

The members were then most hospitably entertained to luncheon by Mrs. Sperling, to whom a hearty vote of thanks was passed on the motion of Mr. C. J. Williams, seconded by Mr. W. E. Hughes; while the Rev. Dr. Russell proposed, and Mr. S. W. Kershaw, F.S.A., seconded, a vote of thanks to Mr. Money. This concluded the business of a highly successful Congress. The arrangements made by the Hon. Congress Secretary worked excellently throughout; and it was generally agreed that the members of the Congress had spent an instructive and pleasurable week,

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—Following on the Congress of the British Archæological Association, this County Society arranged a most pleasant River Excursion (to which members of the B.A.A. were welcomed), and the trip, being favoured with delightful weather, proved a great success. Leaving Caversham Bridge shortly after 10.15, on Mr. Cawston's steam-launch *Starlight*, the party proceeded to Mapledurham House, where they disembarked at the private landing stage. At Mapledurham House the party were welcomed by the Hon. Algernon Mills, who himself conducted them through the historic building, and gave much valuable information, which was supplemented by remarks from the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, who between them pointed out most of the chief features of interest. Mapledurham House has been so often described that it is only needful to repeat that the front part is Elizabethan, though it has been considerably altered. It was fastened on to a much older building, a portion of which, of half-timbered work, remains on the south-west, of which the porch is the best. This was the original residence of the Blount family, to whom it still belongs, the present owner being Mr. J. Darell Blount. The principal front consists of a curtain wall 103 feet long, with an entrance to the hall in the middle, flanked on each side by a wing 20 feet wide, the material being brick, with stone quoins and mullions. At the back are irregular buildings, amongst which is a small chapel for Roman Catholic services, which are still performed. The windows are all mullioned,

the moulding being the usual one of quarter circles and fillet. Sir H. Dryden said that the arrangement of the entrance and of the hall was not the old English one, and that hence the house might be subsequent to the Commonwealth; but Mr. Parker pronounced it to be Elizabethan, and no doubt the internal arrangements had at some time been altered (as explained by Mr. Mills). Mapledurham House was garrisoned at the time of the Civil War, for the King, by Sir Charles Blount whom Clarendon calls "the scout-general of the Royal Army." In 1643, when Reading was besieged, the Parliamentarians captured the fort near Sir Charles Blount's house,—which they plundered,—and Sir Charles must have been a little gratified to learn that many of the troopers were hurt by the bursting of their own petard. Sir Charles, however, met with an unhappy death. He was shot dead by a sentry at the North Gate of Oxford on June 1st, 1644—either because he failed to give the watchword correctly, or because he advanced after the sentry had bidden him to stand. Sir Richard Blount, with his wife Cicely (daughter of Sir Richard Baker) lay buried in the church here, under an altar tomb. The Manor in the time of Domesday was held by Milo Crispin, who was evidently a favourite with the Conqueror, and enjoyed many rich estates in Oxfordshire. William Earl Warren also held it, and it passed through the marriage of his daughter Edith to Hugh de Gournay, a member of a once powerful line of Norman barons. Through the marriage of another heiress, Juliana de Gournay, the property subsequently passed to Sir John Bardolf, second son of William Bardolf, Baron of Wormegay. The last of this race was Sir Robert Bardolf, who lay buried under a beautiful brass in the chancel of Mapledurham Church. He died in 1395, leaving no child. Mr. Ditchfield had been unable to discover when the Blounts came to Mapledurham. There was a portrait of Sir Michael Blount (who built the house) with his two sons, Thomas and Charles, and he was, Mr. Ditchfield presumed, the father of Sir Richard, whose name he had mentioned. The friendship of Pope with Martha and Teresa Blount added interest to that house, as the poet's regard for Arabella Fermor, the heroine of "The Rape of the Lock," added interest to Ufton Court, which some of the party visited last week. Pope was much attached to the two sisters. The vixenish Teresa scorned his youthful homage, but for many years he enjoyed the warm friendship of Martha. Two of his epistles were written to the "scornful beauty" who had "the brightest eyes of Britain"; and they had a poem to Mrs. Martha Blount on her birthday, and some

lines on Windsor Forest sent to the same lady. In the end she treated him with much unkindness, refusing to go to see him in his last illness. Perhaps, however, if they had Miss Martha's account of the matter, they might not judge her very harshly. From all accounts they might conclude that Pope must have been a little trying at times.

The wonderful paintings in the picture gallery, the remarkable ceilings (which are not unlike those taken from Walsingham House, Reading, and those at Hardwick) and the tapestry, which has a curious history, were duly admired.

Mr. Keyser and Mr. Ditchfield heartily thanked the Hon. A. Mills for so kindly allowing the Society to see that most interesting house, and for his courteous guidance.

MAPLEDURHAM CHURCH.

At the interesting church the Vicar (the Rev. F. St. John Thackeray) met the party, and explained that there were two manors—Mapledurham Chazey and Mapledurham Gurney, belonging to the Bardolf family, to whom there was a memorial in the church. The history of how the living came to Eton College (the patron) was interesting. When Normandy was a Province of England several English Abbeys and Priories were dependencies of the great Abbeys in Normandy, and the revenues of them used to be sent across the Channel. After Normandy was lost to England, it was not felt right that such money should go to those alien priories, and Henry V. in 1414 applied the revenues to the Crown; and his son, Henry VI., who endowed Eton, gave some of those alien properties to found different places, among them bestowing Mapledurham on Eton. This Priory was founded by de Gourney, and was originally under the Abbey of Bec. The tomb of Sir Richard Blount, the Blount chapel (with its window of Italian painted glass dating from about the end of the 14th century), the fine brass to Sir Robert Bardolf (1396, the earliest date in the church), and the tomb of the late Mr. Blount, father of the present owner, were pointed out; and Mr. Thackeray observed that this gentleman, although a Roman Catholic, particularly desired to be buried by his (the Vicar's) predecessor, Mr. Coleridge. The church was restored by Mr. Butterfield in 1863, when the present alabaster reredos was put in, and the chancel roof, and also the Norman font, were rather gaudily painted, which was a pity. At this time the little north aisle was added. The church has six bells, the oldest bearing date 1623. The very nice organ was presented by Mr. C. D. Rose, M P., of Hardwick, 1889.

The almshouses, built in 1613, by John Lister, a connection of the Blount family, and the picturesque mill (which was built about 200 years ago, occupying the site of a mill which had been in existence since the time of the Conqueror), were inspected with interest, as was the charming Vicarage garden.

At the Vicarage the party were shown many interesting documents, and also the golden chalice and paten given by King William IV. (whose son, Lord Augustus FitzClarence, was Vicar of Mapledurham), and the very interesting plate flagon, the gift of Lady Margaret Savill.

At Goring Church they were welcomed by the Vicar (the Rev. L. G. Wallace), who outlined the history of the building, which was supplemented by remarks from Mr. Keyser and the Rev. B. C. Littlewood.

The church is supposed to have been built about the year 1080, the tower being evidently the most ancient part now standing. The west doorway is a good specimen of Early Norman work, and some portions of it Saxon; while the Norman work reaches up to the belfry, above which, in the early part of the 14th century, an elevation was added, the original roof being raised about the same time. The church was, apparently, built by Robert D'Oyly; and the nave is very much in its original condition. Altogether the church is a rather primitive Norman building, rather good of its kind; and, putting aside the aisle, very much as it was about 800 years ago. At the restoration of the church in 1885, when the apse was added, many people dissented under the impression that graves would be found on the site; but as a matter of fact digging revealed the foundations of the original apse, so that the restoration on the ancient foundations was a very happy one. This important work was carried out during the vicariate of the Rev. H. C. Littlewood, now Vicar of Burston, near Diss, Norfolk, and brother of the Rev. B. C. Littlewood. Some of the brasses are well worth notice, particularly one in Norman-French, dated 1370-80. There are six bells, the most interesting of which (about 600 years old) was presented by Peter de Keble, the famous builder-Bishop of Exeter, four of the others being fairly interesting, but not particularly old, and the last the present of the Rev. H. C. Littlewood. A nunnery (suppressed at the dissolution of the monasteries) was once attached to the church.

Luncheon having been partaken of at the Bull Hotel, Streatley, a move was made for Aldworth, where a hearty welcome was

extended by the Rev. G. F. Mattinson, the Vicar. The famous tombs of the De la Beche family, with the structural work to fittingly accommodate them, make Aldworth unique amongst the churches of England. In the churchyard, also, were noticed the curious yew tree, and the recently erected monument to the memory of the late Mr. John Bligh Monck, of Coley Park, Reading, and his wife.

Addressing the party when assembled in the church, the Rev. G. F. Mattinson said there was once a castle in that parish, called the De la Beche castle, after the owners of the Manor, who came from Beche in Normandy subsequent to the Norman invasion; and it was the members of that family who built the church, and also put up the monuments existing to this day. The first De la Beche of whom we had any knowledge with regard to that church was Robert de la Beche, who lay under the western canopy of the southern aisle, followed by John and Philip, his descendants. It was Philip who put up those three monuments (leaving the space for himself vacant), The two former were knighted about the time when Edward I. came back from the last Crusade; and his (Mr. Mattinson's) predecessor Mr. Lloyd had ventured the supposition that it was because they took part in that pilgrimage to the East that the honour of knight-hood was bestowed upon them, and that so Philip de la Beche thought his father and grandfather worthy of such memorials. Philip De la Beche was, perhaps with the exception of the figure under the middle archway of the church, the chief person in the family history. He was a man in great favour during the earlier years of King Edward II., under whom he occupied many positions of responsibility. Later on, however, he raised Berkshire for the Barons against the King; and he and his eldest son John and his son Philip, and Edmund De la Beche (who was the Archdeacon of Berks) all took part in the rising, but they were defeated by Hugh Despencer. Philip De la Beche and his second son, Philip, were sent to Pomfret Castle, and his eldest son, John, to the Tower of London. When Edward III. was crowned they all came back to their lands, and were restored to their dignities. John, however, had been so badly treated in the Tower that he died scarcely a year after his return (1338), and Philip, his father, died within two years. Under the middle canopy on the other side was one of the best preserved monuments in the church, which Mr. Lloyd ventured to identify with the wife of Philip De la Beche, although he (Mr. Mattinson) was not aware what authority he had for doing so. At John De la

Beche's death his extensive lands (which included Aldworth and parts of Compton, Bradfield, and Yattendon) came into the hands of Isabella his wife, who held the lands and castle as representative of her son Thomas during his minority. The identification of those monuments was due to a very interesting fact, viz., that during the ploughing up of a site of Aldworth Castle in 1871 a signet ring (handed round for inspection) was found. It was due to the fact that Isabella was obliged to sign documents that that seal was made; and the seal—which had to go down from vicar to vicar of Aldworth—was a great curiosity, because—although there were many impressions of seals of various ages—very few seals of the Middle Ages themselves had come down to us, owing to the fact that as soon as a person had ceased to have the right to use the seal the seal was broken up. The manor and lands in that part of Berkshire remained in the hands of Isabella De la Beche for about five years. During that time her eldest son, Thomas, died, and the lands came into the possession of John De la Beche about 1332. Another figure was peculiar in that it was the only effigy of a man in civilian attire: he died before 1338, and had probably never borne arms. When John De la Beche came into the estates he let the property at Aldworth to his uncle Philip, with remainder to his other uncle Nicholas and, after, to his aunt Joan. He died in 1339, and then only two male members of the family were left. Nicholas was the best known of the family besides Philip. He was Constable of the Tower, and tutor to the Black Prince. During Edward III.'s incursions into France he had the Royal children under his special care; and it was recorded that the King coming back to the Tower from the Continent one night was in a great fury because he found Nicholas De la Beche away from his charges, he being at Aldworth at the time—possibly, as Mr. Lloyd thought, superintending the building of the south aisle, in order to put up the fresh canopies to Isabella De la Beche and himself. When Nicholas died Edmund De la Beche was the only one of the family left. He was Archdeacon of Berkshire, and a very militant Archdeacon too, for he took part in the risings against the Crown. When the church was restored there was found underneath the floor a broken marble slab with a matrix for a half-length figure, apparently of an ecclesiastic, which Mr. Lloyd thought was probably that of Edmund De la Beche. Outside the church, originally, there was in a small archway another figure. Just before the Civilian War Colonel Symonds came to that church, and not only wrote an account of the figures, but

also sketched them. That account, with its drawings, was still in the British Museum, and there they found that the outside figure was that of a knight with an escutcheon. That was thought to be the effigy of Robert De la Beche, who was a younger son and a man-at-arms, and who died before Nicholas and Edmund. As to the church, the north wall, the lower part of the tower, and the font were of 12th century work: and probably there was a British Christian church there even in Roman times. The chancel was built in 1315; and the windows both on the north and south side of the chancel were of that date. The south aisle was generally assigned to about 1340, and was remarkable for the splendid geometric tracery of the windows. The fine "bench ends" of the pews at the west end of the north aisle were supposed to belong to the time of Edward II. The pulpit was very interesting. It was originally in St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, but was sold to Aldworth in 1782 or 1789—he was not sure of the date—when the good people of St. Lawrence's were putting up a "three-decker." No doubt they would be glad to get it back, for it was a very fine piece of Jacobean wood carving. The reading desk, which harmonised well, was of about the time of James II., and he had adapted it from a farmhouse sideboard. Mr. Mattinson concluded by calling attention to one of the windows on the south of the chancel, as being very interesting architecturally, the two lancets coming together and a piece above them not being pierced.

Mr. Keyser heartily thanked the Vicar for his reception and very lucid explanation, and observed that there was no parish church in England where they had got so many monuments as at Aldworth, to one family. Although the De la Beche family was now believed to be extinct, the late Mr. W. W. B. Beach, M.P. for the Andover Division of Hampshire, believed he was descended from that family. It was recorded that Queen Elizabeth, while on one of her journeys, heard of the fame of the monuments at Aldworth, and turned out of her way in order to come and see them.

The Rev. G. F. Mattinson added that that was so, the Queen riding on a pillion behind the Earl of Leicester, from Ewelme. The mutilation of the effigies was undoubtedly perpetrated in the time of the Commonwealth.

A pleasant drive, viâ the Grotto, Basildon, brought the party once more to the steam-launch, and Reading was reached shortly after 7 p.m., a most happy and instructive day having been spent.

On November 2nd Mr. Arthur W. Sutton has kindly promised to deliver a lecture on his tour in Egypt. It will be entitled "Egypt Ancient and Modern" and will be illustrated by a beautiful series of lantern slides.

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The Congress of Archæological Societies was held at Burlington House, on July 5th, under the presidency of Lord Belcarres. The scheduling of earthworks, the custody of court-rolls, the preservation of County boundaries, the proposed mutilation of a monument in Westminster Abbey, were some of the subjects discussed.

Review.

STUDHAM, THE STORY OF A SECLUDED PARISH, by J. E. Brown, Vicar (Elliot Stock), 2s. 6d. This is an admirable addition to the list of village histories which have been published during recent years. Every parish has a history, sometimes exciting and important, sometimes calm and uneventful; and it is important that it should be recorded. The Vicar of Studham has done well to write in so pleasant a manner the story of his village, which ought to find many readers. Before the Norman Conquest it was connected with St. Alban's Abbey, and subsequently with the Priory of Dunstable. The parish has an interesting late Norman and Early English church. The village lies on the borders of Beds and Herts, and although only thirty miles from London is certainly "secluded."

The labour of compiling this little work must have been immense, and Mr. Brown is to be congratulated upon having so successfully accomplished his task.

