

Notes and News

THE CENTENARY OF THE SOCIETY

The Society's record of one hundred years of unbroken existence was celebrated during Trinity Term, 1939, by a series of three lectures, two excursions, and an exhibition, all illustrating aspects of the Society's past activities.

The first lecture, by Mr. W. A. Pantin, M.A., F.S.A. (Oriel College), dealt with the history of the Society in general; the second, by Rev. S. L. Ollard, M.A. (St. John's College), Canon of Windsor, described the Society's connexion with the Oxford Movement; and the third, by Mr. H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, M.A., P.R.I.B.A. (Worcester College), was concerned with the Society's championship of the Gothic Revival in Architecture. Mr. Pantin's lecture is printed above (pp. 174 ff.); it is hoped that Canon Ollard's and Mr. Goodhart-Rendel's will be published in volume V of this journal.

After Mr. Goodhart-Rendel's lecture on June 7th the President and Officers of the Society held a Reception in the Ashmolean Museum, to which members of the Society were invited, as well as former officers of the Society and other guests.

The first excursion, on May 11th, was to Littlemore Church, which was one of the 'model' churches upon which the Society published a monograph in 1845 (see p. 177 f.), Wheatley Church, which was built by G. E. Street in the Gothic Revivalist manner, and the Prebendal House at Thame. The second excursion, on June 1st, visited Stubbings Church, built by R. C. Carpenter, All Saints' Church, Boyne Hill, Maidenhead, and its surrounding buildings, built by Street; Shottesbrook Church, another of the Society's 'model' churches (p. 177), where Street was responsible for the restoration, and finally, Bisham Abbey (the home of Miss Vansittart-Neale) and the tombs in Bisham Church.

The Centenary Exhibition, admirably arranged by Mr. E. K. Waterhouse, M.A. (Magdalen College), and Miss M. V. Taylor, the President of the Society, was on view in the Ashmolean Museum from May 17th until the end of June, and provided a most valuable illustrative commentary on the three lectures. Most of the material was drawn from the Society's own archives and collections, but many of the portraits of former officers and members (including Hartmann's famous portrait of Dr. Routh, the Society's first President, lent by the President and Fellows of Magdalen) were borrowed for the occasion from the Hope Collection and from colleges and private owners. Among the other exhibits were a number of drawings by A. W. Pugin, lent by the Master and Fellows of Balliol, and other drawings lent by Mr. E. T. Long, Mr. Henry Minn, and Professor J. L. Myres. A general account of the exhibition appeared in *The Oxford Magazine*, June 8th, 1939, p. 708.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

Few finds have been made in the district during the six months since the notes published in volume III were compiled:

1. *Abingdon (Northcourt), Berks.* Two further skeletons of Bronze Age date have been found in the pit belonging to the Cowley Concrete Co., Ltd. (*Oxoniensia*, III, 163).

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2. *Cassington, Oxon.* In the new pit opened at Cassington in 1938 (*Oxoniensia*, III, 164) two ring-ditches, presumably of Bronze Age date, were investigated by the Oxford University Archaeological Society early in 1939; finds were sparse and no burials were found in either ring. At the same time a cutting was made across the very large enclosure-ditch which can be seen on Major Allen's air-photographs stretching in a curve across this field and the neighbouring field to the south. The ditch proved to be 36 feet wide and 11½ feet deep, and yielded in the lowest levels of its filling much pottery of the 1st century A.D.

3. *Frilford, Berks.* The excavations in the Noah's Ark field were completed early in 1939 and a full report is published in this volume (pp. 1 ff.).

4. *Hatford, Berks.* An important Early Iron Age settlement of late A2 type with occupation-pits and ditches has been found during sand-digging in a pit on the west of the road leading from Hatford to Hatford Down Cottages.

5. *Hinksey, Berks.* In a field on the Cumnor-Hinksey parish boundary an attempt to trace the supposed Roman road leading to the ford across the Thames at Ferry Hinksey was made by the Oxford University Archaeological Society during May and June, 1939, but without any positive results.

6. *Abingdon, Berks.* Finds of skeletons and of Roman pottery and crude baked-clay rings of Anglo-Saxon type on unoccupied ground at the corner of Bath Street and Broad Street have been reported to the Ashmolean Museum by Mr. H. R. Blagrove of Abingdon.

7. *Wallingford (The Pavilion), Berks.* Further Anglo-Saxon interments were excavated early in 1939 by Mr. F. Snow. The material found up to December, 1938, has been acquired by the Ashmolean Museum.

8. *Godstow, Berks.* Excavations in the chapel of the Nunnery were undertaken by the Oxford University Archaeological Society during May and June, 1939.

THE SITE OF CHERBURY CAMP

The site of Cherbury Camp, in Charney Bassett parish, has always been a puzzle. It is one of the most strongly fortified of the Iron Age earthworks in Berkshire, having on its north-west side, where best preserved, four ramparts separated by ditches, yet it is placed on a hardly perceptible rise in low flat country, almost surrounded by slightly higher ground. Structurally it belongs to the great hill forts usually found in commanding positions,¹ and its site is markedly anomalous. Some light is believed to have been thrown on the problem in the course of a geological survey of the area recently undertaken.

On the west, north-west and north Cherbury Camp is encircled by a brook which still flows sluggishly through a marshy tract and may, before the days of land drainage, have presented an obstacle to attack from those sides. The wood on the west is called Turf Pits Covert, which suggests that peat has been dug there and that the spot may formerly have been boggy than at present. On the south, south-east and east, however, the camp seems to be completely vulnerable from a plain at a level only a few feet lower

¹ For a plan, see *V.C.H. Berks.*, I, 262. The greatest inside diameter of the enclosure is about 1,000 feet from north to south.

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than the inside of the enclosure. This winter the plain, which in my memory has been grass, was ploughed up. The arable field now presents a remarkable sight. The rich dark earth turns out to be alluvial and the freshly-turned surface is almost white with snail shells.

A few minutes' collecting shows that the shells belong to two ecological assemblages which did not live contemporaneously. There is a moderate sprinkling of common land snails such as *Helix aspersa* (Müller), *H. hortensis* (Müller), *Helicella virgata* (da Costa), *H. heripensis* (Mabille), which may have been living on the field up to the moment when it was ploughed. But the majority of the shells, numbering at least 50 for every one of these, belong to a marsh assemblage and cannot have lived in the ordinary grass field. The following six species were collected in the middle of the field east of the south end of the camp. They are listed in order of abundance, with notes on habitats added from Ellis's work.¹

Succinea pfeifferi Rossmässler. Marshes and sides of rivers, lakes or ponds. By the Thames *S. pfeifferi* is confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the river banks, whereas *S. putris* is scattered all over the water-meadows.

Trichia hispida (Linné). Most abundant in moist places.

Cochlicopa lubrica (Müller). Abundant in moist places . . . exceedingly common in the rejectamenta of rivers.

Retinella nitidula (Draparnaud). Damp habitats.

Limnaea truncatula (Müller). Shallow, well-aerated waters, in marshes, on wet mud by rivers, canals and lakes, and in water-meadows.

Planorbis spirorbis (Linné). Still and flowing water and marshes.

Probably 90 per cent. of the shells present belong to the first two species in about equal proportions. On the very moderate assumption that there are on the average only 4 shells per square inch over the whole field there must be something over 500 million shells lying on the surface alone.

Evidently, then, the flat area east, south-east and south of Cherbury Camp was at one time (geologically very recent) a marsh or swamp, varying in width from 300 yards due east to 500 yards due south. The only direction from which there was access to the camp on dry land was the north-east, where the track now runs from Race Farm. The site, in fact, was quite exceptionally defensible: a narrow-necked peninsula, inviting fortification.

W. J. ARKELL.

FINDS MADE DURING BUILDING-WORKS IN THE CITY OF OXFORD

Considerable demolition and rebuilding within the boundaries of the city continue to take place, and it is most unfortunate that since Mr. John Daniell's departure from Oxford no one has been found who can give the requisite time for systematic observation of the consequent excavations. Much material of first-class value for the history of Oxford is thus irretrievably lost, and this state of affairs will continue until a competent and adequately-paid archaeological officer is appointed by the City Council. The absence of such an officer is even more regrettable in view of the widely-expressed desire for the foundation of a City Museum, because an active observer could soon collect a valuable nucleus of material for the Museum's show-cases. The staff of the Ashmolean,

¹ A. E. Ellis, *British Snails* (Oxford, 1926).

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which is a university institution, cannot be expected to undertake such work, in addition to their other commitments, and the occasional watching of sites, which is all that they have time for, is inadequate to meet the situation.

The following site was systematically watched by Mr. E. M. Hawes, of Exeter College :

SW corner of Turl Street and Market Street. The excavations, which were for the foundations of the new building of Lincoln College, produced much mediaeval and later pottery, but no structural remains of note.

MEDIAEVAL FIGURES IN NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD (PLATE XVIII).

The group of 14th century figures representing the Annunciation, with the Founder, William of Wykeham, in adoration, on the east face of the main gateway of New College was repaired during the summer of 1938 under the direction of Sir Charles Peers. An examination of the figure of Our Lady and that of the Founder, which, in cope and mitre, kneels in a niche at her feet, revealed the progress of decay behind a sound surface. The decayed stone has now been removed, so far as possible, and the contours made up in synthetic stone.

At some time, probably in the second half of the 17th century, a new head was put on to the figure of Our Lady, not in stone but in plaster. Close examination proved that the joint between the plaster and the stone was perfect, and this suggests that the original stone head was not removed by chance, but was purposely decapitated, a fate which it might easily have undergone at that time.

Two similar groups of figures exist in the College, one on the west side of the same gateway and one on the west side of the muniment tower, over the hall stairs. The latter is the best preserved of the three, and this is due, no doubt, to the partial survival of the colour with which it must have originally been treated, and of which considerable remains came to light in the recent cleaning. The folds of Our Lady's skirt were red and the Founder's sleeve had a well preserved patch of the same colour. No blue, gold, or other colouring has been found, and the red has doubtless survived because of its greater natural durability. The heads of Our Lady and of the Founder are better preserved than any others in the three groups, but Gabriel's head has been cut away, presumably when the stone had begun to decay, so that the original features have gone and a clumsy substitute for them cut on what remains of the head.

By the courtesy of the Warden and Fellows of New College and of Sir Charles Peers, we are enabled to print the following extract from his report on the work :

' . . . In continuation of the work of former years, the external stonework of the south transept of the Antechapel and of the east front of the Warden's Lodging, up to and including the gateway, has been cleaned and repaired.

. . . The most interesting part of the work was the treatment of the three statues over the gateway. I first examined and reported on these figures in 1931, and repaired them in 1932. . . . The treatment then given did not extend to a complete removal of all decaying stone, and while hoping for beneficial results, I did not venture to prophesy a complete cure. Plaster filling of voids was resorted to, and the statues were solid when left. Now after six years the results have been tested, and whereas the plaster work has remained sound and effective, the decay has

PLATE XVIII



THE FIGURES OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL, OUR LADY, AND THE FOUNDER,
ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE GATEWAY OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Nos. 1-3, after restoration in 1938 : nos. 4-6, before restoration.

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spread in the parts that were affected in 1932 but for practical reasons not cut out, so that in several places the stonework rang hollow when tapped. Having a skilled carver, Mr. W. H. Child, of Messrs. Child & Tyrrell, working for me at Magdalen, I got him to come to New College and carry out such repairs to the statues as I judged advisable. I have now removed as far as possible every piece of stone which was not sound, replacing it with synthetic stone modelled and carved to the old lines.

This, in the figure of Our Lady, meant renewing the front of the body to a depth of three or four inches from below the neck to the waist, a new patch on the left hip and thigh, and some small renewals of folds in the drapery.

The Founder, by reason of a soft bed running vertically through his kneeling figure, has long ago lost a good half of his head and mitre, and his left shoulder and arm have cracked away from the rest of the body. In order to get at the decaying layer the sound stone of the shoulder and arm was removed bodily, cleared of all decayed parts, set back in place on to a layer of synthetic stone replacing the soft bed, and dowelled through to the sound stone of the inner side of the figure. The missing half of the face and mitre has been modelled and carved in synthetic stone and dowelled to the sound old work.

The Archangel is altogether a better piece of stone, and except for a decayed patch on the right shoulder there was nothing much to do. Part of the wing which had broken off was refixed and carried by a staple set in the side of the niche.

Other works done by Mr. Child are : on the south end of the Antechapel three heads on the string course below the parapet ; of these one, a lion's head, is entirely new, one is modelled in synthetic stone on the old core, and the third is the old stone recarved. On the gateway ; an eagle at the N.E. angle of the upper stage, a new stone ; an animal's head on the string course, part recarved, part in synthetic stone ; and the finial above the canopy of Our Lady's statue, a new stone replacing a face-bedded stone.'

A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OXFORD COLLECTOR

Amongst the extracts from the University Registers printed in the introduction to O.H.S. vol. 1, p. xx, is an entry of special antiquarian interest. It occurs in the Register of the Chancellor's Court marked GG and is dated 21st August, 1552, when proof was submitted of the nuncupative will of Edward Beaumont, B.A., of Christ Church. The statement includes the following bequests :—

'item he bequethed and gave to Laurence Nowell bachelor of arts the bed which he lay on, and his best bolstar and his pillow, item halfe his antiquites ; item he bequethed to Ser Bridges the other halfe of his antiquites, being certain strange coynes in silver ;'

This seems to be the earliest record of a collection of coins made by a member of the University, antedating by about half a century the activity of John Barcham, whose coins were given to the University through Laud. Unfortunately no details were added in the inventory to the will concerning the 'strange' (*i.e.* foreign) coins : the furniture and the books are valued individually, but the coins are not even mentioned, nor the antiquities left to Laurence Nowell.

J. G. MILNE.