formerly a building of perpendicular character, and it was put into the hands of that accomplished and able architect, Mr. Street, who detached some pieces of decorated architecture, and that led him to treat it as a decorated church, and he had converted it into a beautiful village church of the decorated period. The manor was given by Henry VIII. to the Englefields, one of the principal families of the neighbourhood, from the time of the Saxons to Queen Elizabeth, when the family was attainted for treason for conspiracy to set free Mary, Queen of Scots. The property reverted to the Crown. It was bought by Sir Peter Van Lore, a Flemish merchant and wealthy citizen of London, whose descendants held it until the end of the seventeenth century, when it came into the possession of the Kendrick family, of Reading, in the reign of Charles II.; then it came into the hands of the Berkshire Lady who compelled Benjamin Child to fight her or marry her, and then into the

possession of the Blagraves, who were descended from the Childs. He did not know the derivation of Tilehurst, but Miss Thoyts suggested the house in the wood. One of the seven Bishops who resisted the tyranny of James I., Bishop Lloyd, was born at Tilehurst, and was a great benefactor to the parish and schools.

Mr. STALLWOOD said he noticed a small early decorated window in the south wall and one near the porch. There was nothing else for an archæologist to notice. The architect had removed the old Georgian brick tower and erected a monument to himself in the most graceful tower and spire. The Jacobean monument to the Van Lores was worthy of notice. He said, at the time the church was restored, about thirty years ago, the architecture of it was not in very great favour.

In the vestry were shown a portrait of Dr. Routh, President of Magdalen College, one of the greatest theologians, and uncle of the present rector. He had conversed with Dr. Johnson. He died in 1855, in his hundredth year, and was a connecting link between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The church plate was of the date 1564 or 1574. The monument of Sir Peter Van Lore was in a dangerous condition when it was restored, so that it was not in its original state.

Leaving Tilehurst church the party drove to Sulham, where they were received by the Rev. H. Wilder, and shown over the pretty church, and also inspected the post office, and gardens of the rectory.

Purley Hall was the next spot visited, some of the party walking through the woods. The view of the Pang and Thames valleys was splendid on so clear an autumn day. The party was received by Mr. F. Wilder, the owner, and shown over the house. Mrs. Wilder read an interesting paper in the library. We give the following from the paper :—

“Purley and Sulham, usually spelt in Charters Purleia and Soleham, are evidently Saxon names. Edmunds gives Purley as ‘Pear Tree Lands,’ a very likely derivation, as Pear Tree and Crab Tree are both common field names. The two parishes have always been closely connected, and are among the gifts to the Abbey in the Reading Abbey Charter from the Sissenasts. The first original deed as yet found is a very perfect one, in a clear Lombardic character, by which Johannis Otley de Schefeld sells to John Kent, citizen and leather seller of London, the land and tenement in Soleham, held by William Worth and John Harsley,

in fief, from Agatha, widow of John Giffarde. It is dated at Soleham in the reign of Henry VI. In 1496 John Kent, son of Kent, sells the same property (time of Henry VII.) of Nunhide in Sulham to Nicholas Wilder or Wildard. The seal is a squirrel eating a nut, between the initials N. W. Among the witnesses is Johannis Wildard, of Englefield, so the Wilders of that parish may be looked on as the first of the family in the county. John, son of Nicholas Wilder, made his will in October, 1588 (*temp.* Elizabeth). He left a widow, Alice, and seven children. To John, the eldest, he left Nonnehide; to Nicholas, the second, the lease of a farm in Hartfield, in Hampshire, which he had rented from Thomas Fairbairn. To his sister, Agnes Edwards, 6d. weekly for life, and to all his descendents he left sheep, one, two or three each. From him the property passed in succession to his sons, John and William. From Thomas Wilder, Nunhide has descended to the present owner, who is the eleventh Wilder of Nunhide. From a survey of Sulham Manor (1617) by Oliver Blagrove, gent., of Sonning, coupled with the fact that in 1615 Anthony Blagrove sold lands to John Wilder, it would appear that he then owned the Manor which in 1632 John Wilder leased from Richard Bartlett, who had bought Sir Humphrey Foster's land in Sulham, Tylehurst, and Ufton. Before 1734 Henry Wilder bought the Manor from Robert Mason, gent., of Sulham, and Thomas, his son and heir.

"Purley Hall, formerly called Hyde Hall, was built in 1609 by Francis Hyde, who suffered as a recusant, being a Roman Catholic (Stonyhurst MSS.) The date is on the coat of arms of King James I., now placed over the porch. Under it is a Latin inscription. Lady Russell has kindly made out a pedigree of the Hyde's from which I extract the following passages:—"In 1632 Edward Hyde, of the Middle Temple, married Anne Ayliffe, daughter of Sir George Ayliffe, but in less than six months she died, aged twenty. She was buried at Purley, where there is a monument to her memory. This Edward Hyde became the celebrated Lord Chancellor Clarendon. Nor did his connection with the county cease here, his son by his second wife marrying the daughter of Sir William Backhouse, of Swallowfield. In July, 1720, Francis Hyde sold the place to Francis Hawes, a director of the South Sea Company (not "Lawes," its promoter, as is stated by Murray and other guide books). The Hawes held it for three generations, selling it in 1778 to the Rev. Dr. Henry Wilder. They, the Hawes, appeared to have altered the house in many

respects. The room now used as a library was formerly a hall, paved with stone, and panelled. It stands in three parishes, Sulham, Purley, and Whitchurch. In Dr. Wilder's time the house was let for three years to Warren Hastings (during part of his trial). A quaint picture represents him riding near the Indian animals, which Macaulay tells us (in his essay) he used to amuse himself by trying to acclimatise. Since that time the top storey has been taken off the house and the stables pulled down. The carving taken from them is now in the dining room. The family pictures were brought into the house by the connection of the Wilders with the Boyles. In 1734 John Wilder, the last of the family who lived at Nunhyde, married Beaufoy Boyle. From her he obtained property at Shiplake, which their son, Dr. Wilder, sold. There are likenesses of Beaufoy and her husband John Wilder; their daughter-in-law, Joan Thoyts, of Sulhamstead; Beaufoy's mother, Mrs. William Boyle, formerly Martha Garth, of Shiplake; and of her grandfather, Sir Samuel Garth. Sir Samuel Garth was a physician, a literary man, and a member of the Kit-Cat Club. There are also portraits of the Earl of Rochester, Mr. Erle, Colonel Blunt, and Anthony Healy, said to be Sir Godfrey Kneller, but their connection with the family is not known."

The Rev. P. H. DITCHFIELD proposed, and the Rev. J. M. GUILDING seconded, a vote of thanks to Mrs. Wilder for her paper and her kindness.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilder then entertained the party at tea, and after inspecting the grounds they returned to Reading, after a pleasant excursion.

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The Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the Athenæum, on Wednesday, November 27th, when the Annual Report and Balance Sheet (printed in the present number), were presented. The Rev. J. M. GUILDING read a Paper upon "The Tomb of Henry I. in Reading Abbey," and an interesting discussion followed.

A Report of Mr. GUILDING's Paper will appear in our next number, and also some other information which has been promised us, respecting the supposed Tomb of the Founder of Reading Abbey.