

Excursions.

THE first summer excursion of the society took place earlier in the season, and an interesting intinerary was carried out. The first stopping-place was Burnham Abbey, which was founded in the 13th century as a home for canonesses of the Augustin order by Richard Duke of Cornwall, brother of Henry IV. It was suppressed at the Reformation, and after many vicissitudes was re-established as an Anglican sisterhood and is under the control of the English Church Union. Its warden, the Rev. Arnold Richard, described the buildings. Burnham Church was visited, and was described by the Vicar (the Rev. P. Nott) and the president. It is Early English in style and partly Decorated. There is a very fine east window and several brasses.

Stoke Poges was next visited, where the Vicar (the Rev. Mervyn Clare) described its principal features and gave a most interesting account of the Hastings Chapel, of late Perpendicular date. The churchyard is well-known, being the scene of Gray's "Elegy." In the churchyard lie the remains of the poet as well as those of his mother, on the grave of the latter are the words "Dorothy Gray, the careful, tender mother of many children, of whom one alone had the misfortune to survive her."

It was intended to visit Fulmer Church, but owing to want of time this was omitted, and the party proceeded to Wexham Church which is a small but interesting building. The windows are all of different styles, ranging from Norman to Perpendicular, and there are some ancient, well-preserved encaustic tiles in the sanctuary. The company then drove to Slough, and partook of luncheon at the Dolphin Hotel. After luncheon they drove to Horton Church where Mr. Keyser described its architecture. There is a Norman arch, and within the main porch, between the nave and the aisles, are short, circular arches. The church is associated with John Milton and his mother, who died in 1637 and was buried here. Her maiden name was Bradshaw, and a plain blue stone on the chancel floor records, "Heare lyeth the body of Sarah Milton, the wife of John Milton, who died the 3rd of

April, 1637." The east window is a memorial of the poet. There is also Early English work, and the south arcade is Transitional. At Horton, Milton wrote "Comus," "Lycidus," and the "Arcades," the "Sonnet to the Nightingale," and probably "Allegro" and "Penseroso."

Journeying onwards, the visitors arrived at Taplow Court, which they were invited to see by invitation of the owner, Lord Desborough, who unfortunately was obliged to be in London and wrote to Mr. Ditchfield "The most historic spot is the old churchyard, where there is the Anglo-Saxon mound, which was opened some years ago. I will leave a book describing some of the things found in it, which are all now in the British Museum. I say it was the tomb of Ælla, the first Bretwalda, about 550 A.D. The churchyard was originally part of the British camp; then it was occupied by the Romans, and after that there was a Saxon church in the old churchyard, and part of that a Norman church, which fell down about a century ago. There is an old oak tree up the Cedar Walk which is supposed to have been planted by Queen Elizabeth when she was imprisoned here, among other places, in the time of the Hampsons."

The party then passed on to Hitcham Church which has a Norman nave, and some 14th century work and a fine east window of four lights, and two brasses. A short history of the church has been recently compiled. The Vicar (the Rev. W. H. George) was away from home, but the visitors were welcomed by his churchwarden, Colonel Lionel Hanbury, who, with Mrs. Hanbury, most kindly entertained them to tea, and showed them over the beautiful old-time garden of the manor.

Bray was the last place visited, where the Vicar (the Rev. W. S. Riddelsdell) met the party and described the church which will always be remembered for its vicar, Simon Aleyn, who come what would, declared

"Whatsoever king doth reign,
I'll be the Vicar of Bray, Sir."

Though the song represents him as living in the changing times of the 17th century, he in reality was a churchman, who lived in the stormy times of the days of the Tudors and kept his

church preferments during the days of Henry VIII., Edward V., Mary and Elizabeth ; in fact, he seems to have followed the course of his contemporary, the Marquis of Winchester, who described himself as " A willow not an oak." The church has at one time and another been so much restored that many interesting details have been " restored away." Amongst some items of interest are a brass of Sir John Foxley (of Bramshill) and his two wives, dated 1378, and Sir William Laken, 1475. From Bray Church the party walked to the old time almshouse known as the Jesus Chapel, where they were met by the chaplain (the Rev. H. Heathcote) who described the chapel and the buildings and who gave a short account of the history of the charity. It was founded by William Goddard, who died in 1609, for six " aged poor of the Fishmongers Company " and thirty-four aged poor of the parish of Bray.

The second excursion was the " two-day excursion " ; this year, emboldened by the success of former years, it was decided to go further afield and so on August 29th the Society journeyed to South Wales. Our President was the moving spirit in the matter and with Mr. Morley journeyed to the " Principality " to make arrangements.

The excursion proved most successful, and will encourage the officers of the society to arrange future expeditions with a wider range than that to which they have been accustomed. About forty started from Reading at 9.39, and journeyed without stopping by an excellent G.W.R. train to Newport, Monmouthshire, and walked to their headquarters, the Westgate Hotel, where they stayed the night.

Dinner took place at the Westgate Hotel, the Mayor and Mayoress of Newport being the guest of our President. After dinner, the Mayor gave an official reception in the Town Hall, when the municipal documents, charters and plate were exhibited. The curator of the museum was present, and exhibited and explained the Roman relics found at Caerlon and Caerwent.

Soon after their arrival, the party walked to the church of St. Woollos, originally founded in 864 A.D., and which had been

thrice plundered ; by Irish pirates, by the Danes in 1013 and by Owen Glendower in the 14th century, who set fire to the building. The nave, aisles and chancel are fine Norman work.

After luncheon, the company drove to Caerphilly Castle, which was described by Mr. Ditchfield. It was built by Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Hereford, in 1272, and besieged by the Llewellyn, the last Prince of Wales. Gilbert's son died at the battle of Bannockburn, and the castle passed through the marriage of his sister Eleanor to the younger Despencer, favourite of Edward II., who was executed at Hereford.

Cardiff Castle was next visited, containing the residence of the Marquis of Bute. Tea was served at the Grand Hotel, after which the church was seen before driving back to Newport for dinner.

On the following day the company drove to Caerleon, the ancient Roman "Isca Silurum," and were fortunate enough to see the results of the excavation of the Roman amphitheatre, the expenses of which have been borne by the *Daily Mail*. Mrs. Wheeler, wife of the curator, W. R. M. Wheeler, of the London Museum, who formerly was curator of the Welsh National Museum at Cardiff, had been in charge for five months, and gave a charming account of the work done, and one of the explorers conducted the company over every part of the wonderful open-air theatre, and viewed the entrance by which the gladiators entered the arena, where the wild beasts were kept, and imagined the circles of seats, crowded by a gay company of Romans.

A brief sojourn was made at Christ Church, and a visit paid to the beautiful Cathedral of Llandaff set in its lovely vale. Caerwent, the Roman Venta Silurum, was next seen, a very interesting village, abounding with Roman relics. The Vicar kindly met the party and described his church. The magnificent ruin of Tintern Abbey was next visited, one of the most beautiful ruined abbeys in the kingdom. The castles of Chepstow and Caldicot were described by Mr. Ditchfield, and then driving back to Newport, where tea was served. The party then took train on their homeward journey to Reading, having had one of the most interesting excursions and one which will be remembered for many a day.

The third and last excursion was on September 26th to places in South Oxfordshire, and some Thames-side villages in Berkshire. Caversham Church was first visited, where the vicar, Dr. Longford, gave an interesting account of the Church. Leaving Caversham, the party drove by Caversham Warren to the pretty village of Mapledurham; the mill there on a backwater of the Thames is so well known to artists, views of it have so often been exhibited in the Royal Academy. At Mapledurham we were received by the vicar, Dr. Cooke, who gave a most interesting account of the history and architecture of the Church; those who wish to learn all about the Church and Mapledurham House, the ancestral home of the Blounts, must study Dr. Cooke's "Early History of Mapledurham." Proceeding on their journey our party wended their way to Hardwick House, once the home of the Powys-Libbe family but now the property of Lady Rose, by whose kindness the Society was allowed to view it. Whitchurch Church was next visited and its architectural details were all explained by our President.

Once more resuming our journey we crossed into Berkshire at Pangbourne and under the direction of our President we saw Basildon and Tidmarsh Churches. We only regret that space prevents us describing in this number all the details of these buildings, but our readers will find in former numbers of this Journal accounts of the history and architecture of these buildings from the pen of our President, as they will of Englefield Church to which we next journeyed. After seeing this Church, by permission of Mr. Benyon Englefield House was seen, where Mr. Benyon received our members and kindly entertained them to tea. An account of the history of the house was given by Mr. Ditchfield. After inspecting the pictures and other treasures at Englefield our party were allowed to wander about the garden and pleasure grounds. So ended our last excursion of the year and one of the most popular; the number who took part in it being nearly one hundred.