

BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Report of the Council for the Year 1956.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society was held in the Psychology Lecture Theatre at Reading University on Saturday, 14th April, 1956, the President, Sir Frank Stenton occupying the Chair. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 23rd April, 1955 were read and confirmed. The Council's Report and Statement of Accounts for the year 1955 were adopted and on the proposition of Miss A. Baily, the Society's Senior Member, Sir Frank Stenton was unanimously elected as President for the ensuing year. The following honorary officers for the year were then duly elected:

Vice-Presidents:

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON, K.G.
THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD
THE RT. REV. BISHOP PARHAM
THE VERY REV. H. S. D. CRANAGE, Litt.D., B.D., F.S.A.
THE RT. HON. LORD ILIFFE OF YATTENDON
LORD GLYN OF FARNBOROUGH, M.C., D.L.
SIR JOHN COCKCROFT, C.B.E., F.R.S.
THE RT. WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF READING
MISS A. BAILY, F.Z.S.
COL. C. N. RIVERS-MOORE
P. S. SPOKES, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.
SIR OWEN MORSHEAD, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., M.A., M.C.
MRS. E. HOLDEN
C. B. WILLCOCKS, Esq., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.
W. H. GODFREY, Esq., C.B.E., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.
E. W. DORMER, Esq., F.R.Hist.S.

Editorial Committee:

P. S. SPOKES, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.
S. H. HORROCKS, Esq., F.L.A.
MISS M. M. SWADLING, F.L.A.

Librarian:

S. H. HORROCKS, Esq., F.L.A.

Excursion Secretaries:

COL. C. N. RIVERS-MOORE
MISS M. M. SWADLING, F.L.A.

Field Work Secretary:

W. A. SMALLCOMBE, Esq., B.Sc., F.M.A.

Secretary:

F. M. UNDERHILL, Esq., F.S.A.

Assistant Secretary:

R. J. LEE, Esq., F.L.A.

Treasurer:

J. G. GAFFORD, Esq.

Auditor:

T. L. SKINNER, Esq.

COUNCIL.

In accordance with Rule 5, the following members retired and were duly re-elected: MISS A. M. KIRKUS, M.A., and MR. D. B. CONNAH, M.A. The following new members were elected: MISS HELEN MASTERS, B.Sc., and MR. S. L. DAY. The retirement of LT. COL. J. MARTIN from the Council was received with regret, and thanks were accorded to him for his past services.

MEMBERSHIP.	<i>Honorary</i>	<i>Ordinary</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Resigned</i>	<i>Total</i>
Dec. 31, 1955	7	438	—	—	445
Dec. 31, 1956	—	32	6	15	11
	7	470	6	15	456

The deaths of the following have been recorded with regret:

Sir Felix Pole, (1937); Mr. H. Stuart Berry (1951); Mr. W. H. Hallam (1895); Miss I. R. C. Slocock (1936); Rev. J. E. Bowles (1939); and Col. G. S. Field (1949). A note on some of the services which these late members had rendered to the Society and to the County will be found at the end of this Report.

PROGRESS AND FINANCE

Our Meetings and Excursions have all received full support from our members, many of whom have given valuable help and suggestions towards our work. The excavations at Silchester under the direction of Mr. G. C. Boon were continued during September and Mr. Boon's notes are given below. In May the Society was represented at a Public Enquiry held at Wantage by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to hear opposition and proposals regarding the erection of a 300 ft. Radio mast at Sparsholt Firs. The Rev. E. Walker, Mr. A. G. Shirreff and Mr. E. G. Kaines-Thomas attended and a letter was also sent on behalf of the Council protesting on the grounds of amenity. The suggestion of our representatives that the mast should be erected a little further to the south so that it would not dominate the hill-top as seen from the Vale was accepted but as yet no works have been carried out on the site. The restoration of the Checker Hall at Abingdon and the erection of a tablet there to the memory of our former Secretary for North Berks, the late Miss Agnes Baker (as mentioned in our 1955 Report) was successfully completed when the tablet was unveiled by Lord Glyn on the 29th September. Members attending our Congress had a most happy time in Norfolk during the first week of July; another Excursion which should be mentioned was that arranged by our member Mr. S. A. Warner in the Didcot area on the 15th August. It is to be regretted that Col. Rivers-Moore who has directed so many of our excursions and Congresses has found it necessary to retire from the office of Excursion Organiser. His untiring work in this connexion and the pains he has taken to transport us to so many varied places of historical interest from Devonshire to the Roman Wall will always be remembered. We are fortunate in having Miss Swadling and a small Committee to carry on this popular side of our activities.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The increase in our income provided by the raised level of members' subscriptions enabled us to keep pace with higher printing and postage costs which always form a large proportion of our expenditure.

We were not called upon to subscribe towards the cost of excavations in 1956, but a contribution was made to assist the reconstruction of the Church of St. Nicholas, Abingdon, following damage by fire.

Our balance at the bank has been reduced by the purchase of British Electricity Stock resulting in an increase in our investment income.

Surpluses from excursions and the Congress have again been welcome, and although our receipts from donations have declined, we are very grateful to the undermentioned and anonymous members for their continued support and we hope that others will feel able to lend their help by this means in the future.

Miss A. Baily

Mr. Barkus

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Clark

Miss Curtis

Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Davis

Mrs. D. Loyd

Dr. & Mrs. J. E. MacFarlane

Mrs. Muller

Mr. and Mrs. P. S. Spokes

Mr. S. Allen Warner

REPORT OF THE HON SECRETARY OF THE FRIENDS OF ABINGDON

1956 was an important year for Abingdon, being the 400th Anniversary of the granting of the first Charter to the Borough. The Friends of Abingdon contributed to many of the celebrations, in particular to the Historical Pageant which took place in June and which was repeated in November. On the latter occasion the Friends of Abingdon combined with the Unicorn Theatre Club to produce an item depicting the visit of Samuel Pepys to Abingdon.

Two lectures were held during the year. The first given at the Annual General Meeting in June by Mr. R. A. Southern, of Oxford University was a most interesting talk on St. Ethelwold, one of the earliest Abbots of Abingdon. In October a large audience in the Corn Exchange listened to a fascinating and topical talk on the County Hall, given by Mr. Gilyard Beer, of the Ministry of Works, who had been directing the work of restoring the Hall.

Other activities included an excursion to Salisbury and Wilton House, and the Unicorn Theatre Club continued to provide excellent entertainments during the summer months. Restoration and maintenance work continues to be carried out on the Abbey Buildings, and in particular the roof of the Checker has been plastered, thus completing, together with the Checker Hall roof, which was restored as a memorial to Miss Baker, the roof of the Unicorn Theatre.

OTHER EVENTS IN THE COUNTY DURING 1956

The restoration of the County Hall at Abingdon was completed by the Ministry of Works who published a guide to the building on the occasion of its re-opening by H.M. The Queen on November 2nd. Her Majesty afterwards visited Wallingford where a tablet was unveiled commemorating the 800th anniversary of the granting of a Charter to that town by King Henry II. The Windsor Guildhall Exhibition completed a 6th year, showing special material relating to the importance of the river Thames in relation to the district. There were no excavations at Kingsbury, Old Windsor this year because Mr. Brian Hope-Taylor was engaged at Yeavering in Northumberland. The summer was unusually wet and many outdoor engagements, pageants etc. were spoiled by inclement weather.

THE SCRAP-BOOK COMPETITION

In conjunction with the READING MERCURY the Society organised a competition inviting entries from various villages, institutions and schools in the County. Entries are to be received by the end of February, 1957, and will be judged by a panel from the Society and the newspaper.

HONOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mr. George C. Boon who has been closely associated with many of us in his work directing the excavations at Silchester, has been appointed to the Department of Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. Mr. P. S. Spokes has been elected Convener for the 9th Regional Group of the Council for British Archaeology at Oxford. Mr. M. F. Bond has been elected a member of the Committee of the British Records Association. Our Honorary

Treasurer, Mr. J. G. Gafford has been appointed a Justice of the Peace for the Borough of Reading and we offer our congratulations and good wishes to our members Miss M. Maplesden and Mr. A. F. Clark who were married on October 6th.

ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS:

12th Annual Report of The Friends of Abingdon.

Report to Dec. 31st, 1955, The Society of The Friends of St. George's and the descendants of The Knights of the Garter.

Council for British Archaeology. Report No. 6, year ended 30th June, 1956. The County Hall, Abingdon, a Guide by R. Gilyard-Beer, M.A., F.S.A.

The Romance of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 4th Edition, revised by Maurice F. Bond, O.B.E., M.A., F.S.A.

Supplementary List of Ancient Monuments in England and Wales, prepared by the Ministry of Works, corrected to 31st December, 1955.

Transactions of The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, Vol. 19. Part 1.

Middlesex Parish Churches, compiled from a Survey made by the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society, with an introduction by Michael Robbins (1955)

Wheatley Records, 956-1956, Oxfordshire Record Society: compiled by W. O. Hassall, M.A., D.Phil. F.S.A.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS CONTAINING MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE RELATING TO BERKSHIRE

Dark Age Britain, Studies presented to E. T. Leeds, with a bibliography of his work edited by D. B. Harden, (Methuen, 1956); amongst much local archaeological material there should be mentioned a paper on Anglo-Saxon Cremation and Inhumation in the Upper Thames Valley in Pagan Times by Joan R. Kirk, also Saxon Oxford and its Region by E. M. Jope.

The Antiquaries Journal, Vol. XXXVI contains a valuable paper on THE NEOLITHIC CAUSEWAYED CAMP AT ABINGDON, BERKS, by Humphrey Case. *EARLY MAN IN SOUTH BUCKINGHAMSHIRE*, by J. F. Head (Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd. 1955) borders on our area and is a most readable survey of the prehistory of the S.W. Chiltern region.

PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS

The Society subscribed £10 towards the restoration of St. Nicholas Church, Abingdon, maliciously damaged by fire, 1 Sept., 1953, and the building and its monuments have been most successfully renovated. Restoration work on the tower of Kintbury Church has been in progress under the direction of Mr. C. B. Willcocks. Advice from the Society's Council has been sought regarding the proposed alteration or demolition of listed buildings at Abingdon, Wantage and Windsor by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The Council have been unable to offer any objections to the proposed demolition of Denford Church near Hungerford.

Mr. D. B. Connah with members of the St. Bartholomew's Grammar School, Newbury, Archaeological Society has continued the survey of ancient monuments on the Berkshire Downs north of Compton. As a result, several of the earthworks etc. which they have noted are in process of being scheduled by the Ancient Monuments Dept. of the Ministry of Works.

We are pleased to note that Ashdown House received a grant during the year on the recommendation of the Historic Buildings Council. Following this a further announcement was published that the building had been presented to the National Trust with 40 acres of surrounding parkland by Cornelia, Countess of Craven.

NEW AFFILIATED SOCIETY

Application having been received from the Middle Thames Archaeological and Historical Society for affiliation to our Society, this was agreed to at a meeting held on Oct. 10th. This Society whose headquarters are at Slough, Bucks, have been doing some useful work, both in recording sites and excavation in that area.

DELEGATES FROM THE SOCIETY

The Society has continued to be well represented at meetings of the various Societies mentioned in previous reports. Your Hon. Secretary and Miss Swadling attended the final meeting of the Agnes Baker Memorial Committee at Abingdon.

HOSPITALITY

The Society is again grateful to the Vice-Chancellor and the Council of Reading University for their permission to use the University buildings for our Meetings, and we offer our congratulations to the Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Wolfendon on his Knighthood in the Birthday Honours List. Our thanks are also due to Miss A. Baily, Miss Swadling and Mr. & Mrs. A. F. Clark for inviting members to tea after meetings.

LECTURES

The following meetings were held during the year, and our thanks are due to the Lecturers for their valued services:

- Jan. 28th. *Berkshire Presses*, by Miss A. M. Kirkus, M.A.
- Feb. 18th. *Tombs of Royal Children*, by Mrs. Lawrence Tanner, M.A.
- Mar. 10th. *Writing a Village History, A Study of Wheatley, Oxfordshire*, by Dr. W. O. Hassall, F.S.A. (This Meeting was combined with the Annual Meeting of the Local History Committee).
- Apr. 14th. Annual General Meeting of the Society, Sir Frank Stenton delivered a Presidential Address on *The History of Parliament*.
- June 23rd. Summer Meeting at Watlington House, preceded by a visit to the Museum of Rural Life in Whiteknights Park. Tea was kindly provided by Miss Swadling and a short discussion on the collection and preservation of Bygones was led by Mr. E. W. Dormer and the Hon. Secretary.
- Oct. 13th. *Anglo-Saxon Art of the 8th Century (Sutton Hoo)* by Dr. Jean I. Young.
- Nov. 10th. *The Bronze Age in Southern Britain*, by George Holleyman, F.S.A.
- Dec. 8th. *English Hand-Bells*, by Frederick Sharpe, F.S.A. and his team of hand-bell ringers.

EXCURSIONS

- Apr. 25th. Selborne Church, Petersfield Church, South Harting Church, Uppark, East Meon Church and Court House.
- May 14th. Stonehenge, Longleat and Edington Church.
- May 29th–June 7th. A party of members led by Col. Rivers-Moore sailed from Southampton for Brittany, visiting Mont St. Michael and Carnac.
- July 6th–11th. Annual Congress held at Keswick House, near Norwich (see separate Report attached).
- Aug. 15th. Excursion in the Didcot area arranged and directed by Mr. S. A. Warner. Northbourne Church, Wigbalds and Willingdon Down, Fulscott Manor, Pryor's Corner, East Hagbourne, Coscote, Blissetts West Hagbourne, Middle Farm Harwell and Didcot Parish Church. A Reception was held in the grounds of the Rectory where the party was greeted by the Vice-Chairman of the Didcot Parish Council and the Chairman of the Rural District Council.
- Sept. 21st. The excavations at Silchester.

NOTE ON THE SILCHESTER EXCAVATIONS, 1956 contributed by Mr. G. C. Boon, M.A., F.S.A.

The main investigation concerned a fifth (buried) defensive system discovered on aerial photographs west of the town wall and apparently merging with, or crossing the Outer Earthwork on N.W. and S.W. The Calleva-Spinae road appeared to cross this earthwork, ignoring an entrance in it, and it was hoped that the defence might therefore turn out to be that of the pre-Roman *oppidum* so long sought. Digging however soon made it plain that the defence was interrupted for the passage of the Roman road, and was thus itself Roman; while the entrance proved secondary to the main structure, and built in the 3rd century. The abnormally wet conditions of 1956 made it impossible to dig out the buried silt of the ditch in all but one of the several cuttings opened, but such evidence as there was pointed to an early second-century date for the construction of the defence. It may be a primary line for the Outer Earthwork on the west, soon abandoned because of the excessive amount of ground enclosed, but more work is needed. A cross-section over the Roman road (20 feet wide, two successive metallings within a thickness of one foot, the lower surface much worn and pot-holed) was also dug, and post-holes and beam-slots of a timber building in perfect alignment with it explored.

The site of a 'bastion' at the N.W. corner of the town-wall, mentioned by Aubrey in *Monument Britannica*, was also explored and found to be a mere mound of earth.

Perhaps the most important activity was a re-survey of the lines of the various defences in collaboration with the archaeology department of the Ordnance Survey. Much new and useful information relating to the course of the Belgic Defence (1954-1955), the Outer Earthwork, its 'Annexe' (1956) and details of the street plan and Roman roads was forthcoming as a result.

OBITUARY

Sir FELIX J. C. POLE died on the 15th January at the age of 78. He had been a member of the Society since 1937 and in spite of a busy life had taken a great personal interest in our activities and publications. Although blind for many of his final years, he had retained a great love for the countryside surrounding his home at Calcot. He was especially interested in east Berkshire and his conversation would often be concerned with the condition and fate of scenes and buildings with which he had been familiar round Windsor and Slough. He was always ready to comment on papers published in our Journal which he had read to him, and he was responsible for the foundation of the periodical, *Berkshire Life*. He learnt Braille and re-read much English literature in that medium.

W. H. HALLAM. Born at Lockinge, Berks, on 14th June, 1861, he entered the G.W.R. works at Swindon as an apprentice and served the company for 50 years as an iron turner. He made a lifelong study of Berkshire and Wiltshire history, contributing articles to various publications, including our Journal, and issuing his own history of the parish of East Lockinge in 1900. Mr. Hallam joined the Society in 1895. His diaries, now in the local collection at Reading Public Libraries, are contained in 63 closely written notebooks covering the long period from 1868 to 1952, and form a unique record of an enquiring mind.

He died at Swindon on 10th February, 1956, in his 94th year.

Annual Congress with headquarters at Keswick House, Norwich.

July 6th-11th, 1956

On a fine July morning, some 40 of our members and their friends set out by coach and car to take part in the Annual Congress, with headquarters at Keswick House, near Norwich. Journeying from Reading, our first visit was to Royston Cave, that extraordinary cavern-chapel set far below under the cross-roads of this town on the great North Road. Not all our members descended

into the chalky depths to view the strange series of religious and historical drawings and inscriptions incised into the walls. After lunch we set out via Newmarket for Brandon, in Suffolk, and from there visited Grime's Graves at Weeting, those prehistoric flint mines, consisting of nearly 300 circular pits, discovered to be flint-quarries in 1870. At the bottom of the pit shafts are galleries in the chalk made by prehistoric man in searching for fine quality flints. The pits are now under the care of the Ministry of Works, and access to certain shafts and galleries has been made possible for visitors. Members were thrilled to descend into these quarries which were first worked, it is thought, at the end of the Old Stone Age. After a day of caves and pits we arrived at Keswick House where we were soon installed in pleasant quarters, set in the midst of lovely gardens.

The next morning we first visited Knapton Church, notable for its splendid double hammer-beam roof with three rows of angels with extended wings and painted scrolls and shields. This roof, said to be the finest in the country of its period (ca. 1503) was a fitting introduction to the wonderful series of angel roofs in Norfolk. At Trunch Church, again with a fine nave roof, we duly admired the remarkable font canopy and the rood screen. We had been much looking forward to our visit to Felbrigg Hall, where we were received by the owner, Mr. Ketton-Cremer, who showed us round this interesting and well-preserved Tudor house with its later front. We also visited the church in the park, now being restored, and notable for its 14th and 15th century Felbrygge brasses. We now made for Cromer and enjoyed a picnic lunch and sea-breezes before setting out to visit Binham Priory, founded by Peter de Valoines, a nephew of William the Conqueror, as a cell to the Benedictine house at St. Albans. The principal remains are the Norman nave of the priory church (still used as a parish church) where the Seven Sacraments font is of special interest; the ruined portion of the buildings, including the chancel and transepts, have been excavated and are now well cared for by the Ministry of Works. After passing through the picturesque little town of Walsingham with its interesting buildings both ancient and modern, we visited the Slipper Chapel, a small and beautiful decorated wayside shrine which has been restored after many vicissitudes, and now contains the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham and is a great centre of R.C. Pilgrimage.

The next day was Sunday, and members welcomed the opportunity of hearing Matins in Norwich Cathedral; in the afternoon an expedition was made to Blickling Hall, that miracle in red brick, one of the loveliest Jacobean houses in the country.

On Monday morning, through a downpour of rain, we reached Norwich Castle, where the keep and the attached prison buildings now house the Castle Museum and picture gallery, famous for works by "Old Crome" and other Norfolk artists of note. Later, a visit was made to the Cathedral, the glories of which are so well known that we do not venture to describe them here. Proceeding to the Guildhall, a flint and stone building of the early 15th century, standing in the great Market Place, opposite St. Peter Mancroft, we were shown much of interest and were later accorded a civic welcome by the Deputy Lord Mayor in the magnificent new City Hall. Here the Civic Regalia and City Charters were on show and we were most hospitably entertained to tea.

The next morning we travelled to Wymondham Abbey, founded by William d'Albini, Earl of Arundel, in 1107, and which was at first, like Binham, a cell of St. Albans. How breath-taking is the first sight of the Norman nave, with the great angels of the main hammer-beam of the roof and the glowing gold altar-screen in the background lighting up the whole. We next visited Attleborough Church, with its magnificent screen of ca. 1500 stretching across the nave and aisles of this great Perpendicular church, formerly cruciform, of which the chancel was destroyed in 1541. Proceeding to Swaffham, we found there another of those fine double hammer-beam roofs, with some 200 carved angels hovering. The famous Pedlar's Seat in this church reminds us of the old folk-tale of the Swaffham Tinker or Pedlar and his pot of gold. We now made our way

to Castle Acre Priory, the most interesting monastic ruin in Norfolk, with its beautiful facade of late Norman work with the Perpendicular Prior's house adjoining. The ruined portion has been carefully excavated by the Ministry of Works.

East Barsham Manor, built by Sir William Fermor in the reign of Henry VII is again a splendid example of Tudor brickwork with its interior features much less changed than those of Blickling Hall. Henry VIII visited the house in 1511 and walked barefoot to the Shrine at Walsingham, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away.

The day for our return came all too quickly, and we made our way via Newmarket, Royston, Baldock to Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire, where we lunched before visiting the principal rooms and the park. We returned to Reading by way of Aylesbury, and I think it is safe to state that all members felt they had spent a very pleasant and profitable few days in Norfolk.

During our stay at Keswick we had the opportunity of hearing interesting talks on archaeological and architectural subjects by Mr. R. Rainbird Clarke and Mr. Stanley J. Wearing.

Our customary musical activities produced much talent—indeed, a Congress without Col. Rivers-Moore and his musical saw cannot be contemplated.

