Berks Archwological and Architectural Society.

Founded 1840. Reconstituted 1871. Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN.

ANNUAL REPORT,

FOR THE YEAR 1890



Reading:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY MESSRS. RIVERS AND SLAUGHTER, BLAGRAVE STREET.

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Berks Archwological Society.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR 1890.

HE year 1890 must always be regarded as an "Annus Mirabilis," an epoch of great events in the Society's annals, and one full of promise for its future career. Upon this date the Society attained its Jubilee, and during the fifty years of its existence it may claim to have contributed in no small degree, both by its Meetings and Publications, towards promoting the study of Local History and Antiquities in the Royal County.

We shall proceed in our report: (1) To record the principal events of the past year; (2) To give an account of the Society's work and financial position; (3) To offer some general remarks and suggestions upon the main objects and increasing utility of the Society's work to the County of Berks.

(I.) With regard to the Principal Events of the past year, we may state as follows:—

At Midsummer the Society took possession of its new offices over the Abbey Gateway. This ancient and historic building, formerly the Abbots' Court-room, in which the Mayors of the Merchant Guild of Reading were appointed,

and which was the scene of the cruel execution of the last Abbot, Hugh Faringdon, now forms the head-quarters of the Society; and by an arrangement with the Corporation it has been assigned to the Society rent free, on the condition that it is open at suitable times to the public. Although considerable expense has been incurred in fitting up the new premises with necessary furniture, yet the amount hitherto paid for office rent will be entirely saved.

In the Autumn, during the conference of the Librarians' Association, held in Reading, September 18th to 20th, the Society gave a reception to our distinguished visitors, who were conducted over the Abbey (of which a ground plan was lithographed for the occasion) and entertained at afternoon tea in the Mayor's garden, which was kindly lent for the purpose.

On October 29th the Secretary received the gratifying intelligence that H.M. the Queen had consented to become the Patron of the Society, and also a life member. It is proposed to commemorate Her Majesty's gracious act by striking the die of a Medal, which shall be awarded annually to Public Schools in the County as a History Prize, and bear the name of the "Victoria" Medal.

We must not omit under this section of our Report to mention the remarkable result of the excavations conducted at Silchester by the Society of Antiquaries of London. They will throw wonderful light on the Roman occupation of this portion of Britain, and our Society has gladly contributed towards their researches.

The Society also felt it a duty to bring before the public of Reading the invaluable services rendered to the town by the learned and honoured Curator of the Museum, Dr. Joseph Stevens. We are glad to know that a marble bust of the Curator will be shortly placed in the Museum as a memorial of his work to a succeeding generation.

In our Obituary for 1890, we have to record the loss of Sir Paul Hunter, Bart., a former President of the Society, and one of its warmest supporters; of the Rev. A. D. Crake, Vicar of Cholsey, an accomplished scholar and

antiquary; of Mr. John Harris, the able and respected Master of Reading Blue Coat School; and of Mr. Robert Bradley, who for many years filled the office of Hon. Auditor to the Society.

(II.) In the second section of our Report we beg to lay before you the special work accomplished by the Society during the last twelve months, and its present financial position.

It need scarcely be said that a Society which aspires to represent a great English County, and to cover a wider area than that of a local Field Club, must justify its claims to that position by its broader aims and more extended usefulness. We would continually impress upon our members that a body, which contributes nothing by its researches to the elucidation of County History or Antiquarian Lore, which makes the fatal mistake of allowing its meetings to degenerate into pleasant social gatherings, cannot long retain the interest of the public, or deserve any lasting support from intelligent residents within the district. Our work will be tested solely by its results; and the Society must expect to flourish or to languish according to its usefulness and its labours.

Upon the formation of the Berks Ashmolean Society in 1840 (our original predecessors), the aim of the first founders was chiefly directed to the publication of documents, illustrating the Historical, Ecclesiastical, Genealogical, and Topographical Remains of the County of Berks (see, Laws of the Berkshire Ashmolean Society, May 23rd, 1840); and its subscribers were limited to a comparatively few members at a high rate of subscription. But, upon the re-organization of the Society in 1871, it was wisely resolved to place it on a broader basis, to reduce the subscription to 10s. per annum, and to enlarge its usefulness by giving admission to Lady Members, and to Associate Members being young persons likely to take an interest in Archæological or Architectural study.

The objects which the re-constituted Society had in view may be briefly stated as follows:—The publication of

original documents; the examination of Historic Sites and Ancient Buildings by personal inspection; the encouragement of Historical and Architectural Study; and lastly, to aid in the preservation and restoration of Historical Monuments by grants from the Society's funds.

Your Committee may state that these objects have been steadily kept in view during the past year, and we proceed to notify the efforts which have been made in these particular directions.

Under the head of Publications and Lectures, we may point to the interesting and valuable papers which have appeared in the Society's Quarterly Journal. It is a matter of deep regret that this official channel of the Society's work should be so feebly supported, and that in consequence it is a serious burden upon our finances. We earnestly appeal to our Members, at the time they remit their annual Subscription, to forward 2s. 6d. as the cost of the Journal (including postage) for the current year. A guarantee of 120 Subscribers would make the Journal self-supporting.

The Lectures and Papers which have been read before the Society at various periods during 1890 will be found in the Appendix to this Report.

Three exhibitions of peculiar interest have been held in the Society's rooms at the Abbey Gate. One of Prints, Drawings and Architectural Designs connected with the Borough and District of Reading. Another of Ancient Church Plate within the County; and a third of Monumental Brasses of Berkshire, still on view. These exhibitions, after private view by the Members of the Society and their friends, are open for a few days gratuitously to the public, in compliance with the wish of the Corporation that, so long as the Society is entrusted with the custody of the Abbey Gateway, it should be made as beneficial as possible to the working classes in the town. This part of our contract it is a point of honour in us to fulfil. officer of the Society is always prepared to conduct (by previous appointment) any party of working men, or other

visitors, through the Abbey Ruins on Wednesdays and Saturdays. On several occasions during the past year, private schools and other visitors have availed themselves of this opportunity. The number of visitors admitted to inspect the Abbots' Court-room over the Gateway has amounted during the last six months to 175.

Three Excursions were held in the course of the summer, viz., to Wantage, to Wokingham, and the Vale of the White Horse. Full particulars of these will be found in the Quarterly Journal. The thanks of the Society are due to the gentry and clergy of these places, who received us with such courtesy and cordial hospitality.

A valuable collection of Norman mouldings and relics of the ancient Abbey, having been offered to the town by the Vicar of St. Laurence, were accepted by the Corporation, and have been entrusted to the care of the Society. They will be placed in the basement room on the west side of the Abbey Gate, and will form, it is hoped, the nucleus of an Architectural Museum.

The small but useful Library belonging to the Society is almost entirely composed of *Reference* books. It has been augmented during the year by a donation of 8 volumes from Mr. Walter White, late Secretary of the Royal Society.

With regard to the encouragement afforded by the Society to Students in English History and in Architectural Art, the usual Prizes have been awarded to Public Schools in the county; and to the successful competitor in the School of Science and Art. In the last instance, two students, viz., Mr. Herbert Barkas and Mr. John A. Smith, having been bracketed equal for the Architectural Drawing, the Prize was divided between them.

With respect to the aid bestowed upon the Preservation of Ancient Monuments in the County, the amount is, of course, restricted by our limited means. But a grant has been assigned to the Silchester excavations, and grants promised to the restoration of the churches at Lamborne and Blewbury.

During the past year we have taken measures to establish Local Correspondents in the chief towns of Berkshire, who shall give periodical reports of archæological matters within their several districts for insertion in the Quarterly Journal.

The following statistics will shew the numerical and financial position of the Society at the present time. During the year we have lost 10 members by death or resignation, and 18 new members have been admitted, giving an increase of 8. The number of members now upon the Society's Register is as follows, vis.:—18 Life Members, 42 Lady Members, and 103 Ordinary Members, total 163 Members, exclusive of Honorary Members.

The financial condition of the Society is satisfactory. Notwithstanding the heavy outlay on removing to the Abbey Gateway, the cost of the Exhibitions, and furnishing our new Quarters, there is a balance in the Treasurer's hands amounting to £7 14s. 11d. The accounts have been duly audited by Mr. J. Okey-Taylor, in the place of the late Mr. Bradley.

No change has occurred in the administration of the Society, with one exception. The Hon. Secretary, finding some inconvenience to arise from his non-residence in Reading, and that his editorial and corresponding work was becoming very onerous, made arrangements with the Librarian to relieve him of a portion of his duties as Financial Secretary. It is proposed that, in future, that officer shall act as Honorary Treasurer and Financial Secretary.

(III.) It only remains to offer a few remarks and suggestions, upon the general work of the Society, likely to increase its usefulness and efficiency for the future.

Your Committee beg to repeat their previous suggestion, that, as the Society is now in some respects acting as Curator to the Abbey Ruins, a popular Guide Book (with ground plan) should be prepared for visitors, and that Notice boards should be erected, pointing out the various portions and apartments of the Abbey still existing.

They are also of opinion, that the sum arising from the composition of Life Members, amounting to £5, should not be treated as part of the annual income, but invested as capital, and the dividends employed specially for prizes and grants.

It has been proposed by the Society of Antiquaries that a careful archæological survey should be made in each County, noting on the map those places in which finds and discoveries have been brought to light. It is our intention to act on this suggestion, and to commence the Berkshire survey as soon as possible.

In closing this somewhat lengthened report, your Committee may congratulate the Society that its Jubilee year finds it carrying out its projected objects with unimpaired vigour. It may be said without presumption to be enjoying the activity of youth with the stability of maturer age. In the meantime, we believe that its sphere of usefulness is increasing year by year, and that it is gradually educating the residents of Berkshire to a fuller appreciation of the wealth of historical interest contained in this part of that mighty Kingdom, which great Englishmen have built up in the past; of which all good Englishmen are proud; and which we, in our day, should strive our utmost to defend and preserve.

On behalf of the Committee,

P. H. DITCHFIELD, Hon. Secretary. J. M. GUILDING, Hon. Treasurer.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Balance Sheet for the Pear ending Michaelmas, 1890.

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Audited and found correct, J. OKEY-TAYLOR. December 18th, 1890.

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Meetings, Tectures, and Excursions, 1890.

DATE.	DESCRIP- TION.	SUBJECT OR PLACE.	LECTURERS.
Jan. 7th	Exhibition	Science and Art Conver- sazione in Town Hall	
Mar. 26th	Excursion	Wokingham	Rev. P. H. DITCHFIELD, F.R. Hist. Soc.
May 8th	Excursion	Wantage	H. J. REID, Esq.,F.S.A Rev. J. M. GUILDING, F.S.A.
July 16th	Excursion	Vale of White Horse	Rev. P.H. DITCHFIELD Rev. A. D. MACRAY Rev. E. R. GARDINER
Sept. 18th	Reception	Visit of Librarians' Associa- tion to Abbey Ruins	Rev. J. M. Guilding, F.S.A.
,, 19th	Exhibition	Prints and Drawings illus- trating the Town of Reading (open to the public for one week)	
Oct. 14th	Demonstra- tion	Municipal Charters of Read- ing, given at Conversaz- ione of the Literary and Scientific Society	Rev. J. M. GUILDING
,, 29th	Lecture	"Some Legends and Ballads of Berkshire"	J. A. BRAIN, Esq.
Nov. 18th	Exhibition and Lec- ture	Abbey Gateway, "Church Plate of Berkshire"	Rev. E. R. GARDINER
Dec. 18th	Annual Meeting and Ex- hibition	"The Monumental Brasses of Berkshire"	Rev. J. E. FIELD

Tife Members.

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

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BENYON, R., Englefield Berks.
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BLANDY, W. F., Downshire Square, Reading.
CONROY, Sir John, Bart., Balliol College, Oxford.
HARGREAVES, John, Maiden Erleigh, Reading.
HUNTER, Sir C. S., Bart., Mortimer Hill, Berks.
PALMER, W. I., Hillside, Reading.
PARKER, Jas., F.G.S., High Street, Oxford.
ROCHESTER, The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of.
STURGES, Rev. E., All Saints, Wokingham.
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BINNIE, A		Wokingham.
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Scarning Rectory, East Dereham, Norfolk. Upper Stondon Rectory, Shefford, Beds.

Att ve Gables, Taplow.

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KENT, T. R. ...

7, Victoria Street, Reading.

SMITH, A.

164, Friar Street,



Kady Members.

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Parkside, Reading.

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