

much has the work increased that it has become necessary to engage a second assistant in order to cope with it. It is clear therefore that an increase in membership is essential if our work is not to be seriously curtailed, and it is the sincere hope of my Committee that it is the desire of the members of the Berkshire Archæological and Architectural Society to help us either by becoming members of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings or by making a substantial donation to our funds, and by inducing their friends who may be interested to do the same. I will gladly send copies of our current Annual Report to any who may wish to have them; a copy of the Report is sent free to members, to others a charge of 2/- is made. The Society also publishes pamphlets on repairs to ancient buildings and cottages, and leaflets on ancient bells and bell cages, wall paintings, etc.; the former may be had by members at reduced rates, while the latter cost only a few pence.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

A. R. Powys, *Secretary.*

Notes

SONNING PARISH REGISTERS.

The Rev. G. P. Crawford, the Vicar of Sonning, has recently prepared for publication the registers of the parish of Sonning from 1598 to 1812. We regret that owing to lack of support he has abandoned his project to print and publish the registers; but in order that they may be available for students and others he has presented the manuscripts he had prepared of the registers to the Reading Public Library, where they will be deposited in the local collection, and thus be available for the free use of all inquirers.

CHURCH PLATE OF OXFORDSHIRE.

The Rev. J. T. Evans, F.S.A., rector of Stow-on-the-Wold, has just completed an examination of all the altar vessels in Oxfordshire, and the results will be embodied in a work entitled 'The Church Plate of Oxfordshire,' which will be the author's eighth volume. His former publications were: 'The Church

Plate of Pembrokeshire' (1905); of ' Gloucestershire' for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society (1906); of ' Carmarthenshire' (1908); of ' Radnorshire' (1910); of ' Breconshire' (1912); of ' Cardiganshire' (1914); and of ' Gowerland' (1921).

Mr. Evans also has in preparation for the Oxford University Press a volume entitled ' English Church Plate,' which will form one of the series dealing with Church Art in England.

ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR, RESTORATION.

The Dean of Windsor (The Very Rev. A. Baillie, D.D., who is one of the Vice-Presidents of the Berks Archæological Society), in the course of an interview regarding the restoration of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, said: ' We have now finished the stone groining of the choir roof, a very beautiful piece of work. Every stone was taken down, numbered, and, where possible, replaced, but with due regard for the construction, so that probably this groining is safer than it has ever been since the architect first erected it in the time of Henry VII. The question of the transepts and their stability has always been an anxious one. They were probably originally intended to have only one storey, like the little chapels at the end of the nave, but they were carried up the full height and subjected to the strain of the stone groining without any lateral support. Of course they have given outward, and Mr. Breakspeare felt very anxious as to their safety if the groining was reconstructed. Practically the transepts consist of four pillars about 3 ft. 6 in. square running the whole height of the chapel, unsupported, joined by windows, and very thin walls which gave an appearance of stability; but the strain is entirely on these pillars. Mr. Breakspeare called in Sir Giles Scott, and together they called in an eminent engineer. Everybody was desirous, if possible, to prevent visible alteration of the building, and it was thought that a plan of tying might satisfactorily be adopted. But it was impossible to do this tying low enough and near enough to the actual pressure of the springers of the roof. In the end they were of opinion, therefore, that tying would absolutely increase the danger. The only alternative was buttresses, and these are now being constructed. I do not think that once they are up and weathered they will be very noticeable, and, anyhow, stability is

the first consideration with the building. It is impossible to say when our work will be finished. We have often estimated the time and have always been wrong. Unforeseen conditions arise which cause delay; the difficulty of getting sufficient skilled men has constantly been in our way, but the end begins to be in sight. We believe that nothing as serious and difficult remains as we have had to face in the past, and, owing to the slow and careful method with which Mr. Breakspeare has worked all through, we have no mistakes to regret. I am only speaking of the choir and transepts. What we shall find in the nave we do not yet know with any certainty, but we hope that there is nothing of the same seriousness as the problems we have had to deal with in the past. Owing to the generosity of various donors, most of whom have wished to be anonymous, we have enough money to complete the restoration. As far as we can at present estimate, we shall have spent somewhere about £120,000.'

THE BARBER OF READING.

In olden days the Reading barber was in much request. I have lately had occasion to study the history of Odiham, and especially that of the ancient castle which dominated the town. It is situated in the hamlet of North Warnborough, about one and a half miles from Odiham, and has an interesting story. It was built by King John, and seems to have been a favourite residence of his. He was living there when the Barons summoned him to Windsor and compelled him to sign Magna Charta. In 1236 King Henry III granted the castle to his sister Eleanor, Countess of Pembroke, for her residence. When the Earl died she married the famous Simon de Montford, Earl of Leicester, which must have been gall and wormwood to the King, as Earl Simon was one of the leading barons in rebellion against him, and to this castle while the rebellion was successful he brought as prisoners Prince Edward (afterwards Edward I) and Henry of Germany. Reading comes into the story on account of the fame and skill of the barber. The Countess had a daughter named after her, Eleanor, who was suffering from ill-health. So on two occasions she sent for this Reading barber to come to Odiham Castle to bleed her! Our ancestors seem to have had a superfluity of blood, and bleeding was deemed to be a remedy for all the ills of life. Barbers in those days combined

their trade with that of surgeon. In London there were two City Companies, the Barbers and the Surgeons, which were united in the time of Henry VIII, and Barber-Surgeons' Hall remains until this day. A very charming Hall it is, rich with plate and pictures. There is a curious leathern screen with which a strange story is connected. A man was hanged at Tyburn, and the body brought to Surgeons' Hall for dissecting purposes. However, the man revived, and the kind surgeons nursed him back to health, and then quietly slipped him out of the country, giving him some money to start life afresh. He went to the East and became rich and prosperous, and sent this leather screen to the Barber-Surgeons as a thank-offering for their kindness to him.

P.H.D.

THE DEATH WATCH BEETLE.

A very deadly enemy to woodwork in churches and other buildings is the creature known as the Death Watch beetle (*anobium tessellatum*, or *rufovillosum*). It caused extensive ravages in the church of All Saints, Wokingham, entailing an entire re-seating at an enormous cost. It has been found, I believe, in the Manor House at Shinfield, and is doubtless doing its deadly work in many a church and house where at present it is entirely unsuspected. It is advisable, therefore, to utter a warning, and we venture to suggest that all incumbents and churchwardens should examine the buildings over which they have charge to see if any traces can be found of the ravages of this insidious enemy, and to take steps for its destruction.

The Society of Antiquaries has taken up the matter and has issued a very useful pamphlet on the subject, copies of which I can obtain and send to anyone who fears any danger from this source. The President of the Society, Lord Crawford and Balcarres, writes as follows :—

‘Widespread alarm has been aroused in recent years by the discovery that the ravages of the Death Watch Beetle are far more extensive than was suspected. Not only in the grandiose roof of Westminster Hall, but at Hampton Court, Gray's Inn, Bath Abbey, St. Paul's and elsewhere, generations of this mischievous animal have been devouring the roof-trees of ancient structures, reproducing the species in lofty and inaccessible timbers, which alike provide food and homestead, cradle and

grave. It is a useless creature, performing no office but that of voracious though elusive destruction—"Your Worm is your only Emperor for Diet!"—yet it is associated with a number of picturesque legends. Two centuries ago the earliest naturalist to observe its lethal habits (Rev. William Derham, Rector of Upminster) wrote: "The name of Death-Watches is common enough, and their noise terrible to many who look upon it as the sound of the dreadful messenger of death, little imagining it to be only a sportive exercise of a very common insect." In fact the ticking noise which used to suggest an ominous death-knell is really a testimony of affection as the beetle strikes his head upon the friable and perishing timber. We have been fortunate in securing the help of Professor Maxwell Lefroy, who has made a close study of this enemy of Church and State. The Society is anxious to offer advice to those who may desire fuller information than that conveyed in this brief circular.'

P. H. DITCHFIELD.

This beetle is a tiny creature about one-sixth of an inch in length and of a rusty brown colour. It is the '*larvae*' which do the damage to wood-work. The male attracts the female by tapping his head against some hard substance, producing a clicking sound. By people of a superstitious nature this noise is supposed to be the forerunner of bad news—death, etc.—hence its name, the 'death-watch beetle.'

J. HAUTENVILLE COPE.

Queries

CURIOUS CARVING IN WATERSTOCK CHURCH, OXON.

Can any reader of the *Berks Archæological Journal* throw any light on the remarkable carving of an arm bone which is to be seen at the bottom of the middle light of the east window of the north aisle in Waterstock Church, near Wheatley, in Oxfordshire? It is in high relief and good condition. No one can throw any light on its history. A suggestion has been made that it may represent a sacred relic formerly in the church, but there is no corroboration of this. I have written to 'Notes and Queries,' the Oxford Architectural Society, and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, of which I am a member, but without result. I have never seen anything like it.

J. FRANK BUXTON.