

Local History Recording Scheme : Berkshire Branch

TWENTIETH ANNUAL REPORT.

January 1st to December 31st, 1943.

FROM our Local Correspondents during the year 12 records have been received and, up to the end of 1943, 618 approved records had been sent in relating to 145 parishes in the county. Two new Local Correspondents were enrolled during 1943, and our Correspondents now number 200, representing 176 parishes. We have to report with regret the deaths of several Correspondents. Others, serving with H.M. Forces, or engaged on Civil Defence or other war-time work, cannot at present give us any active help. In spite of this loss of valuable assistance, progress has been maintained and records continue to be sent in regularly, although in lesser numbers than in pre-war days. Included among this year's records are several interesting ones of Caversham by Mr. D. L. Stevenson.

At the present time there is a genuine awakening of interest in Local History throughout the country and the Committee would urge Local Correspondents to bring to the notice of their friends the advantages of assisting an organization such as the Local History Recording Scheme, which endeavours to link together those anxious to study and preserve the records of the past, many of which are rapidly disappearing and which, if recorded before too late, will be of great value to future historians.

The Committee would stress once again the importance of collecting information on the effects of the war in each parish in the county. As has been pointed out during the past three years, notes on such matters as the ploughing up of grass lands, war service, the effects of enemy action, evacuation, billeting, etc., if carefully collected now when the information is obtainable, will form a most valuable series of records in the future.

Gravel pits should be watched. Many old ones are being re-worked and often yield finds which should be recorded.

Those interested in Local History are reminded that the Notes for Local Correspondents, published by the Berkshire Branch of the Recording Scheme, and sent on request to all willing to help, give full particulars of the kind of information to be collected.

With regard to Monumental Inscriptions, one list, relating to Lyford, has been received this year, transcribed by Mr. W. H. Hallam. Up to the end of 1943, lists of Inscriptions in 142 parishes had been received, or promised.

In recent Annual Reports reference has been made to the Berkshire Architectural Records Committee. Those interested

will be glad to know that this Committee continues to make satisfactory progress and up to the end of last year had obtained 4,479 photographs and other illustrations, etc., of Berkshire buildings, mostly in duplicate, and some 2,850 negatives.

With reference to finance, at the end of 1943 the balance in hand was £3 17s. 8d.

The Committee again wishes to take this opportunity of thanking the various Affiliated Societies for their interest and support, and also to record its appreciation of the work of the Chairman, Hon. Director, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer, and to express its gratitude to the various Correspondents who have sent in records during the year and in other ways have helped to further the work of the Scheme.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

January 1st to December 31st, 1944.

THIS Twenty-first Annual Report of the Committee of the Berkshire Branch of the Local History Recording Scheme covers the period from January 1st to December 31st, 1944.

From our Local Correspondents during the year 19 records have been received and, up to the end of 1944, 637 approved records had been sent in relating to 148 parishes in the county. Three new Local Correspondents were enrolled during 1944, and our Correspondents now number 192, representing 173 parishes. We much regret to report the deaths of several Correspondents. Others, serving in H.M. Forces, or engaged on Civil Defence work, or other war-time duties, can no longer give us active assistance. In spite of this loss of valuable helpers, it is encouraging to report that interest in the Scheme is well maintained and that records have been sent in each quarter. Included among this year's records are an interesting series relating to Hurst by Mr. J. S. Todd.

The Committee would wish to stress once again the importance of collecting local annals of the present as well as of the past. Recently our Chairman wrote: "Once more I would urge Local Correspondents to commence or continue the work of collecting information on all subjects which have been affected by the war in their parishes. Now is the time to do this, for with the urgent work of reconstruction immediately after the war taking precedence, this kind of local record will tend to be overlooked."

The importance of gathering together, without delay, records dealing with the local defence services and other war-time organizations is stressed in a letter written to "The Times" by

Professor A. S. Tuberville, the President of The Historical Association (January 26th, 1945). The following extracts from his letter will be of interest to Local Correspondents.

"The history of local defence services, alike in time of war and when the coming of war is apprehended, is both of national and local importance; but too often the student finds that the records for the district in which he happens to be interested are non-existent, fragmentary, or inaccessible. One could wish that more local evidence had survived concerning the measures adopted to meet the threat of invasion by Napoleon, the initiation of the volunteer movement as the result of the scare of 1859, and the activities of the V.T.C. during the last war.

Now that the Home Guard is standing down, it seems desirable to draw attention to the risk that much material likely to be of value to the future local historian may be lost unless the danger is recognized and steps are taken to guard against it. . . .

What applies to the Home Guard applies equally to such other organizations as the A.R.P., C.D., N.F.S., W.V.S., and the emergency committees which have dealt with problems of evacuation and the housing of refugees. . . . The story of the way in which local groups co-operated in the national defence belongs to local as well as to our national history and is as such equally worthy of full and accurate record.

Steps should be taken now, lest irreparable loss occur as the result of the perhaps indiscriminate enthusiasm of the collectors of paper for salvage, together with a quite excusable unawareness of their historical value on the part of the present custodians of documents which appear to them to be of no further use once the activities to which they relate have been brought to an end."

With regard to Monumental Inscriptions, six lists have been received this year, all transcribed by Mr. L. H. Chambers. Up to the end of 1944, lists of Inscriptions in 146 parishes had been received, or promised.

In our Annual Reports for the last three years reference has been made to the Berkshire Architectural Records Committee. Our Local Correspondents will be glad to know that this Committee made satisfactory progress during 1944, when it obtained 485 photographs of Berkshire Buildings, mostly in duplicate, and 191 negatives.

With reference to finance, at the end of 1944 the balance in hand was £4 15s. 2d.

The Committee again wishes to take this opportunity of thanking the various affiliated Societies for their interest and support, and also to record its appreciation of the work of the Chairman, the Hon. Director, the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer, and to express its gratitude to the various Correspondents who have sent in records during the year and in other ways have helped to further the work of the Scheme.