Notes.

Prehistoric Discovery in Berkshire.

An important prehistoric find has come to light in the county. Mr. J. W. Walker has consented to describe it before the Berks Society at the April Meeting in 1929. He is also reading a paper before the Society of Antiquaries on Roman Remains near Didcot.

John Blagrave and his Inventions.

Dr. Gunther's lecture on this subject was welcomed most cordially. He has kindly promised to write a resumé thereof for this Journal. John Blagrave was not the only member of the family who enriched the world with learning. In the XVIIth century there was Joseph Blagrave, a great enthusiast in astrological studies, whose work entitled "An Introduction to Astrology," was published after his death by Obadiah Blagrave in 1682 and dedicated to Elias Ashmole "eminently accomplished in all ingenious literature." In my little book on "The Literary History of Reading," I published some extracts from this work showing the absurdities of the so-called science. He also published "The Astrological Practice of Physics" in 1671, and "Epitome of the Art of Husbandry," with all things necessary for the improving of it. I fear it would not be very useful in our present decline of agriculture. There was also a Robert Blagrave, who published at Oxford a book by W. Hughes on "Munster and Abingdon, and the Open Rebellion *There* and the Unhappy Tumult *Here* Bred in the Same Womb, Etc." It is a very odd book, evidently written by a disappointed man, one of whose expectations of the results of the Rebellion had not been realised. There may be other Blagrave authors. There are still some members of the family residing in Reading, who own some considerable property and, until recently, Calcot Park. Possibly some reader may be able to furnish a pedigree of the family.

P.H.D

St. Giles' Churchyard, Reading.

I have recently copied all the inscriptions on the memorial stones in St. Giles' Churchyard, Reading, numbering 275, and also on those in the extension burial ground opposite, where there

are 103, and formerly were no doubt several others. This ground, unlike the churchyard, which is so well cared for, has been allowed to get into a dilapidated state. It is a depositing place for all kinds of rubbish, and wanton destruction has been done to many of the tombs and gravestones.

It was consecrated by John Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury, on August 17th, 1820. Were he on earth to-day would he not be filled with dismay to see this God's acre in such a neglected condition? I trust that some steps will soon be taken to restore this ground to its former beauty.

Biographical details of the following clergy who are buried in these grounds and of others who have relatives interred here will be welcome:—

Rev. Eusebius Lloyd, of Silchester, Hants.

Rev. T. C. Cowan, born May 10th, 1776, died February 7th, 1856.

Rev. O. A. Jeary, died December 13th, 1817, aged 38 years. His wife Eliza was daughter of Richard and Sarah Billing.

Rev. Frederick Grosvenor (formerly Sowdon), 29 years Rector of Dunkerton, Somerset, born September 10th, 1822, died October 27th, 1879.

Rev. James Mentor, died June 15th, 1842, aged 69.

Rev. Richard Bartholomew, Rector of Dunsfold, Surrey, and Chaplain to the late Earl of Southampton.

Rev. John Smyth.

Rev. Thomas Ward Franklyn.

L. H. CHAMBERS.

INSCRIPTIONS.

Can anyone solve the following puzzles?

1. On an obelisk in a churchyard:
within a circle are the letters
T K S H T E S S

2. On a sundial in the grounds of a private house:
1649
une suffed

[The date is that of the execution of Charles I. Possibly it may refer to that, and the author may have inscribed his dial in a disguised form, lest he should suffer persecution at the hands of the king's enemies.]

Foxhall or Vauxhall at Didcot.

In the controversy that is raging about the spelling of this name I wrote to Lord Wyfold, who has written a book on Berkshire topography, and he has kindly sent the following extract from his work, "The Upper Thames Valley":—

> "If James I and other Stuart monarchs raced and hunted on the Berkshire Downs there must have been a royal residence or hunting lodge in the neighbourhood. The following extract from *The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2, page 176, throws some light on the matter: 'In the board room at Paddington Station is a screen containing the ancient leaded glass from a two-light window at Foxhall Farm, Didcot, which was demolished in 1884, when the Railway Company constructed the western curve there. The arms in stained glass on each small diamond-shaped pane are the Rose of England and the Thistle of Scotland, and said to be of the period of James II. Foxhall is traditionally said to have been a hunting box of that monarch. Seventy years ago the house is described as the principal residence in the village, but was then known as Vauxhall.'"

W. A. Hallam.

In the tenth century Anglo-Saxon charter of the southern boundaries of the parish of Blewbury is described as "then up to the Landslip to Fox Barrow. From the Barrow along Grims Dyke as far as the Ridge Way" (G. B. Grundy, *Berkshire Charters*). Fox Barrow is shown on the ordnance survey map on the west side of the Didcot-Newbury railway, south-west of Churn Farm. It lies on the east side of the Ridge Way, one and a quarter miles north-west of Lowbury Hill.

James I converted that portion of the Ridge Way, known as the Fair Mile, which runs from Lowbury Hill to Kingstanding Hill, into a racecourse, and the king frequently visited the course to see his horses in training, and to watch the races. Foxhall Farm, Didcot, is traditionally said to have been his headquarters, where the king stayed on these occasions. Colour is lent to this

tradition by the fact that in a window of Foxhall Farm, composed of diamond-shaped leaded glass, each pane contained the royal badge of James I, the Rose of England and the Thistle of Scotland. Foxhall Farmhouse was taken down in 1884, when the Great Western Railway Company constructed the western curve near Didcot Station; the leaded glass from this window was made into a screen which is now in the Board room at Paddington Station. The ground outside Didcot Station on which the Tuesday corn market used to be held was known as Foxhall ground. There seems to be no authority for the term Vauxhall. which is a modern version of the older term, having a somewhat similar pronunciation, although this latter nomenclature has crept into the ordnance survey map.

J. W. WALKER, F.S.A., O.B.E.

It appears that Colonel Davidson, the head of the Ordnance Survey, and Colonel Hawkins, the County Council Surveyor, were convinced of the truth of the arguments advanced by Mr. Walker and others who advocated Foxhall. It was therefore disappointing to receive from Colonel Davidson a letter expressing gratitude for our help, but he wrote: "I accepted your advice on the method of spelling of this camp, and put it up to higher authority, but have received a reply that it is not proposed to change the name at present and that it will remain as Vauxhall." It seems an unfortunate decision, but it is hoped that later on the "higher authority" will renounce their error and revert to the older name.

P.H.D.

CASTLE GUARD RENT AT WOKEFIELD.

From the accounts of Roger Potynger, Reeve of the Manor of Wokefield in 1457, we learn that there was payable "in rent resolute to the Castle of Windsor every 24th week 4s. 0½d., and every seventh year 4s. 0½d. more." It is not surprising to find that this tax was passed on by the lord to the tenants. Even the copyholders were charged 2d. or 3d. according to the size of the holding, and one is suspicious that there was a little margin

to the credit of the lord. However, in 1475 the manor was in the hands of the Crown, and as the Reeve had to hand over all the receipts, the Crown was not a loser. The tax continued to be levied until 1553, when the Crown sold the manor to Sir Richard Rede, through a couple of intermediaries or contractors, when the impost was extinguished.

F.T.

[Wokefield was not the only Manor which was subject to this payment. Lands were held by many individuals on condition of their keeping guard at Windsor. The interested reader may refer to the following: 17 Edw. II, mem. 30; 19 Edw. II, mem. 54; 20 Edw. II, mem. 45. Rot. Parl. Vol. I, 292b. Ricardus de Windsor was seized of the Manors of 'Westhakebourne' (West Hagbourne), Berks, and 'Stanewell' (Middlesex), the latter being held by the service of Castle Guard due to the Castle of Windsor.—EDITOR.]

THE FAMILY OF MEOLS.

This family is of ancient origin, and appears not infrequently in connection with the place-names of a township or village. The almost-forgotten Manor of Stoke Meoles lay between Stoke Basset (North Stoke) on the west and the liberty of Stoke Rowe (now Stoke Row) on the east, forming a link in the chain of Stokes (or stockades) which was continued along the river by Stoke Marmyon (Little Stoke) and Stoke Abbas (South Stoke). Stoke Meoles is generally mentioned in history in close connection with Ipsden, though there are indications that it was an outlying portion of Stoke Basset. The family of Meoles (Moeles, Mules, Molis, Molys, Meles, etc.) held manors in Devon, Somerset and other western counties in the thirteenth century, and after. They first appear in Oxon in 1236, when Nicholas de Molis held Overton (now Over Norton) in chief of the king. This Nicholas married Hawthia de Newmarsh, relect of John de Botreaux, and left a son Roger, whose name occurs several times in the Borstall Cartulary in deeds of about 1290. Roger, who married Alice, daughter of John de Preux, of Overton, held Overton of the king in chief for a pair of gilt spurs, to be provided for the king "on the day of Pentecost" wherever in England he might be. The Charter Rolls of 1290 record a grant to (Sir) Roger de Molis and his heirs of free warren in all his demesne lands in Little Berkhamsted and in Stokesbasset. In 1284 he is reported as

holding Stoke Basset of John de Rivers. The inquest on his death reports that he died in 1295, and is succeeded by his son John.

John de Moeles held Overorton and Stoke Basset, the latter of the Earl of Lincoln by service of one knight's fee. He married a daughter of Lord Grey de Ruthven, and died in 1309 or 1310, succeeded by his son Nicholas, who died childless in 1315. His widow, Margaret Courtney that was, continued her seisin of those manors till they were taken into the king's hand, and appears responsible for Stoke Meoles in the list of lords of townships taken in 1316. Nicholas was succeeded by his brother Roger, who married Joan Lovel, of Castle Cary, his mother Margaret still holding till 1349, the year of her death, a life interest in 1½ knight's fees in Stoke Basset. Roger " de Meeles alias de Meoles " died in 1324 without male heirs, succeeded by his daughters Muriel and Isabel. Muriel married Thomas de Courtenay, and brought him on her grandmother's death the manors of Overorton, Stoke Meoles, including woods known as Haylegh (now Hailey), Bixemore and Bechwode.

Later notices of Stoke Meoles are rare. An inquisition on Johanne Herdwyk (of Hardwick by Whitchurch) reports him as seised of property in Stoke Maleys (possibly another variant of this very variable patronymic). Robert Lord Molins in 1465 held a moiety of the manor of " Stoke Moyles Co. Oxon." Finally, Sir John Dynham, who died 7 Hen. VI. held half the manor of " Stoke Moyles," and his son John, who died 22 Hen. VI, held the same. There was another " Stoke Meoles " in Devon.

I can supply the references for every statement here made to anyone who desires to have them.

A. H. Cooke.

Nettlebed, Oxon.

The Rev. A. L. Manby writes to inquire about this Oxfordshire village.

(1) What is the date of the old font in the churchyard? The Vicar thinks that it is Saxon, others say Norman. Surely it ought to be in the Church.

(2) Is Nettlebed mentioned in Domesday, and is there any mention of the Church there in the Survey? It is dedicated to St. Bartholomew.

(3) What is the derivation of the place-name Nettlebed? High on the Yorkshire Moors there is a farm that bears that name. May it be connected with the common plant that stings?

The Parson and His Flock.

The mediaeval parson, being very often the only man in the parish who could read and write, was in many cases called in to write the last will and testament of members of his flock, and act as witness to the signature. Whilst asking nothing for himself we can safely surmise that he was responsible for the item "for tithes forgotten 6d.," and other small religious benefactions. He must have been a very useful personage, but here and there was a Parson Trulliber who got at loggerheads with his people. One such was Stephen Bryggam, of Mortimer, in the 15th century, of whom the Manor Court Rolls report, that his servant John Frith "made an assault upon William Southampton and drew blood from him, with one stick of no value, against the peace of our Lord the King." Frith was fined 4d., and the stick, being of no value, was probably thrown away. But worse remained to be told; the parson himself made an assault upon William with a "Wodeknyfe valued at 12d." But as it does not say that he drew blood the parson appears to have got off with the forfeiture of his "Wodeknyfe" as a deodand.

There was also a 16th century cleric of the same place whose doings did not meet with the approval of his flock. According to their story he not only turned his cattle out on the common pasture and refused to pay the usual dues, but he also kept the other commoners out, "and entendeth to do so to theyre greate hurt." Not content with this, he "being of covetous mynde and extort pouere," had begun a suit at law against the Reeve and Bailiff of the Manor. "In most lamentable wise, besechen, complaynen and shewen," the commoners put their case to the Queen of England, then Lady of the Manor, setting forth that the offender was "a man of greate substance, and a very covetous

preste, and malicious," who intended to utterly undo and ruin his flock. The Queen's Council called upon the parson to explain. He started off by saying that the complaint was " uncertain and insufficient, the matter of Malys only faigned and immagyned with the intent to put him to trouble, vexacyon and losse." He denied being a man of substance, nor would he admit being covetous or of " extort pouere." He said he and his predecessors had always had the disputed right of common, being charged to find the parish a " Bull and a Bore." That the reason he had begun a suit was because the bailiff had impounded his beasts. He also denied that he had called any of his parishioners " herytykes " as they alleged. Finally, if there was anything else he had not denied of their complaint, well, he denied it, asking not only to be dismissed from the suit, but also desiring to have his " reasonable costs and chardges for his wrongfull vexacyon in this behalfe susteyned."

How the matter ended we have no record, but in 1543 this Vicar, Sir Richard Hayly, was succeeded by another, and it is possible that the " heretykes " had cause for rejoicing.

F.T.

A Norman Arch-Stone at Erleigh Court, near Reading.

The writer's attention has recently been drawn by Lady Black, who is now residing at Erleigh Court, to a carved stone which was dug up in close proximity to the Court, and which has been for several years a part of the rock garden. At first blush it seemed that this stone would surely prove to be the solitary remaining defigured relic of the ancient Chapel of Erleigh St. Bartholomew, which stood in a field at the rear of the present house and the history of which is largely bound up with the Mother Church of Sonning and the vast ecclesiastical lordship which centred in the eastern part of the Royal County. But for reasons which will later appear this assumption would seem to be very unlikely.

The Chapel seems to have been originally founded for a priest to celebrate Mass therein on St. Bartholomew's Day. In 1715 it was recorded that for some six hundred years the Vicar of

Sonning had had *omnes obventiones altaris*, and there was preserved among the possessions of the Mother Church a relic of the head of St. Bartholomew placed in a beryl stone, with the foot and cover silver gilt; this would no doubt have been preserved because of the pensionary Chapel of Erleigh being so dedicated. But there is reason to think that a Chapel stood here before the Conquest and that the effort of the Erlegh family was a rebuilding.

The Manor was held in the time of the Confessor by a Saxon thegn named Don. After the Conquest, but before the great survey, it had been granted to Osbern Giffard, and although the fee descended in this knightly family, the Manor was held by the de Erleghs, who were also large landowners in Somerset in the 12th century. The first local Erlegh who can be identified with certainty is Thomas de Erlegh, and in 1220 a return was made of "the Chapel of Thomas de Erley, militis, which is of St. Bartholomew." This knight was Verderer of Windsor Forest and Coroner of the County of Berks.

In 1224 we get an authentic record of a visit paid to the Chapel by the Dean of Sarum, William de Wanda. This is the record: "The dean visited the chapel which stood in the court of Thomas de Erlegh, knight, and which was dedicated to St. Bartholomew. It was built of wood. There was, however, an area around the chapel, enclosed by a fence, and partly ready for making a cemetery, and heaped stones were lying about as if the construction of a new chapel was about to be taken in hand."

It was this reference to the new stone-work which suggested that the carved stone in question must be associated with the rebuilding of the Chapel about the time of de Wanda's visit. It must, however, be allowed that 1224 is sixty years later than the period in Norman architecture of which it is an example, and in any event it is doubtful if so ornate an example of the beak-head mould would have been used for the simple shrine which sufficed for the spiritual needs of the de Erlegh family in the 13th century. One must, therefore, reluctantly fall back upon the most likely source of its origin—the wholesale cairn at Reading. The writer assumes it to be another instance of the

despoiling of Reading Abbey. It is known that when this house was dissolved its fabric was ruthlessly plundered, and shaped and carved stonework was free to anyone who had need of it. (The writer knows of a case where a carved stone of the period is placed in a pathway in Reading to prevent a gate opening too widely; and of another instance where the front garden of a cottage is adorned with ornate examples of the great Romanesque art.) On the second and outer orders of the west doorway at Iffley Church, near Oxford, may be seen a brilliant series of the beak-head ornament by those who are interested.

ERNEST W. DORMER.

[The Norman builders were very fond of carving a row of beak-heads over their tympana, and as Mr. Dormer suggests this figure was probably part of the despoiled Reading Abbey. In Mr. Keyser's book on "Norman Tympana" many examples are given of these beak-head mouldings. They were supposed to symbolise the Parable of the Sower, and to represent the "birds of the air" ready to dart down upon the souls of inattentive hearers of God's Word, and to pluck the good seed that had been sown in their hearts during the service.—EDITOR.]

COUNTY HALL, ABINGDON.

Some of our readers may remember our appeal for the old County Hall in Abingdon; a view was shown of the hall. It is in a bad state and much repair is needed. The inhabitants of Abingdon have raised over £900, but according to the latest intelligence £400 more is required. Those in authority think that they could manage to do what is necessary for £1,300, but probably £1,500 will be at least required. I have stated the obligations which the County owes to Abingdon and its hall, and in particular Reading, although it has much to raise for its own needs, should try to help the old County town of Berkshire to rescue this important building from ruin and decay. Abingdon refused to welcome the railway when the Great Western first laid its line through Berkshire. The Company wanted to make it the place for making its carriages, and if that had been agreeable to the Borough Abingdon would have become another Swindon. Nor would the Corporation allow the line to pass through their town. They regretted this when it was too late. As a result Abingdon has remained a peaceful old-world place of

quaint streets and beautiful buildings with picturesque gables and half-timbered shops and houses, and ancient churches and almshouses, unspoiled by the march of progress and modern excrescences. But such peaceful towns are not places where money is easily raised, as in such prosperous boroughs as Reading. So Abingdon pleads for help, not for itself alone, but for a grand old structure which is a model of good building and must be preserved—its County Hall, which was intended for the use of the Shire when Assizes were held there, and County business transacted which is now transacted in its more fortunate neighbour, Reading. It is hoped it may not plead in vain.

Stokys of Brympton and Dyneley.

The oldest Middle Aston deed, dated 1459, is an indenture whereby John Stokys of Brympton is bound in £400 to Edward Langford, "sqwyer," which is to be void if the said John makes an estate of the reversion after his death of the Manor of Middle Aston (Oxon) to Robert Dyneley, son of William, and to his issue, with remainder to the heirs of the said John; also of the Manor of Brympton (Berks) to the said Robert after the death of the said John and Isabel, his wife.

Can anyone tell me the relationship between Stokys and Dyneley? Sir Richard Baker, the chronicler, inherited Middle Aston through his grandmother, Elizabeth, the Dyneley heiress, and boasts of his descent from Brympton, Stokys, Foxcotes, Dyneley, and so to Baker. On the face of it it looks like Robert Dyneley being a nephew, grandson, or son-in-law.

There is also a gap of two generations or so between Brympton and Stokys.

C. C. Brookes.

Middle Aston, Oxford.

The Vine in Berkshire.

A question was asked some time since whether there was a vineyard at Reading Abbey; if there was its exact location does not appear to have been determined. There appears to be little doubt that the vine was formerly cultivated in England for the

purpose of making wine (though some have imagined that the word *vinea* might mean orchards as well as vineyards), but it is uncertain when it was first introduced. We are informed by Vopiscus that the Emperor Probus, as early as 280 A.D., restored the privilege of the vineyard to most of the provinces to the north and west. Vineyards are mentioned by Bede in the 8th century, and amongst the laws of Alfred we find "Should anyone commit injury to the vineyard or lands of another he shall make compensation therefor." The Vale of Gloucester seems to have been particularly favourable to the culture of the vine. William of Malmesbury says, "This Vale is planted thicker with vineyards than any other province in England, and they produce grapes in the greatest abundance, and of the sweetest taste. The wine that is made in them hath no disagreeable tartness in the mouth, and is little inferior to the wines of France." Most of the great monasteries had vineyards, from which they made wine for the use of their respective houses, and it is stated by Stowe that "King Richard the Second planted vines in great plenty within the little park of Windsor, and made wine therefrom, whereof some part was used in his own house, and some part sold to his profit, of which the yearly account of the charges is yet to be seen in the outer gate-house, made by King Henry the Eight, where the moneth court, kept by the clerks, of the honor and castle, for the please of the forest and honor, are held." It is supposed that vineyards gradually fell into disuse from its being discovered, when Gascony was in the hands of the English, that the wine imported thence was both better and cheaper than could be made here. Some, however, have affirmed that there is upon record a treaty between France and England in which it is stipulated that we should root up our vineyards, and be their customers for all our wine. Gascony wine was so plentiful in the reign of Henry the Seventh that on the marriage of his daughter Margaret with the King of Scotland, twelve hogsheads of claret were given away to the populace. It was sold, in 1504, at about 6½d. a gallon. Readers of this Journal may have historic details of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Bucks vineyards that would be interesting.