



The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.

Gossip of an Antiquary.

I AM glad to hear that this Journal was of some use in the Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the other day, when the legality of incense was being discussed. In the list of Oxfordshire Church Goods, transcribed by Mr. Hone, there are items "Oon payer of Senseurs," "a Sensre of Brasse," "a Sensour," which show that the Commissioners of Edward VI. frequently found a thurible or censer (our forefathers were not very particular about spelling) in our parish churches, while our cathedrals usually possessed a large number of these vessels.

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At Rome there are Censers of gold in the treasury of the Church of St. John Lateran, reputed to have been given by the Emperor Constantine. There is an old silver censer at Louvain, more than a dozen at Milan Cathedral, seven at Metz, four of silver-gilt at Notre Dame, Paris, of the fourteenth century, and some very remarkable ones at Rheims and at Trèves. Most of our English censers are in Museums, at South Kensington, the British Museum and in private collections. There are, or were, specimens of old thuribles still in use at St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham; the chapel of Ushaw College, near Durham; the Roman Catholic Church of Buckland, Berkshire; the Chapel of Stonor Park,

Henley-on-Thames ; and the College of Downside, near Bath. Sometimes they were made in the shape of a church tower or spire, and sometimes like a shrine.

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The diggers at Silchester have been very active this year, and have excavated a large amount of ground on the North side of the old Roman town. Some rather puzzling houses have been uncovered, the walls of one being built on the ruins of another, and the ingenuity of Mr. Mill Stephenson and Mr. St. John Hope will be taxed in drawing correct plans of these old dwelling places. Several pits have been found containing divers objects of interest, and altogether a very good start has been made in the season's work.

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Antiquarians had a rare treat at the Society of Antiquaries' Rooms, Burlington House, a fortnight ago, when Sir Francis Tress Barry, Bart., M.P., exhibited the results of his excavation of several pre-historic Brochs, near his Castle of Keiss in Caithness. Southerners may be excused if they do not know much about Brochs. These old stone dwellings do not grow in these parts. In fact no one quite knows how long ago they did grow, and may be said to claim kindred with the Round Towers of Ireland, which were constructed, according to an ingenious Irishman, "for the purpose of puzzling posterity." Sir Francis exhibited a series of beautiful photographs of these strange dwellings, which he has with so much perseverance and pains unearthed, and a large number of objects found therein. Some of those who are learned in antiquities were inclined to characterise the brochs as late Celtic, but I am sure that a more careful examination of the remains and of the many interesting problems which arise concerning them, will lead them to assign the brochs to a much earlier date ; and that the end of the neolithic and the beginning of the bronze age would be a more correct estimate of the period when there lived the builders of the brochs.

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Father Thames has preserved for us a fine store of relics of the past ; in fact, Danish swordsmen and Saxon spearmen as well as the old bronze maker of weapons and his neolithic ancestors must have been very careless in dropping their weapons into the stream. Sir Francis, whose antiquarian interest extends from the Thames to

John o' Groats, exhibited a few weeks ago a fine collection of objects recently rescued from the bed of the river, which I begged him to show to the Berks Society before they find a home at Eton College, whither they are destined.

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Mr. Everard Green, Rouge Dragon, read a paper last week at the Society of Antiquaries on the Heraldry of Ockwells Manor House, which some of us visited not long ago, and were so delighted to find that the interesting house had fallen into the hands of Mr. Edward Barry, F.S.A., who has so carefully preserved this ancient building and restored its mediæval glories. I hope later on to tell you what the Rouge Dragon had to say about the perfect old glass adorning the windows of Ockwells, which he suggested formed a *liber amicorum* of the patrons and friends of John Norreys, the builder of the house, *temp* Henry VI.

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the Abbey Gate, on Wednesday, May 3rd, when there were present C. E. Keyser, Esq., President, Lord Saye and Sele, W. Berkeley Monck, Esq., and a large attendance of members. The Officers of the Society were elected, the Report read by the Secretary, which we publish in this number of the Journal, and other business transacted. Mr. Keyser then gave a very interesting lecture on "Norman Doorways of Berkshire Churches," which we hope to publish. The lecture was illustrated by a fine collection of large photographs, and thirty-two of the most interesting doorways were exhibited by a magic lantern on a screen, which shewed with much accuracy the architectural details. The lecture was repeated in the evening for the benefit of those who were unable to attend in the afternoon, and the thanks of the Society were heartily given to the President for his most valuable contribution to the history of the architecture of Berkshire.

The first Summer Excursion took place on May 31st, when the Society visited Hurst, Binfield, Billingbear and Wokingham. The attendance of the members was larger than usual. Hurst House