



Berks Archæological Society.

REPORT, 1898.

IN presenting their Report for the past year your Committee have to record many changes which have taken place during its course, and somewhat interrupted the usual progress of the Society's work.

DEATH OF THE REV. J. M. GUILDING.

Foremost amongst these changes is the great loss which the Society has sustained by the death of the late Treasurer, the Rev. J. M. Guilding, F.S.A., who has been for so long a period its mainstay, and has guided and directed its labours since its reformation in 1871. He was an enthusiastic antiquary, a kind and genial friend, one with whom it was a privilege to be associated, whose departure from us will be deeply mourned by his many friends. His energy and zeal in the cause of archæology were remarkable. In spite of advancing years he undertook the editing of "The Records of Reading" in four volumes, which must have been a heavy and laborious work. In the work of the Berks Archæological Society he displayed the keenest interest, and at its meetings and excursions he always took an active part. An able and ready speaker he was ever ready to impart his knowledge to others, and could always be relied upon to give a graphic and interesting account of an architectural building, or to discourse pleasantly upon the history and records of his adopted town and county. Reading owes much to him for the valuable work which he accomplished in connection with the Public Library, the charities of the town, and the administration of his parish of St. Lawrence. The officers of the Society will miss him much as a true friend and a genial and helpful colleague, and his memory will live in the annals of the Society as long as it exists.

NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

During the past year the Society has been most fortunate in gaining the services of Charles E. Keyser, F.S.A., High Sheriff of the County, as its President. At the last annual meeting Mr. Keyser was elected to the office held for many years by the late Sir George Russell, Bart., and the Society is certainly to be congratulated in securing the services of so distinguished an antiquary, a gentleman who is not only content to preside occasionally at its meetings, but who is willing to devote both time and energy to promoting the welfare of the Society and to bestow upon it the benefit of that unique knowledge of archæology which he undoubtedly possesses.

PRACTICAL WORK OF THE SOCIETY.

In spite of the difficulties caused by the long illness and death of one of its chief officers the work of the Society has progressed with its usual activity. Many Archæological Societies content themselves with one or at the most two excursions each year, and hold no meetings for lectures during the winter months. The Berks Society has never been content with so small a programme, and in spite of the changes which have taken place during the past year, has provided its members with many opportunities for studying the antiquities of the Royal County.

On February 17th an excellent lecture was given by the Rev. W. M. Summers on "Glimpses of Reading in the Early Stuart Period," founded upon researches in the Calendar of State Papers.

On March 23rd an interesting lecture was given by the Rev. Walter Marshall, minor Canon of Windsor, on "Some points of interest in our Parish Churches." The lecture was illustrated by a beautiful series of magic lantern slides made from photographs taken by the lecturer.

On April 27th the annual meeting was held in the Abbey Gate, when the new President was elected, who delivered his inaugural address on "Berkshire Antiquities."

In June an excursion was arranged to Shiplake, Henley, Bisham and Marlow, when it was proposed to visit these river-side places in a steam launch. But the weather not being very favourable at the time, the number of members who proposed to attend was insufficient, and the excursion was abandoned.

On August 3rd, a very successful excursion was made to the interesting little town of Lambourn and Ashdown Park, the seat of the Craven family. The recent opening of the Lambourn Valley

Railway has rendered this part of the county more accessible, and it was felt that the Society ought to visit one of the most interesting churches in Berkshire. The sun shone brightly on the occasion of the Society's first visit to the neighbourhood, and about thirty members and friends assembled at Reading station. At Newbury they were met by Mr. Watts, the Secretary of the Newbury Field Club, who very kindly conducted the party to the very interesting Cloth Hall, a curious building which sadly needs careful restoration. Mr. Watts told of the glories of the old cloth trade of Newbury, of its hero, John Winchcombe, or Jack of Newbury, who with fifty bowmen marched to the service of King Henry VIII. against the Scotch, and made the "Newberrie Archers" famous, as the old ballad plainly declares. Leaving Newbury the party travelled by the new railway, passing the site of the first battle of Newbury, the pretty village of Welford, Shefford, East Garston (the *Esgarstown* of the Domesday Survey), a manor once held by the service of providing a Knight to serve the King for forty days when he should be at Kidwelly, in South Wales; and finally reaching Lambourn, where they were met by the Rev. J. Footman, the historian of the little town, whose book deserves an honoured place in every Berkshire Library. Mr. Footman ably described the interesting church, with its grand Norman Tower, its perpendicular work and numerous alterations and restorations, its chantry chapels and tombs, the details of which will be found in his book. After an excellent lunch at the George Hotel the party went in brakes to Ashdown House, where they were graciously received by Lady Craven. The Chaplain conducted the visitors over the house, and an excellent paper by Mr. Walter Money, F.S.A., was read by the Secretary upon the history of Ashdown House and the White Horse Hill. The house was built by Webb, the nephew of Inigo Jones, and contains many portraits of Elizabeth of Bohemia, the devoted friend of William Lord Craven, and of Prince Rupert, Prince Maurice, &c. After tea Mr. Ditchfield expressed the gratitude which all the members of the Society felt to Lady Craven for her great kindness and hospitality. A visit was paid to King Alfred's camp, a description of which was given by the Secretary, and after a satisfactory day the party returned to Reading.

On July 7th, the Bucks Archæological Society visited Silchester and the Secretary of the Berks Society was invited to join the party, and gave a cordial welcome to the Antiquaries of the adjoining county on the occasion of their visit to Reading.

On October 5th, by the kind invitation of the President and Mrs. Keyser, the Society visited Aldermaston. The party was received at the church by Mr. Keyser who described its many points of interest. The judicious and careful work of restoration was much admired, and the newly discovered mural paintings created much interest. The party then visited the Court where the President gave a history of the Manor and of the house. After being hospitably entertained, the members expressed their thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Keyser for their kind reception of the Society, and returned to Reading after a most enjoyable day.

Owing to various causes the usual course of lectures during the winter session was not held.

DEATH OF DR. STEVENS.

Archæology, not only in Berkshire but also throughout England, has suffered a severe loss by the death of Dr. Stevens, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society and late Hon. Curator of the Reading Museum. His main branches of study were geology, archæology and anthropology, and in each of these his work for Reading bears his memory witness. It was greatly through his influence that the Duke of Wellington agreed to the location in Reading of the famous Silchester relics of the Romano-British period, which form such an attraction to the town. Dr. Stevens' work for the museum, which he created—and to a certain extent endowed—was purely a labour of love. In 1888 he published "*A Parochial History of St. Mary Bourne, with an account of the Manor of Hurstbourne Priors, Hants*"—a large and handsome illustrated volume. His latest work in the cause he had so much at heart was the compilation of the Ethnological collection in the local Museum. Dr. Stevens will be sorely missed by the Society and by his many friends in Reading.

CONGRESS OF ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

The Secretary attended the annual Congress of Archæological Societies at the Society of Antiquaries, London, on July 6th, when papers were read on "*The National Photographic Record Association*," "*The Cataloguing and Photographing of Effigies*," "*The Indexing of Archæological Transactions*," and "*The National Portrait Catalogue*."

The Photographic Survey of the County is in the hands of the Reading University Extension College Photographic Society acting in conjunction with a Committee of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society.

Last year a Committee was appointed to compile a catalogue of Berkshire portraits, consisting of Lord Saye and Sele, Rev. A. Cheales, Miss Thoyts and Mr. Ogilvie. Your Committee regret that their efforts have not met with much response from the owners of portraits in the county, but trust that the returns asked for may be sent in at no distant date.

The Archæological Survey of the county was commenced some years ago, but is still in a very imperfect state. The Committee would be glad if some members of the Society who have leisure would undertake this very important work.

The usual prizes have been presented for the study of history and for progress in architectural drawing.

The Committee have to record with much regret the resignation of Mr. Ernest Wright of the office of assistant secretary. For several years Mr. Wright has performed the duties of that office, and the Committee desire to express to him their thanks for the labour which he has so willingly bestowed upon the work of the Society during the many years in which he has been connected with it.

PUBLICATIONS.

In connection with the Society the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal continues to be published. It contains a record of the proceedings of the Society, notes and queries relating to the three counties, together with papers on antiquarian subjects.

Many of the marriage registers of Berkshire have been transcribed by Miss Thoyts and are about to be published by Messrs. Phillimore and Co., when a sufficient number of subscribers has been secured.

PROPOSED EXCURSIONS.

During the summer months the following excursions will probably take place:—On May 31st, Oxford; June 21st, Billingbear; July 26th, Stonehenge; August, Wantage and Lockinge. The Committee hope that many members will be able to attend these excursions and assist the officers in making them a success.

With regard to the future of the Society the Committee hope that its scope may be extended and that a large number of the residents in the county who have not yet been associated with our work will consent to be enrolled as members. The Berks Archæological Society already holds an honoured place amongst other county Societies, and by the industry of its members and by their hearty co-operation with the Committee and Officers it is hoped that

it may continue to carry on the useful work of preserving and recording the relics of the Royal County and increasing the knowledge of the past which is a sure and certain guide for the present and future makers of England's greatness and prosperity.

P. H. DITCHFIELD,
Hon. Secretary.

*REPORT OF NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
SUB-COMMITTEE.*

Your Sub-Committee regret to have to make an unfavourable report. The attempt has been an utter failure, notwithstanding that no endeavour was wanting on their part. Upwards of 100 letters with forms of return were sent out, a large proportion of these being personally written by the Chairman. Very few indeed of the recipients have had the courtesy to reply, and of those who applied for forms and received them a still smaller number have filled them up and sent them in. Five returns have been sent in to Mr. Lionel Cust, Director of the National Portrait Gallery.

(Signed)

SAYE & SELE, Chairman.
ALAN CHEALES, Secretary.

