



Berks Archaeological Society.

ANNUAL REPORT, 1905—6.

YOUR Committee beg to present their Report for the past year. This Report possesses features of unusual interest on account of the visit of the British Archaeological Association to Berkshire in July last, and the holding of its sixty-second Annual Congress in Reading.

The Congress was most successful in every way. Every one took a keen interest in the proceedings of the week. The noble hospitality of the Mayor of Reading (Martin J. Sutton, Esq.) and of the President of the Berks Society, and other ladies and gentlemen, and the efforts of all to make the Congress successful, not only in Reading but also at Abingdon and Newbury, all leave pleasant recollections. We hope that the visit of the Association will tend to increase the love and veneration of the inhabitants of the County for the relics of Antiquity with which Berkshire abounds, and promote a systematic study of history and architecture.

The official record of the proceedings of the Congress, which was written by your Secretary, has been published in the *Journal of British Archaeological Association*, and also in the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal*, and need not be here repeated. We would call special attention to the inaugural address which was delivered by our President at the largely attended Reception of the Mayor of Reading at the Town Hall on July 17th. It contains an able resumé of the principal objects of antiquity which our county contains, and will remain of permanent value to the students of the history of Berkshire. Abridgments of the following papers have already appeared in the *Journal of the Association* :—Mr. Andrew Oliver's Notes on the Brasses of Berkshire, Dr. Hurry's Account of Reading Abbey, Mr. Field's History of Wallingford, and Miss Sharpe's short account of Upton Court, and other papers that were

read during the Congress will appear in due course. The committee and officers of the Association have expressed themselves as deeply grateful to the members of the Berks Society for the kindness, hospitality and assistance which they received at Reading during the Congress week. The preparations for the Congress and the carrying out of the programme entailed considerable labour on the part of the officers of this Society, and they are pleased to know that their efforts have been appreciated in assisting to make the Reading Congress completely successful.

The Victoria History of the County is progressing satisfactorily, and the first volume is now in the hands of the binders and may be expected by the subscribers very shortly. This volume will contain the records of the geology of the county by Mr. Horace Monckton, the natural history by various writers, prehistoric remains by Mr. Shrubsole and Mr. Clinch, the Roman and Saxon periods, the Domesday section by Mr. Horace Round, with a translation of the text by Mr. Ragg, Ancient Earthworks by Mr. Harold Peake, and Industries, Arts and Manufactures, by your Secretary. Volume II. will appear soon after the beginning of 1907, and the remaining volumes, devoted to the Topography of the county, will follow. For assistance in this section the Editors hope to have the benefit of the assistance of the members of this Society. Intending subscribers are asked to communicate without delay to the Editor.

LECTURES AND EXCURSIONS.

During the past year your Society has arranged the usual number of lectures and excursions, and these compare favourably with those of other county Societies. Whereas many of these content themselves with an annual meeting and one excursion, your Committee have arranged no less than seven lectures and two excursions, in addition to the numerous meetings and opportunities of visiting places of historic interest which the Congress last summer afforded.

On May 4th, on the occasion of the last annual meeting, the Principal of the Reading University College read an interesting paper on "The Site of Early Reading," in which he endeavoured to prove that the original historic town lay in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's Church and along the great north and south road crossing Caversham Bridge. Mr. Childs gave a mass of detailed evidence in support of these conclusions, demolishing, as he ventured to believe, a contrary view maintained by some writers of recent years that early Reading was situated eastward of the Forbury. The effect of this evidence

tended to show that not merely mediæval Reading but pre-Norman Reading grew up along the ancient "Old" street which passed from the Kennet Bridges and the modern Bridge Street northward along St. Mary's Butts and West Street towards Caversham Bridge.

On May 30th the Society visited Windsor and received a hearty welcome from the inhabitants of the royal borough. A goodly number of members journeyed from Reading, and were joined by others at Twyford and Maidenhead, and several came from London and the neighbourhood of Windsor. On arrival at the Castle the party was received by the Rev. Canon Dalton, who most ably described the numerous interesting features of St. George's Chapel. The Curfew Tower was also examined, the site of the great hall of Henry III., the curious gargoyles of the Chapel. After glancing at the Albert Memorial Chapel, Mr. Miles, H.M. Inspector of the Castle, conducted the party to the Terrace and the State Apartments. After luncheon at the Castle Hotel, a public meeting was held at the Town Hall, where many of the residents of the Castle and the borough were assembled. The Mayor, Sir A. W. Shipley, presided, and a lecture was given by the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, on the history of the town. The Town Clerk, Mr. E. C. Durant, had kindly arranged an exhibition of the charters and documents belonging to the Corporation. The party then drove through the Great Park to St. Leonard's Hill, the seat of Sir Francis Tress Barry, Bart., M.P. for Windsor, who, together with Lady Barry, gave them a kind welcome. After tea, Sir Francis exhibited the unique collection of prehistoric antiquities which he had excavated at Keiss Castle, the baronet's Scottish seat.

On June 24th, at the close of the Congress of the Association, your Committee arranged a river excursion to Mapledurham, Goring, Streatley and Aldworth, which, being favoured with delightful weather, proved a great success. The Hon. Algernon Mills and your Secretary described the interesting house of Mapledurham, the Rev. F. St. John Thackeray explained the history of the Church, the Vicar of Goring welcomed the party at his Church, and the Rev. G. F. Mattinson described the tombs of the De la Beche family at Aldworth, a full account of which has been published in the Journal.

The first meeting of the Winter Session was held on November 2nd, when an interesting lecture was given by Arthur W. Sutton, Esq., on "Egypt, Ancient and Modern." The lecture was illustrated by a magnificent series of lantern slides made principally from photographs taken by Mr. Sutton and his family.

The second lecture was given by the President on the Churches of Letcombe Regis and Letcombe Bassett on December 6th. A most graphic description was given of the architectural features of the two churches, which was illustrated by excellent lantern slides and photographs. By the kindness of Mr. Keyser it is hoped to publish his papers *in extenso* in this Journal, and to illustrate it with beautiful plates similar to those which have appeared in the accounts of the Churches of Sparsholt and Childrey.

On account of the turmoil of a general election, it was not possible to hold the usual meeting in January. On February 1st Mr. Andrew Oliver lectured on "Flemish Brasses in England," giving an exhaustive study of all the examples which have been discovered in this country. His lecture was illustrated by lantern slides. On February 15th, at the fourth meeting of the winter session, an admirable and learned lecture was given by Mr. W. F. C. Anderson, Secretary of the Berkshire Education Committee, on "An Antiquary's Studies in Dalmatia and Montenegro." The lecturer conveyed his hearers to a little known part of the Continent, and ably described with the help of excellent lantern slides the antiquities of the shores of the Adriatic and the excavations in which he took a leading part. The fifth meeting of the winter session was held on March 15th, when an interesting lecture was given by Captain Henderson on "A Tour in Belgium." It was illustrated by an admirable series of lantern slides taken from the lecturer's own photographs, which showed wonderfully clearly the architectural features of the Flemish churches and other buildings.

On April 26th, Mr. A. Petrocokino gave a valuable lecture on "Old Buddhist Temples in Java and the Malay States," illustrated by many lantern slides from photographs taken by him, and pen and ink drawings.

The thanks of the Society are due to these gentlemen for the valuable and interesting papers which they have read, and also to the ladies and gentlemen who have entertained the members to tea on the occasion of these lectures. The names of these ladies and gentlemen are:—The President, Mrs. F. E. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sutton, Mr. and Mrs. Wyly, Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Strange, and Mrs. Bethell Earle.

THE CUSTODY OF THE ABBEY GATE.

Your Committee beg to report that they have secured from the Corporation of Reading the room at the Abbey Gate, recently held

by the Central Aid Society, at a rental of £5 per annum, and have purchased the fittings for the sum of £4. This room will be devoted to the purpose of a library. The question as to the repair and decoration of the Abbey Gate has occupied the attention of your Committee. It was felt, however, that before your Society spent any money on the building, the Committee should have a more secure tenancy than they at present have from the Corporation. After several communications had passed, the Corporation has expressed its willingness to grant a lease of 7 or 14 years, on conditions that the sum of £50 be spent in decoration and that some necessary internal repairs, the cost of which has been estimated at £38, be undertaken by the Society. It was felt that the funds of the Society ought not to be spent in merely decorative work, but should be devoted to the promotion of the study of antiquities, to publication work, to excavation of earth works, and other kindred objects, and that the cost of the decoration of the Abbey Gate should be defrayed by a public subscription. To this object the members of the Society and other ladies and gentlemen in the town and neighbourhood will be asked to contribute. The matter was first suggested by your Treasurer, Mr. Ravenscroft, whose absence from England on account of ill-health we all regret very much; and your Committee feel that the carrying out of the scheme may with advantage be left until his return next month. We are glad to hear that Mr. Ravenscroft's health has benefited greatly by his sojourn abroad, and that he is now completely restored. We congratulate the President of our Society on his complete restoration to health, and are very glad that he is again able to attend our meetings.

Your Committee is not aware of any very important discoveries which have been made during the past year. At Silchester progress has been made with the excavations, and some interesting buildings in Insulæ V and VI have been brought to light, and other objects, which will be exhibited at Burlington House on June 6th to 19th, and ultimately find their way to the Reading Museum. Your Committee recommend a grant of 5 guineas for the present year's work, and will be glad to receive any further subscriptions from the members and friends of the Society.

The discovery of the Chapel of St. Edmund and of the Well of St. Anne at Caversham, described in the last number of the Journal, are worthy of record.

The XI Volume of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archaeological Journal contains the description of a palimpsest brass recently

replaced in Binfield Church by Mr. Mill Stephenson, with notes on other palimpsest brasses in the county, Mr. Margrett's discovery of prehistoric remains in the Thames Valley, Mr. Treacher's History of Ruscombe, Saxon Charters relating to Brightwell, Sotwell and Mackney, by the Rev. J. E. Field, the Architectural Accounts of the Churches of Sparsholt and Childrey by the President, enriched by two valuable series of plates presented by the author, an account of Bisham Abbey by Mr. Ernest Dormer, Sutton Courtenay by Mr. C. Lynam, F.S.A., and notes and queries relating to the three counties. Amongst the books relating to the county which have been published we may mention the new history of Newbury by Mr. Walter Money, a short history of Reading by Mr. Childs, for the use of children, and a brief history of Reading Abbey by Dr. Hurry.

The Society has made a grant of 2 guineas towards the restoration of the Tower of Blewbury Church, and 3 guineas to the Shinfield Tower Fund, and has also given prizes for historical knowledge to the students of the Kendrick Schools, and a prize for architectural drawing to the students of University College, Reading. A collection of £3 3s. 6d. was made on the occasion of Captain Henderson's lecture for the Reading Borough Police Widows' and Orphans' Fund.

OBITUARY.

During the past year the Society has to record with deep regret the lamented death of Mr. W. Berkeley Monck, one of its Vice-Presidents, who took a keen interest in the welfare of the Society, and frequently attended its meetings. His sad and sudden death leaves a vacant place in the ranks of the Reading and Berkshire gentlemen which it is impossible to fill. Your Secretary, on behalf of the Society, endeavoured to express to Mrs. Berkeley Monck the deep feeling of the members with regard to the heavy loss which they had sustained on account of his death, and their heartfelt sympathy in her bereavement.

We have also to deplore the death of another Vice-President, Mr. W. G. Mount, President of the Newbury District Field Club, a gentleman greatly beloved by all who knew him. The death of the Rev. W. H. Summers, of Hungerford, has removed from us a learned and painstaking antiquary, who has done much good work, and was engaged until his death in transcribing the records of Hungerford. It is satisfactory to know that his MSS. has been placed in the hands of Mr. Harold Peake, who has consented to finish the work.

With regard to the future work of the Society, your Committee hope to arrange the usual number of excursions and lectures. A visit to the Warwick pageant has been suggested, and an excursion to Bradford-on-Avon. The region of East and West Ilsley has not been explored for many years, and perhaps it will be possible to visit these places during the coming season. It has been our usual custom to visit one of the towns in Berkshire each year, but these are limited in number, and are well-nigh exhausted. The President and Secretary will endeavour to arrange an attractive and useful series of excursions. During the coming lecture season the Secretary would be glad to hear from any members of the Society who would read papers or undertake any special research work. It is an advantage to a Society to have working members. To listen to lectures or join in picnics is not the utmost that many could do to further the study of history and archæology in this county, and if each member endeavoured to do some bit of work to promote the objects which we have in view, our labours would be more prolific of results, and the position and usefulness of the Society increased.

Proceedings of Societies.

BERKS ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The annual meeting was held on May 29th, when the officers were elected, the reports read, and also two lectures given, on "St. Edmund's Chapel" by the Rev. Alan Cheales, and on "The Ceilings of Walsingham House" by the Hon. Secretary. The report is printed in this Journal.

In conjunction with the Newbury District Field Club, an excursion was made on June 25th to Devizes and Potterne, the report of which is deferred until the next number of the Journal.

OXFORDSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The report of this Society for 1905 has been published, and records an enjoyable excursion to Chipping Norton, Little Compton, Moreton-in-the-Marsh, and the Rollright Stones. We are glad to learn that the Rev. G. E. Barnes has been persuaded to relinquish his intention of resigning the secretaryship. The Rev. C. E. Prior gives some notes on the deaneries of Chipping Norton, Cuddesdon and Oxford, and Mr. Potts publishes some notes on the interesting Globe Room at the Reindeer Inn, Banbury. The Transactions contain "Seven Somerton Court Rolls," which are particularly valuable. They were purchased from a dealer, and are ably edited by Mr. A. Ballard, Town Clerk of Woodstock.