



Notes and Queries

RELATING TO BERKS, BUCKS AND OXON.

Communications are invited upon all subjects of Antiquarian or Architectural interest relating to the three counties. Correspondents are requested to write as plainly as possible, on one side of the paper only, with REPLIES, QUERIES and NOTES on SEPARATE SHEETS, and the name of the writer appended to each communication.

Notes.

A RELIC OF MEDIEVAL NEWBURY.—Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, time had dealt kindly with the borough of Newbury, at least from the point of view of a lover of the past—the many houses of timbered and half-timbered construction, and the handsome, well-proportioned buildings of a somewhat later date, forming a delightful picture of an old-fashioned, well-to-do country town. But Vandalism, indifference, and destruction, have gone hand in hand, and soon it will be difficult to find one picturesque little bit worthy the brush and pencil of the artist, or the lover of by-gone England. It is, therefore, refreshing to have to chronicle the unexpected discovery of a charming fragment of medieval Newbury, where it would have been least expected. On recently removing an old plaster ceiling in the shop of Mr. Robert Martin, in the Market-place, in connection with some structural alterations, it was found that the entire surface was covered with beautiful oak panneling, affixed to massive deeply-moulded beams. The rectangular compartments are richly ornamented with moulded ribs and bosses, or flowers delicately carved at the intersections. Judging from the character of the work, it appears to belong to the Perpendicular period of the 15th. century, and for the most part is in a remarkable state of preservation. Like Solomon's Temple, there is no metal here, and the panels of fine old English oak, beautifully figured, are keyed to the timbers by oak dowels. The work done at this period was thoroughly that of artists, and the men who executed it understood what they were doing, whereas now the modern workman, for the most part, follows blindly, and has his materials provided for him by the aid of machinery. Hence the old spirit and feeling of the genuine craftsman is absent. It is fortunate that Mr. Martin, the owner of this property, intends to preserve intact this most interesting adornment to his premises, and as the alterations are being carried out by Mr. Charles W. Adey, who possesses the hereditary skilled appreciation of good work, this charming reminiscence of the good old times could not have fallen into better hands. At the time of the battles of Newbury, the premises in question formed a very famous hostelry known as the "King's Head."—W.M.—*From Reading Mercury.*

ST. EDMOND'S CHAPEL, READING.—The history of this very ancient building, and the very recent discovery of its remains, is of so singular, not to say romantic, a character, that I have been asked by the Editor to put it somewhat fully on record. The chapel was founded in 1284, on permission of Abbot Helias, by a town worthy, one Lawrence Burgess, bailiff of Reading; who also

built a hermitage close by to which he retired. It was on land near to the present Greyfriars Church. Some two centuries later, in 1479, it seems to have fallen into disuse; and we find citizens memorialising Edward 4th against Abbot Thorne because "this chapel, wherein were laid the bones of many christians," was then a barn. It does not appear that anything was done; at any rate after another similar interval we find it not only a barn, but a fort, "the Invincible fort," called "Harrison's Barn." It cuts off the approach from Caversham, and appears to have done good service during the Fortnight's Siege; as a cannon ball in the Museum shows that considerable sized ordnance was used by Lord Essex, who made on this side his principal attack. At this time the site appears to have been Crown property, and the Fort, after its disuse, to have been pulled down and built up again some half-mile further out, on part of the Bettel estate farm, "where it now is" says Man in his History of Reading—"long since demolished" is Doran's last word for it. And now for its re-discovery. Some years ago, when engaged on the History of the Siege, I applied to the owners of this land for information as to the Chapel-barn-fort. I could not obtain any. Some few weeks ago I heard from the Agents for the property, the Messrs. Dryland Haslam, that the wall of an old barn on the Battel estate had been blown down, disclosing many worked stones which had apparently belonged to an ecclesiastical building; they had kept my enquiry letter all these years, and now could answer it. The stones were about to be built into the new wall's foundation, but were most courteously put at the disposal of the Museum authorities, in case they should prove of antiquarian interest. We eagerly inspected them, and thankfully accepted a gift of them from the owner, Mr. Saunders. The best were selected and sent up to us at the Museum, and are now in the Stone Chamber at the Abbey Gateway, which forms for the present a place of refuge for our overcrowded Museum Stone-work, and is thus in the friendly charge of the Berks Archaeological Society. Expert inspection shows the two principal stones to be part of a marble pilaster, possibly formerly a portion of the altar front. There are also two other unwrought marble slabs. It is a singular history of over six hundred years, of great vicissitudes, and having withstood not only Abbot Thorne, but the Earl of Essex; and about every other conceivable form of neglect: and for these marbles to have come now, in 1906, under the better shelter of the unkindly Abbot's successors, a Corporation which shows the kindest care for all local antiquities. The good old Bailiff could hardly have hoped for a more satisfactory conclusion. The chapel-barn-fort-barn is to be found off the Oxford-road, at the bottom of Beresford-road. It is of considerable size, and is afflicted with a hideous corrugated iron roof. Its former roof was of thatch: architects could of course indicate what was the original one.—ALAN CHEALES, Curator for Later Historic Archaeology; and Librarian of Berks Archaeological Society.

Queries.

AMERICAN LANDOWNERS IN ENGLAND OR ON THE CONTINENT.—Can any of your readers furnish me with the names of any American gentlemen who own Estates of more or less importance in England or on the Continent? Perhaps they will be good enough to state the estates which are so held.—J.B.W.

HUGH CHAMBERLIN (1636-1709).—I should be glad of any information with regard to the parentage of Hugh Chamberlin, who lived at Redhill-Radcliffe-on-Soar, co. Notts, buried at the Baptist burial ground at Rempstone. I have his will which shows that he had some corn growing on some ground at Draycott, co. Derby. His son Joseph lived at Kingston-on-Soar, whose wife Martha owned land at Keyworth, where their son Thomas lived, who died in 1747. I should be glad of any information with regard to the Snows of Southam and Offchurch, and of the Lyndons of the same place.—T. CHAMBERLIN TIMS, Great Bourton, near Banbury.

EXECUTION OF THE ABBOT OF READING.—Miss Mitford, in *Belford Regis*, when writing of the ruins of Reading Abbey in 1834, describes "the deep and beautiful arched gateway forming part of an old romantic house which, although erected many centuries later, is now falling to decay, while the massive structure of the arch remains firm and vigorous as a rock," and then mentions "that graceful and shadowy gateway, which, with the majestic elms that front it, has formed the subject of almost as many paintings and drawings as Durham Cathedral." This latter is, of course, what is still known as the Abbey Gate, the home of the Berks Archaeological Society. Where was the former? Miss Mitford adds a puzzling note concerning the first-mentioned gateway. She wrote, "It was not at this gateway, but at one the very remains of which are now swept away, that the Abbot and two of his monks were hanged at the time of the Reformation: a most causeless piece of cruelty, since no resistance was offered by the helpless Benedictines." Where was this third gateway which has disappeared? And was the Abbot with his monks hanged there?—F.H.

Replies.

WARFIELD AS A FAMILY NAME.—There was over here, last summer, a very able and intelligent American clergyman, the Rector of Christ Church, States Island, New York, named the Rev. F. Warfield Crawden, who had come over partly to find out all he could about Warfield, as his family originally came from this Parish, he said. He took back with him fairly copious notes about this part, which he told me he should send to his friend, *Governor Warfield, of Maryland*, who is at present Governor of that State. This gentleman, he said, was very interested in anything concerning *our* Warfield, as he firmly believed that his family came to England with the Conqueror, and settling at Warfield, gave their name to the Parish.—B. C. LITTLEWOOD, Warfield Vicarage.

MEDMENHAM HELL-FIRE CLUB.—It is curious that there should still exist direct testimony of the proceedings of this notorious club. A lady living in Scotland has written to me an account of the traditions lingering in the neighbourhood of the Abbey in her father's time, and tells of the orgies that went on there, the drinking out of cups made of human skulls, and out of chalices, the sleeping in cradles, one of which existed in the Abbey in her father's time stored away in a lumber room, and the final scene with the monkey, as described in Mrs. Climençon's chapter in the *Memorials of Old Buckinghamshire*. My informant is Mrs. James Brown, of Lochfield, Maxwelltown, Dumfries, and her father was the Rev. W. Douglas Veitch, who was curate at Hurley in 1824.—ANDREW OLIVER.