Notes.

The Isle of May.

There must have been many students puzzled by the fact that the Abbey of Reading possessed in the early days of its foundation possessions so far remote as the Firth of Tay and the Firth of Forth. With the exception of these northerly lands and the Priory of Leominster in Hereford, the majority of the Abbey's possessions were in the neighbourhood of Reading and certainly in the south. The explanation is that when Henry Beauclerc founded the Abbey his brother-in-law, King David the First of Scotland, who reigned from 1124-1153, put Rindelgros and the Isle of May into the wealthy endowment of Henry's foundation. It will be remembered that the marriage of Henry the First to Matilda, daughter of Malcolm of Scotland, brought about a much closer relation between the English and the Scottish peoples, and this movement was carried still further by David's attempts to organise and fashion the administration of his own dominions on Norman models. It is to this endeavour of David that probably Reading Abbey owed the gifts of Rindelgros and May.

May itself, in the East Neuk of Fife, has an interesting history. The earliest notice of it appears in the Chronicle of Winton:—

"This Constantine king regnand
Ower the Scots in Scotland;
St. Adrian, with his company,
Came of the land of Hungary,
And arrivit intil Fife,
Where that he chused to lead his life.
Then Adrian and his company
Together came to Coplately (Caiplie)
Then some intil the Isle of May
Chusit to bide while year and day:
And some of them chusit benorth,
In steds fair the water of Forth.
At Inverye St. Monane,
Whilk of that company was ane,
Chusit him so near the sea
To lead his life yair endit be."

This must have been prior to the Danish invasions of the coast of Scotland, in one of which, about 872, Adrian, the superior of the monastery, was cruelly put to death. A stone coffin, half of which used to be in the Church of West Anstruther, and the other half on the Island, is said to have contained his remains. In the middle of last century it was stated that the cave at Caipley, alluded to in the foregoing verse, was still in existence, bearing evident marks of having been the abode of a hermit. It was fashioned into a rude chapel, with an altar hewn out of the rock, above which were three crosses chiselled into the stone. At the farther end a few steps led to the cell of the hermit above.

At the time when Camerarius wrote, there was standing on the island an extensive monastery of hewn stone and a church to which the faithful repaired, "magna religione," and which was especially frequented, "mulieribus se prolis habendae." The Prior from 1166-1213 was Hugo de Mortuo Mari (Mortimer), and William the Lion confirmed to him all the donations of David, his grandfather, and Malcolm IV. The Prior was chosen by the Abbot of Reading. In 1268, Robert de Burghate was appointed Abbot of Reading, and it was during his tenure of that office that the Isle of May was alienated to William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrew's, without the consent of the majority of the Reading brethren. One account says that May was purchased of the monks of Reading by Fraser, Bishop of St. Andrew's, and annexed to the Priory of Pittenweem between 1249 and 1285. However, at the first Parliament of Baliol, King of Scotland, in 1291-2, William, Abbot of Reading, petitioned for the restoration of the Priory which had been alienated by the folly of Abbot Robert (de Burghate), his predecessor. In the meantime the Bishop removed the cause to the Papal See, but the monks of Reading, entirely under the influence of the English Monarch, were not slow to carry their appeal into his courts on the ground of delay. From an examination of the accounts of the Abbey at the Dissolution it will be seen that the monks of Reading never regained the Isle of May.

ERNEST W. DORMER.

An Archdeacon of Berkshire.

There is an early mention of the Berkshire Archdeaconry in connection with the history of All Saints', Derby. In revising the 4th edition of my book on "The Cathedrals of Great Birtain," I have found that nine cathedrals have been created since the last edition, and this has added considerably to the labours of the unfortunate author. Amongst these additions is the See of Derby, which was founded in 1927. The important church of All Saints', Derby, was selected as the cathedral of the new See. It was a collegiate church governed by Canons. In 1252 a dispute arose between the Canons of All Saints' and the Abbey of Darby, relating to tithes, and it was referred to the Pope. Innocent IV, following the usual precedent, issued a bull, dated at Milan on the 4th of the Nones of September, in the ninth year of his consecration, appointing Giles, Archdeacon of Berkshire, to act as arbitrator. The Archdeacon, having summoned the representatives and witnesses of both parties before him, gave his decision in the monastery of St. Frideswide, at Oxford, on the day following the Feast of St. John-at-the-Latin-Gate, 1253. The Canons claimed that the Abbey should be compelled to pay tithes to them of all their demesne and other lands, of hay, of the profits of milk and fisheries, and of all other tithable articles within the limits of the two parishes of All Saints' and St. Alkmund. The Canons further protested that the Canons of Darby obtruded themselves into their churches, where they celebrated Mass, heard confessions, enjoined penances, performed the rites of sepulchre, and administered blessed bread, holy water, the Eucharist and extreme unction not only to their own servants but to certain others.

These were the knotty questions which our Archdeacon was called upon to decide. Wisely he associated with himself in his judgment the Prior of Frideswide and John the Constable, and decided very conclusively against the Abbey, ordering the Canons, in recompense for the loss they had sustained, to make an annual payment of not less than one nor more than two marks to the Canons, and a further annual sum of twenty shillings to

cover the cost of the suit. (Cott. MSS., Titus C. IX, f 75 b). Such was the judgment of the wise Archdeacon of Berkshire nigh 600 years ago, and doubtless the good Canons of All Saints', Derby, would return to their home, praising his wisdom and virtues, and sing a glad Te Deum.

P.H.D.

Oak from Reading Abbey?

Old oak, unless it be in the form of a pierced gothic credence, an Elizabethan buffet or a Welsh tridarn of known ancestry and fine colour, may not quicken the pulse of the connoisseur whose raptures are reserved for the art of the age of Louis Quinze. Nevertheless, there may be some to whom the ordinary thing of great age and local association will have an interest and charm, such as two oak beams that at the present time are lying with other wood in the playground of St. Laurence's Schools in Abbey Street. The heap of woodwork there may in the main be ignored, but there are two mighty beams which have a certain fascination for those who have so often tried to reconstruct in the mind's eye the glory that was Reading when its monastery lay unshattered and orderly by the Kennet stream.

It will be remembered that a short time ago it was decided to abolish a row of XVIIth and early XVIIIth century cottages known as Abbey Wall. It was found that the back wall of these cottages was actually a part of the wall of the Abbey, and that the houses had, as it were, three sides, with their fourth side a monastery wall. This wall is now disclosed and is wisely being preserved. It may be that eventually a more dignified approach to the ruins from this point will be possible. In the course of the demolition of Abbey Wall cottages the two beams in question, and other beams or less girth and significance, were found. Whether or not they were used as supports for the southern face of the wall the writer is not able to say, but a point of some interest emerges from a consideration of their discovery. The size of the two larger beams is roughly seventeen inches square with a length of over sixteen feet, and at their extremities there

is a superlative example of the honeycombing powers of the various wood beetles that are commonly grouped as the "Death Watch."

It is common knowledge that when Reading Abbey was dissolved it gradually became a cairn from which the town's churches, some of its secular buildings and structures farther afield were partially rebuilt. The destruction seems to have been carried on down to the beginning of the XIXth century. The writer has, for his own gratification, traced several buildings in Reading into which material from the ruins of the Abbey has been incorporated. But these notes have reference to woodwork and not stone or flint. Quite apart from the domestic buildings grouped round the Abbey Church, the church itself must have been fairly well furnished with woodwork. Man, in his "History of Reading," says: "The dissolution, and consequent destruction, of the Abbey was a favourable circumstance for the parishioners (of St. Mary the Virgin at Reading), as it enabled them to furnish themselves with a great proportion of the materials they wanted from the spoils of that once stately fabric, at little more than the expense of taking them down and carrying them away. Among other charges for this purpose, in the churchwardens' books, we find the following:—

> "Payde for takyng downe of the quyer in the abbeye and the carrayge home of the same twentye one lodes 10s. 6d.; Payde for the rowfe in the abbeye £6 18s. 8d.; Payde for twentye one lodes carryage of tymber out of the abbeye 6s. 8d."

It is impossible at this distant day to say what was comprised in the forty-two "lodes," but it is difficult to find in St. Mary's Church at the present time anything in wood that seems to be co-eval with even the later years of the Abbey's existence, and certainly nothing that bears the impress of that artistic centre. It is said that the present roof of the church is the one referred to as having been bought for £6 18s. 8d. If this be correct, it must obviously have been cut and adapted to its later use. It is probably of chestnut.

Some of the panelling in Magdalen College is also said to have been once in Reading Abbey. The question arises, where did the remainder go? Presumably any carving that bore the likeness of saints was handy for firewood; any pierced screens would also go that way for want of a better use. But some of the massive timbers may well have survived. The writer remembers that some years ago, when old Southcote Manor House was still standing, the long room on the western side was not boarded, and the joists were long and mighty beams. It was obvious from the cutting and dowelling and their uneven line of length that they had formed part of a structure of no mean dimensions; whether they came from the predecessor of the house that John Blagrave built in the early part of the XVIIth century it is difficult to say: they may have come from the Abbey. The writer believes that some of these ancient beams are still in existence and have been incorporated in new houses at Caversham. One is left wondering where they will finish, for their heart is like iron. Was Ashridge the place where these huge oaks grew?

To end this desultory note the writer has the temerity to suggest that the larger beams now lying in St. Laurence's School playground were at one time part of the woodwork of Reading Abbey which was re-used when the cottages adjoining the Abbey Wall were erected. That the two most interesting beams may be 500 or even 600 years old he also suggests, but as there is a timber yard a few feet of where they lie, one must be careful!

E.W.D.

Fishery Rights of Early Abbots of Reading.

Two early documents relating to the rights of the Abbot of Reading in the water of Thames do not seem to have been published hitherto. The first is an agreement and final concord made between Simon, Abbot of Reading, and the monastery of that place, before the itinerant justices, headed by the Lord Richard Gay Bishop of Sarum, and Geoffrey Marmion, Lord of Chakyndene and Stoke Marmion (now Little Stoke). Geoffrey "recognises that the half of the water of Thames between Cholsey

(Causcia) and his demesnes are the right and domain of the Abbot, saving that Geoffrey and his heirs are to have their weir (gurgitem suum), mills, islands, improvements, etc., for their part, provided that they shall not be to the injury of the Abbot and his men. Similarly, the rights of the Abbot and his men are saved, over their mills, islands, waters, fisheries, improvements, etc., in the waters aforesaid. Each party is to have their own ' bucks ' and other engines in their part of the water for catching fish (Burrocas suas et alia ingenia ad capiendos pisces), and when there is fishing by net and by boat (per rete et batellum) whatever is caught in mid-stream shall be divided equally between the parties. Each party shall study the advantage and benefit of the other (profectui et indemnitati alterius) in the aforesaid waters, and will do nothing to injure them." A straightforward and gentlemanly settlement, conceived in a thoroughly good spirit. Cholsey was one of the original grants by Henry I to the Abbey at its foundation in 1121. The date of this convenico is fixed within ten years by the fact (1) that Bishop Richard Gay (generally known as Richard the Poor) was translated from Chichester to Sarum in 1217, and from Sarum to Durham in 1225 ; (2) Simon was Abbot of Reading 1213-1226.

The second document, although more than two centuries later (the date is 1446), is also of interest and relates to the same water of Thames. Edmund Rede, armiger, Lord of the Manor of Chakyndene, grants " to John, by divine permission, Abbot of Reading, and the monastery of that place, his mill called Littlestokmill, and the water called Littlestokewater, with the fishery, the islands, weirs, pools and the ditches on the south side of the road called le Millewey, leading to the mill aforesaid, at an annual rent of 40s. lawful money of England. If the aforesaid rent is in arrear, in part or in whole, Edmund and his heirs have the right of entrance and distraint, and may drive off, carry away, and remove the animals distrained from the one county to the other, till such time as full satisfaction is given. Edmund, his heirs and assigns, and his tenants of Littlestoke, are given free access to the water near the mill with and for their sheep

for washing, at all suitable and convenient times. The Abbot, etc., grant to Edmund and his tenants the right every year to have, mow and carry away, in a certain place called Seynt Petrus bedde in the water aforesaid, so much green stuff growing there (tantum de viridi ibidem crescente) as they consider suffices for strewing the church of Chakyndene and their own houses, as many times soever (tociens et quociens) as they please. The Abbot, etc., shall not, under colour of this agreement, fish or take birds or cut down trees in the meadow of Litelstoke, nor in the meadow called Le Townmeadowe adjacent to the water aforesaid. They shall not raise the level of the water (non exaltabunt aquam) so that the meadow aforesaid shall be injured or damnified. If at any future time any individual having a right or title power of the property shall evict the Abbot, etc., from any part of the property, apart from any fraud, negligence, defect and malice of the Abbot, then a proportionate reduction shall be made in the annual rent of 40s."

This Edmund Rede, husband of (1) Agnes Cottysmore and (2) Catherine Greene, was son of Edmund Rede, of Boarstall, and Cristina James, and grandson of John and Cecilia Rede, both of whom were buried in Checkendon Church. Cristina, in 1434, was granted one-fourth of the Manor of Checkendon and Stoke Marmion, with other property in Stoke Basset (North Stoke), Ipsden and Mongewell. Edmund, who was armiger when this deed was drawn up (1446) was created Knight of the Bath on the Coronation of Elizabeth Grey, Queen of Edward IV, 26th May, 1465.

The Abbots of Reading appear to have had fishing rights both up and down stream. e.g., at Windsor, compare "Etoniana," p. 608 (1921). John Thorne was Abbot 1446-86.

A. H. COOKE.

THE STORY OF A PANE OF GLASS.

When the Berkshire Society were rambling in the region of Lambourn and Wantage they visited a very charming old Jaco-

bean house, the Manor House of South Fawley, and a diligent search was made for a certain pane of glass which was said to show some interesting scribblings. At last it was observed by one of our skilled observers. The writing on the glass by a diamond ring was as follows :—

" D——r Molly, Ch——ng Nelly Moore, Pr——y Anastasia Moore " ; the gaps evidently should have been filled by " Dear," " Charming " and " Pretty." Who were these fair ladies ? It was discovered that they were the daughters of Sir Richard Moore, the owner of this pleasant house, Lord of the Manor of South Fawley, who died in 1737. In spite of their charms the fair ladies all died unmarried. It would be possbile to weave a little romance about them. We would suggest the subject to our historical novelists. Who was the author of the above lines ? It cannot be that one of the ladies scratched them with a diamond ring that had just been presented to her. Were they written by the hand of some enamoured youth who found the three belles so charming that he could not make up his mind to whom he should plight his troth ? Perhaps he did not please them and they all refused him And there is another line which speaks in another tone; It records the mournful words : " This life's is no life." What do they mean ? Hope has fled. The sentiment savours of remorse. The writer had dealt harshly with the fond youth, and regretted her unkindness, and a lone spinsterhood is all that she has to look forward to. Is that the interpretation ? We will leave it to the imagination of the reader.

The story of the house has been told in outline already ; perhaps a few details would not be without interest. The manor is ancient. It belonged to King Edward the Confessor, and was held after the Conquest by William. He gave it to Richard Doyley, one of the family who reached the castle at Oxford. And then it passed to the Polehamptons. Those were dangerous days. Edward Polehampton rode one day to Enborne, and there he had a mighty quarrel with someone whose name seems to be unknown. They fought, and poor Edward was greviously

wounded, and soon after he had been brought home he died of his wounds. The Childrey family, who took their name from the village of Childrey, succeeded, and then the Manor passed by marriage to the Kingstons.

Owned by a Reading M.P.

In 1594 the Manor was purchased by a wealthy knight, Sir Francis Moore, who represented Reading in Parliament, and then passed to his son, Sir Henry, who was created a baronet. Sir Francis built in 1614 the present house, which is a fine example of Jacobean architecture, and resembles somewhat the ill-fated Lulworth House that was recently destroyed by fire. It has lost some portion of the north end, which was pulled down. The house belongs to the Wroughton family, and a recent tenant, General McNeil, has the credit of restoring it in 1909. The hall occupies the central portion of the house, and the kitchen and offices were at the north end, where the dining room now is. At the south-west corner is a large embattled tower with a staircase. All the windows have stone mullions and no transoms. Happily no one has thought of substituting sash windows.

The chimneys have been rebuilt in brick. A short wing has been added on the west of the tower. In an upper room there was a chapel which was panelled, but the panelling has been removed to the lower rooms. There was a porch, an excellent piece of early Jacobean work with square-headed doorway which formerly bore the arms and motto of the Moores, *Regi et legi*, but this has been removed and a modern porch and door substituted. There is a fine staircase of oak with turned balusters and massive newels.

That useful personage, Captain Symonds, an officer in the Royal Army during the Civil War, kept a diary, and he records the quartering of Lord Bernard Stuart and his troop of King's Life Guards at Little Fawley, "the neate and faire habitation of Lady Moore," on November 19th, 1644. I fear the "dear Molly," "charming Nelly" and "pretty Anastasia" could not

have been alive then, or they would have had rare doings with the gallant officers. You can still trace the forecourt, the terraced walk and bowling green whereon the squire used to love to play on a summer's evening, and the well-house with a well 200 feet deep, the wheel being worked by a horse or a donkey like those at Carisbrooke Castle, Grey's Court and Potsham.

The Moore family died out in 1807 and were buried in their large tomb in the old church at Fawley, which was pulled down and rebuilt in 1866, during the time when so many old churches were doomed to destruction. In 1765 the estate was sold to the Vansittart family of Shottesbroke, and in 1799 to Mr. Bartholomew Tipping, and so passed to the Wroughton family, to whom it still belongs. As has already been recorded, it is now the home of the famous racehorse trainer, Mr. R. C. Dawson, who has of late added fresh laurels to those he had already won.

Basildon: "Nobes' Tomb" and his Will.

A sketch of the above appears in a "Tour Round Reading," by Fletcher, 1840.

WILL. "In the name of God, Amen. I, Thomas Nobes of the parish of Basildon in the County of Berks, Wheelwright, being of good and perfect memory, blessed be God . . . First I commend my soul and spirit unto my Lord God Who is Life and Light and Jesus Christ my faithful Mediator and Advocate to Whom be praise and glory for ever, and my body I commit to the earth to be buried in my own ground the place I assigned in Basildon Hookend . . . My loving wife Joan after my decease the messuage or dwelling house I now live in in Basildon Hookend aforesaid with 14 acres of land lying to it be the same more or less . . . Item another cottage or tenement or dwelling house in Basildon Woodgreen in the possession of the widow Marshall. Item another tenement in possession of Thomas Graye in the 2 acres of arable land lying in Bottomfield called Snowdown which I bought of Antibus Nobes and also one coppice of wood called Howgrove containing by estimation 5 acres and 4 acres

of arable ground and one acre of meadow disperst in the common fields of Basildon to my said wife Joan during her natural life and after her decease to remain and fall to Thomas Flower, Thomas Edlin, only my kinsman John Nobes son of Antibus Nobes to have the house and the two acres of land upon Snowdown I bought of his father and £20 in money within 12 months after my decease. Item all other the houses and lands after my said wife's decease I do give and bequeath to the said Thomas Flower, Thomas Edlin and William Edlin and their heirs for ever to be equally divided betwixt them and as touching the house I purchased of Thomas Wattson of Wallingford I do give unto my wife Joan during her natural life to receive the rente and after her decease I do give . . . the same house or houses now in the possession of Ralph Norton in Wallingford to my beloved friend William Mountigne and to his now wife Martha to he and his heirs for the remainder of the term. . . . To the 2 daughters of my brother Antibus Nobes £10 a piece. To the three sons of my sister Agnes had by Thomas Palmer the sum of £10 to be equally divided betwixt them. . . . My kinswoman the widow Knowles the sum of 20s. . . . Brother John Nobes a guinea. . . . My cousin Peter Edlin's 2 daughters 20s. a piece. My sister in law Flower and her son in law 20s. a piece. . . . To the poor of the parish of Streatley the sum of £5. To the poor of the parish of Goring £5 To Mary Pocock daughter of John Pocock the benefit of a lease upon a parcel of land called Wickingly by Basildon, Lease made to me for £5 the said Mary to take the said lease and hold the land till she is satisfied for the said money and all the interest. To John Edlin's widow 20s. and her 2 daughters 20s. a piece. To my landlord Mountigne 50s. To John Mountigne, Thomas Mountigne, David Mountigne and Daniel Mountigne to each the sum of 20s. a piece. To Dorothy Fane £5 John Chamberlain 2 sons and daughters 20s. a piece. To Martha the wife of John Aubrey of Goring 20s. To Thomas Simmones wife 20s. William Fryes widow 20s. Robert Clarke and his wife 20s. a piece. Item I give and bequeath to the poor

of the corporation of Wallingford the sum of £7 to be paid by the churchwardens and the overseers of the poor of Wallingford out of the rent of my estate there within one month after my decease. All the rest and residue to my loving wife Joan Nobes whom I do make sole executrix. . . . My loving friends Thomas Flower and Thomas Edlin overseers.

"Dated 19 Feb. 1697-8.

"Signed Thomas Nobes.

"In the presence of Ric. Guttridge Hen. Higgs The Marke of Eliz. Higgs."

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[*Local History Recording Scheme*].