



Berks Archaeological Society.

REPORT 1901—1902.

IN pursuance of the duty entrusted to them, your Committee beg to lay before the Annual Meeting of Members a Report of the proceedings of the Society during the bygone year.

H.M. The King has graciously consented to become Patron of the Society ; and the Lord Bishop of Oxford has kindly allowed his name to be associated with the Society as one of its Vice-Patrons.

CONGRESS OF ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETIES.

The Annual Congress was held at Burlington House on July 10th, when the Secretary attended to represent the Berks Society. The following subjects were discussed :—Proposals for a complete list of earthworks in Britain ; the preparation of schedules of objects of particular antiquarian interest for the use of County Councils ; suggestions for a return to Mediæval Blazon ; and the evils of ivy.

ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL GALLERY.

Funds having at length been provided by the careful and skilful finance of the Hon. Treasurer, the Society has been able this year to carry out to the full its undertaking with the Corporation. The basement room on the right of the Abbey Gateway, under the superintendence of Mr. Ernest Ravenscroft, has been adapted to the purposes required, and with the concurrence of the Museum Committee the Librarian has been able to arrange there some objects of very considerable interest, comprising a large and handsome stone coat of arms being those of Sir Richard Child, Bart., created in 1732 Viscount Castlemaine (the title is now extinct) ; a memorial slab relating to John a-Larder, third cook to the Abbot in 1447 ; a stone slab containing part of the Latin inscription over the door of the old Reading School, and a variety of worked stones, once belonging to the Abbey, found lately amongst the foundations of a house on an island near Caversham Bridge, also a stone coat of arms from the old Town Hall.

PRACTICAL WORK OF THE SOCIETY.

The year 1901-2 has been a fair level year in respect of your Society's operations ; and the Committee desire to return sincere thanks to the gentlemen who have read papers, and to the ladies who have entertained. Five Meetings have been held in Reading, when well attended Lectures were delivered in the Abbot's Audit Room at the Abbey Gateway ; also three Excursions took place which gave much satisfaction to Members and friends who attended these.

The year's proceedings were as follows :—

On May 1st the Annual Meeting was held, 27 Members being present, when matters of interest and importance were discussed ; after which the Rev. Alan Cheales read a valuable paper on "Relics of Reading Abbey," viz., the Abbey Stone, the Abbey Coffin, and the Abbey Hand. The paper was illustrated by drawings prepared by Mr. Ravenscroft, and an interesting discussion followed.

On June 17th, the first Summer Excursion took place, when the Members visited the Churches of Shinfield, Arborfield, Finchampstead and Swallowfield, and were hospitably entertained by Lady Russell at Swallowfield Park, who also read an interesting paper on the history of the house and its various owners.

On July 30th the Society visited Hanney, Charney, Bassett, Stanford in the Vale, Shellingford, and Faringdon : at this latter place a learned and copious paper relating to its history was read by the Hon. Secretary, after which the party proceeded in carriages to Buckland, where they inspected the Church and were hospitably entertained by the Rector. The various churches visited were described by the President.

On September 25th, the Society visited North Hants ; and inspected the Churches of Bramley, Sherborne Priory, Monk Sherborne, and Sherborne St. John, the conduct of the party generally being in the hands of the President.

On November 27th, a Meeting of the Society was held at the Abbey Gateway, when Dr. Hurry exhibited and described seals and coins of Reading Abbey ; and the Rev. Alan Cheales gave a learned and interesting lecture on "Ancient Egypt." About 40 Members of the Society and friends were present.

On January 30th, 1902, the second meeting of the Winter Session was held at the Abbey Gate, when 25 Members and friends were present. A very interesting lecture by the Rev. E. H.

Goddard, Secretary of the Wilts Archæological Society, on "The Church Plate of Wilts," was given, and illustrated by excellent sketches on the black board.

On April 3rd, a valuable and exhaustive lecture on "The Battle of Ashdown," giving its locality as in the vicinity of The White Horse Hill, which still commemorates that battle, was delivered by Theodore H. White, Esq. It was illustrated by a very excellent map of the district, specially prepared for the occasion by Mr. Albin White.

VISIT OF THE BIRMINGHAM ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

During the past Session a visit was paid by the President and several Members of the Birmingham Archæological Society to Reading and Silchester. On their arrival at Reading they were received by the President and a few Members of your Society, and conducted to the Museum, where Mr. Colyer explained the exhibits from Silchester; after which they partook of lunch, and then drove to Silchester. There they were met by Mr. St. John Hope, M.A., F.S.A., and having inspected the Roman remains they drove on to Aldermaston Court. Here our President entertained them at tea, afterwards they drove back to Reading in time to catch the evening train to Birmingham.

THE ASCOT FIND.

Early in the year an interesting and important discovery of twenty urns, containing calcined human bones, was made at Sunningdale, near Camberley, on the Rigde Mount Estates. A mound was being removed in the construction of new golf links, when three urns were discovered. Under the direction of Mr. O. A. Shrubsole, F.G.S., curator of the Geological and Anthropological Department of the Reading Museum, a further search was made, and seventeen other burials were brought to light. It is believed by competent authorities that the mound was the site of an ancient crematorium in pre-Roman days. Some of the urns are 1-ft. 4-in. in diameter. They are of ancient British make, and may safely be ascribed to the time before Britain came under the Roman influence—probably of the Bronze Age. Some of the urns have been sent to the British Museum, the Reading Museum, to Oxford, and to the Louvre, Paris. It is proposed to carry out further excavations.

EGYPT EXPLORATION FUND.

Having regard to the lecture given during the last Session on "Ancient Egypt," it may be interesting to have reported that,

through the good offices of Miss Lawes, of Caversham, who assisted Professor Petrie in 1899, a valuable collection of antiquities from Hu in Upper Egypt was received at the Museum in 1900, and that since then, in recognition of a £2 2s. subscription of the Corporation, two other grants have been made by the President and Committee of the E.E. Fund, comprising an excellent collection of red and black pottery, the unfailing mark of the New Race (Pre-Dynastic); also a specially fine golden mask, from the Fayum, of the Ptolemaic period; with many other objects of interest, which are now on show in the Later Historic Department.

THE SILCHESTER EXPLORATIONS.

The Silchester Explorations have been continued through another year; and, as reported on by the Honorary Curators of the Museum, are shown to have been of very considerable interest. They write: "The excavations for the season of 1900 were on somewhat more extensive a scale than in the former year, being carried over eight acres of the city. Various large houses were disinterred, as also a building which may have been a small temple. The most striking feature of the excavations was the quantity of mosaic flooring covering the corridors and chambers of the larger houses. The find of the season, which will distinguish it from other years, was made in a wooden lined well dug out in Insula XXIII. From seven feet, from the top downwards, lay a mass of ironwork resting on black ash, which filled the remainder of the well. It was no easy task to disentangle this shapeless mass, but eventually it resolved itself into a great hoard of tools. In all there were over one hundred pieces. It has been conjectured that the hoard belonged to some blacksmith, and from the presence of an instrument of farriery called a buttress, which has ceased to be used in its ancient form in this country, it seems possible that the smith may have also practised farriery. . . . This hoard, together with that found in 1890, has been placed in the central table case in the large room of the collection."

Your Committee recommend that a sum of three guineas be again voted this year to the Society of Antiquaries' Exploration Fund.

PROGRAMME FOR 1902—3.

It is suggested that Excursions be made to the following places:

1. Westbury, Edington, and the neighbourhood.

2. Hungerford, Littlecote, &c.
3. St. Albans.

It is hoped that a paper on "Excavations at Little Marlow Nunnery," will be read during the Session by A. Vaughan Williams, Esq., F.R.G.S., who indeed had consented to do so at this General Meeting, but as an act of courtesy postponed it in order that it might first be read before the Bucks Arch. Society.

Other papers also are promised.

GENERAL NOTICES.

Members desiring to read papers before this Society are requested to communicate with the Secretary.

The thanks of the Society are offered to Mrs. Falcon-Steward, Mrs. Williams, the Secretary and Mrs. Ditchfield, and Mrs. Morris Williams, for kindly entertaining the Members and their friends at tea on Afternoon Meetings of the Society.

OBITUARY NOTICES.

A vacancy has been caused amongst the Vice-Patrons, owing to the lamented death of Lord Wantage, the late Lord Lieutenant of the County ; and J. Herbert Benyon, Esq., the present Lord Lieutenant, has kindly consented to fill it.

The Society also has to record with regret the death, during the past year, of Charles Stephens, Esq.

Silchester Excavations.

The results of last year's work was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, last month, and caused much interest to the numerous visitors.

The excavations in 1901 were begun on 10th May, and continued without break until 13th November. The work was confined to the northern half of the town, on a strip of ground lying to the east of *insulae* XXI and XXII, which were excavated in 1899, and extending northwards from the modern road traversing the site to the town wall. The area examined was nearly 6 acres. The ground in question was found to contain, in its southern