

Introductory

By REV. H. E. SALTER

THOSE who are interested in the history of Oxford and its neighbourhood will wish *Oxoniensia* a long life ; we need not add the word *useful*, for it is bound to be useful, if only its life is assured. For many years there has been no publication where discoveries about Oxford, whether archaeological or historical, could be recorded from time to time as they were made, and it is certain that in consequence much knowledge has been permanently lost.

From 1860 to 1900, the Architectural and Historical Society printed Proceedings and in some of the volumes we have records of archaeological discoveries in Oxford, but at that time it was held that all that need be known about the history of Oxford could be found in Wood, and few of the lectures in those Proceedings made any attempt to break new ground in this direction. This publication came to an end in 1900 ; it had been growing more brief and perfunctory, and its last record is 'Mr. James Parker gave an account of the recent discoveries in St. Michael's Church, namely some fourteenth century ventilating shafts in a so-called crypt under the western chantry.' Unfortunately this is all that is said, and probably that discovery is now lost. It is hoped that *Oxoniensia* will deal with matters of just this kind, but in such a way that future ages will know by description and plans what exactly has been found. Between 1892 and 1895 there was a useful periodical called *Archaeologia Oxoniensis* edited by Mr. J. Park Harrison, of which six numbers were issued ; for the most part the papers that were printed were about the archaeology of ancient Oxford and contained valuable material. In addition, there were short paragraphs at the end of each number which dealt with any finds that had been recently made when houses were demolished or in other ways ; and it is much hoped that the editors of *Oxoniensia* will be able to have similar short notices, and that archaeologists will be induced to keep their eyes open and report to the editors any discovery of which they have heard.

After 1900 there was no periodical. Mr. Percy Manning continued to watch as before, and has left among his papers some drawings of what was found when houses were demolished, but valuable as they are they fall far short of what they

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would be, if there was a description with them, and if they had been prepared for the press while the matter was fresh. As an example of what has been lost, we may mention the remains of the old City Wall on the north side of the churchyard of St. Michael which were found when the new premises of the Oxford Drug Stores were made. The wall proved to be standing on subterranean arches, of which no measurements or photographs were taken, mainly because there was nowhere to print a record about it. In the same way the discoveries that were made in 1899 when the line of the City Wall was excavated north of the Bodleian are inadequately recorded. There is a popular description, a small book called *Buried Oxford Unearthed* by F. H. Penny and W. M. Merry, but it is without adequate drawings and photographs. Much that we should like to know is omitted in that account. A few years ago part of the cemetery of old St. Edward's was found when the Church Hall was built at St. Columba's, but there is now no published record of it; nor of the pavement of tiles two feet below the surface, at the junction of Speedwell Street and Cambridge Street, which was uncovered by the Gas Company some ten years ago.

All these things are unrecorded because there was no *Oxoniensia*. If discoveries are lost which have been made from historical records, the case is not so serious, for as they have once been made, they may be made again; but it is a waste of energy that the same work should be done twice. Such papers as Miss Cam's on the Northgate Hundred should be recorded for the help of future students, and there ought to be no dearth of such articles about Oxford. For instance it is believed that there is a paper on the Oxford carriers which is almost ready, and curious records about Oxford which are discovered in unusual places might well be preserved in *Oxoniensia*; such as some stray medieval letters which have been printed in the *English Historical Review*, but would be better preserved in a publication devoted to Oxford. Just as there may be short paragraphs for archaeological discoveries, so it might be for historical points. The sentence about the fire at St. Frideswide's in 1190, which occurs in one of Neckham's sermons, is a case in point; it was discovered by one who was working not on Oxford but on Neckham. Such waifs and strays may be given a home in *Oxoniensia*. There should be no lack of material; the difficulty rather will be what to reject. And may one who is not on the editorial Committee give a warning. Many an article by an Oxford archaeologist may contain new material and deserve to be recorded in print, and may bear indirectly on the history of Oxford and the neighbourhood, but unless it bears directly, not indirectly, the editors may find it their duty to harden their hearts. It must be printed elsewhere. In *Archaeologia Oxoniensis* there are some papers which never approach within a thousand miles of Oxford, and the periodical is treated

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as if its title meant ' Archaeology by Oxford men.' It will be depressing to the readers of *Oxoniensia*, if the name is translated ' Work by Oxonians.' Such work, we may assume, will be worth printing, but speaking for the stupid and narrow readers, what I want is something new about Oxford and the district.¹ We wish therefore all that is good to this new adventure ; with such young, capable and vigorous editors, all that is needed is financial support. May this be forthcoming.

¹ Reference to p. 1 will show that the policy envisaged here, of publishing nothing that does not bear directly upon local antiquities, has already been officially adopted. [Ed.].