


# Berks Archæological and Architectural Society.

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## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

FOR THE YEAR 1894.

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N presenting their Report for 1894, your Committee may venture to say that, although the past year has been marked by no eventful incidents, yet the Society has evinced no slackness in carrying out the objects of its foundation. It can point to a fair amount of useful work, both in the fields of Architectural study and Archæological research.

### *(I.) General Occurrences of the Year:—*

With regard to matters of general Antiquarian interest, we may remark that the Silchester Excavations, under the Society of Antiquaries, still continue to bring to light many interesting features of the Romano-British civilization, which were swept away by the Saxon invaders. Within our own County there has been nothing to record in the way of Church Restoration, and no Public Buildings of any magnitude or importance have been erected to our knowledge during the last twelve months.

The Annual Conference of Archæological Societies, in union with the Society of Antiquaries, was held in London, in July, 1894, and the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield attended as our delegate on that occasion. Various matters of interest were discussed, relating to the Archæological Survey of England, to the desirability of compiling a List of the Sepulchral Effigies found in England and Wales; and to the importance of encouraging Archæological research as a subject of Elementary Education, so as to arouse the interest of the working classes in the antiquities of the district.

We are also glad to report that the Corporation authorities of Reading have adopted the suggestion of the Society, in affixing tablets to the various portions of the Abbey Ruins, descriptive of their position, thus acting as a guide to strangers in giving them a

correct idea of the extent of the Monastic Buildings. An accurate ground plan of the Abbey Ruins, comprising the Conventual Church, Cloister Court, and other parts of the structure, has been published by the Society, and can be had on application to the Secretary, Mr. E. Wright.

*(II.) Practical Work of the Society during 1894.*

In estimating the work accomplished during the year, it is important to remember the fact that the Society was instituted for a *two-fold* object, viz., first, the promotion of Archæological research as an aid to the interpretation of National History; and, secondly, the encouragement and study of Architecture. The year has been marked by considerable activity on the Archæological side, but it is doubtful whether the same amount of energy has been displayed in the pursuit of Architectural objects.

LECTURES AND EXCURSIONS.

During the winter months four Meetings were held for the reading of papers and discussion (only one of which related to Architecture); while no less than four Excursions have taken place during the summer to places of general or local interest.

It has been objected by some that the Excursions of a "County" Society should be limited exclusively to places *within the County*. But we submit that a true Archæological instinct should induce us to combine a special knowledge of our particular County with a broad *general* view of National History and Antiquities, of which the County furnishes only one important page. It is our aim, therefore, that our transactions should have partly a local and partly a general sphere. While in our Excursions and Lectures we specially aim at elucidating the History of Berkshire, so as to make us familiar with its local customs, its traditions, its remarkable families and notable events, yet in addition to this special local object we contend that the Society should have a wider educational object, and should aim at a larger and fuller instruction in all subjects of Historical Antiquity. This has never altogether been lost sight of by the Members of our Society, though it has occasionally been kept in the back ground. It was distinctly prominent under the able administration of our former Secretary, W. L. Nash, Esq., F.S.A., who has emphatically expressed his opinion, that "human interests are too varied to admit of their being kept in any narrow circle, be the circle antiquarian or any other."

Our Society, therefore, as will be seen from our annual programme, does not consider it desirable to limit its action to work of a purely *local* character, but attempts to embrace within its sphere various subjects of Antiquarian and National interest. This, we believe, makes it of greater educational value, and encourages a spirit of more varied enquiry among its members.

The Excursions which have taken place during 1894 were as follows :—

1. On June 5th, a Visit was paid to various places of interest within the City of London, including the Charter House; the Priory Church of St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield; Christ's Hospital; the Guildhall; and Merchant Taylors' Hall.

2. On July 25th, an Excursion was made to Oxford, when the following Colleges were visited, viz., Christ Church, Merton, Oriel, All Souls, Magdalen and New. The Society was afterwards entertained at Tea in Trinity College by the Oxford Architectural Society.

3. On August 15th, an Afternoon Visit was made to Ruscombe, the residence of Wm. Penn; to Waltham St. Lawrence; to Shottesbrook, a collegiate church built 1337; and to White Waltham, formerly attached to Chertsey Abbey. A valuable Paper was contributed on this occasion by Wm. Ravencroft, Esq., F.S.A., on the Decorated Style of Architecture, and brief notices given of Wm. Penn, of the learned Nonjuror Dr. Henry Dodwell, and of the famous Berkshire Antiquary Thos. Hearne.

4. On September 26th, an Afternoon Excursion was made to the Churches of Binfield and Warfield. In the latter place an interesting collection of relics was exhibited, connected with Prince Charles Edward, the young Pretender, and with the Ratcliffe family, Earls of Derwentwater, the devoted adherents of the House of Stewart. The Society was afterwards entertained at tea in the Vicarage by the Rev. B. C. Littlewood.

#### LECTURES.

The course of Lectures delivered during the session was as follows :—

1. On February 26th, by W. H. Greenhough, Esq., Librarian, on "The Bibliographical Treasures of the Reading Library" with an Exhibition of valuable Books, Prints, etc., belonging to the reference department, given in the Town Hall to our members in conjunction with the Literary and Scientific Society. This

interesting paper was afterwards printed by request and copies circulated among the members.

2. On March 16th, by Joseph Wells, Esq., M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Wadham College, Oxon, on "Gothic Architecture in Oxford during the XVII. Century."

3. On October 24th, by Dr. Stevens, F.G.S., on "Recent additions to the Silchester Collection in the Reading Museum illustrating the Romano-British period of English History." The Society was afterwards entertained to afternoon tea in the Committee Room by the Worshipful the Mayor and Mrs. Field.

4. On November 28th, by the Rev. Alan Cheales, M.A., on "Lord Saye and Sele of the XVII. Century," an historical and genealogical account of one of the chief actors in the great Civil War.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SECTION.

In reviewing this portion of our year's work, we cannot forbear once more expressing our regret that so few Papers have been given on Architectural subjects. It is much to be wished that we could enlist among our associates an additional number of Architects' Pupils, and award a larger number of Prizes for Architectural Drawings to be competed for by them. The Committee strongly recommend that the Subscriptions of Associate Members be reduced to 2/6 per annum, and that Architects practising in the Town be respectfully requested to bring the advantages of the Society to the notice of their Pupils and Assistants.

#### USE OF THE GATEWAY.

The Abbey Ruins have been visited on several occasions by parties of Visitors from a distance, and by Schools and bodies of working men in our Town. The number of such Visitors may be roughly estimated at about 350 during the past year. These have, in most instances, been conducted over the site by an Officer of the Society, in compliance with the conditions made by the Mayor and Corporation in granting the use of the Abbey Gateway to the Society; and in this respect we have been able to give a good account of our Stewardship. In conformity with our usual practice, the Room has also been gratuitously lent for special Meetings to Societies of a Literary and Scientific character.

#### PRIZES AND DONATIONS. LIBRARY.

Among the objects contemplated by the Society, we have always attached peculiar importance to the encouragement of Students in the

study of History and Architecture. Special Prizes are annually offered and awarded for these objects. We have much pleasure in stating that the Drawing Prize was awarded in 1894 to Mr. Percival H. Portsmouth, of the Art Department, U.E. College, for proficiency in Architecture. The History Prizes were awarded to Miss Elsie Friend, of the Girls' High School, for an essay on the "Tudor" Period; and, in the Kendrick Schools, to Miss Nellie Gostage, and to Arthur Cooke, for essays on the "Stuart" Period.

No grants have been made during the year towards the restoration of Public Buildings, but a special collection is annually made in the Town for the Silchester Fund by S. Slingsby Stallwood, Esq., F.S.A., to which several of our Members individually contribute.

Some small additions have been made to the Reference Library of the Society. We have to acknowledge the gift from C. E. Keyser, Esq., F.S.A., one of the Vice-Presidents, of his valuable work on "Mural Decorations"; and the Society is indebted to Jas. Boorne, Esq., J.P., for the loan of a valuable collection of Prints and Drawings illustrating the History of our Town and County. At a recent sale of the Library of the late Mr. Phillips, at Sotheby's, there were two or three lots containing MS. Books formerly belonging to Reading Abbey; it is a matter of regret that these could not have been purchased by some generous donor, and presented to the Free Library of the Town.

#### "QUARTERLY JOURNAL."

The Society has been reluctantly compelled to discontinue the publication of the *Quarterly Journal* as our funds were unable to defray the loss on so costly an undertaking. It is proposed, however, by the former Editor, Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, to establish an Archæological Journal for the counties of Berks, Bucks and Oxon, which shall contain the transactions of the chief Antiquarian Societies within the Diocese of Oxford, viz., the Berks Archæological Society, the Oxford Architectural Society, the Newbury Field Club and the Thames Valley Field Club. It is hoped that the new venture will receive the support of all Members belonging to the above bodies. The Committee recommend that a contribution (not exceeding £5 per annum) should be allowed towards the publication of this Archæological Journal, on condition that our Members be supplied *gratis* with those numbers which contain references to the proceedings of our Society.

(III.) *Financial Condition and Statistics of the Society.*

No appreciable change has taken place in the number of Subscribing Members. At the close of 1894, there were 87 Ordinary Members, 5 Associate Members, and 53 Lady Members on the books of the Society.

In consequence of the more frequent Excursions undertaken during the year the expenditure incurred in this important section of the Society's work, viz., personal visits to places of interest, has somewhat increased, leaving the balance now due to the Treasurer at £11 19s. 10d.

The Balance Sheet for 1894 has been audited by J. Okey Taylor, Esq., and will be printed in the Society's Report. The Balance Sheet of the *Quarterly Journal* (now discontinued) will appear in a separate account.

(IV.) *General Remarks and Conclusion.*

PROGRAMME FOR 1895.

Our programme of Lectures for the current year will embrace papers on the following subjects, viz. :—(1) "The great Livery Companies of London." (2) "The Bayeux Tapestry, as a contemporary record of Anglo-Norman History." (3) "The Development of Trade and Commercial Progress in Reading." (4) "A Memoir the High Stewards of Reading;" with (5) other subjects notified in last year's Report but not yet delivered.

The following places are submitted by the Committee as suitable for Excursions during the current year, viz. :—

*Day Excursions.*—(1) Winchester or Salisbury Cathedrals; (2) Netley Abbey and Southampton; (3) Marlborough.

*Afternoon Excursions.*—(1) Broughton Castle (by kind permission of Lord Saye and Sele); (2) Aldermaston and Upton Court; (3) Bramshill; (4) Wargrave, Henley and Greys.

Your Committee would strongly urge upon the Society the propriety of erecting a Memorial Brass to Thomas Hearne (1678 to 1735), the most distinguished Antiquary whom Berkshire has produced. No record of his labours exists in this County, and the Society could not better evince its appreciation of this learned Scholar than by fixing a Brass, with an appropriate inscription, in the Church of Waltham St. Lawrence, the Parish in which he was born.

## OBITUARY.

We have to record with sincere regret the death of two valued Members of the Society, viz., Col. Gray, of Swallowfield, and A. W. Parry, Esq., Architect.

In Col. Gray the County has sustained the loss of a distinguished and highly accomplished English gentleman, admired and revered by a large circle of friends, and who filled the Office of High Sheriff of Berks in the year 1881 with marked dignity and distinction.

Mr. Parry was one of the original Members when the Society was re-constituted in 1871, and as a Member of the Committee gave us the advantage of his professional experience and judicious counsel.

It would be improper to close our Obituary Notice of this year without paying a tribute of respect to the late Rev. Richard Hooper, Rector of Aston Upthorpe, one of the many eminent scholars trained under the great Dr. Valpy, of Reading School, and whose attainments in Bibliographical and Antiquarian knowledge were of marvellous extent and accuracy. Though not a Member of the Society, Mr. Hooper took a constant interest in its proceedings, and has contributed frequently by valuable, though unpublished, papers to its transactions. He will fill a worthy place among the literary celebrities of Berkshire in the XIXth. century.

Signed on behalf of the Committee,

P. H. DITCHFIELD,

J. M. GUILDING.

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The Oxfordshire Archæological Society made their Annual Excursion on Tuesday, June 25th. The places visited by a party of 27, driving from Oxford, were Cumnor, Stanton Harcourt, Standlake and Northmoor. The many points of interest in the Churches of these places were examined, under the guidance of the President, Sir H. Dryden, and with the help of the respective Clergy. The remains of the mansion at Stanton Harcourt (seen by most of the party for the first time) were, by Mrs. Porter's permission, thoroughly viewed, and a very interesting collection of fragments of armour, &c., preserved in the Manor House, now occupied as a farm-house, was shewn by the tenant, Mr. Arnatt. Gaunt House, a moated farm-house at Standlake, named after an owner in the fifteenth century, which was garrisoned for the King in the civil war, and the Manor-house at Northmoor, were also visited. The day was to all the party one of great pleasure.