

ANNUAL EXCURSION.

HALESWORTH, WISSETT, RUMBURGH,
SOUTH ELMHAM.

The Annual Excursion took place on the 25th June, 1896. The country selected, Halesworth and its neighbourhood, proved rich in objects of Antiquarian and historical interest, and the proceedings were so mapped out that the interest of the visitors was sustained from the commencement to the end of a long day. The visitors from Bury St. Edmund's and West Suffolk were met at Ipswich by members resident on the Eastern side of the County, and shortly after ten o'clock the train left the Ipswich platform with a party of ladies and gentlemen about equal in number to previous years. The members increased *en route*, while residents in the respective localities visited drove to the various meeting places.

The members present included:—Rev. Canon Raven, D.D., F.S.A., Rev. Canon Manning, F.S.A., Mr. Felix T. Cobbold, Mr. R. M. Miller, Mr. Henry and Mrs. Miller, Major Meller, Rev. M. B. Cowell, J. Arnott, Esq., Rev. E. Hickling, Mr. and Miss Key, Mr. Geo. Abbott, Mr. H. W. Trigg, Mr. W. Sanicroft Randall, Miss Coates, Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Haslewood, Mr. Wm. Vick, Mr. F. and Mrs. Pawsey, Rev. E. C. and Mrs. Hopper, Rev. A. J. C. Connell, Mr. P. and Mrs. Wainwright, Mr. Thos. Harrison, Rev. W. E. Layton, Rev. Francis Haslewood, Honorary Secretary, and Mrs. Haslewood, and many others, including a large number of ladies.

The party reached Halesworth shortly before twelve o'clock. The Rev. A. R. Upcher, the rector, was at the station to meet the visitors, who had not got many yards before their attention was drawn to matters of special interest, and it was pretty evident that a good day was in store for the party—at any rate it began most auspiciously. The church of S. Mary, at Halesworth, was the first church on the programme, but the Rev. A. R. Upcher, who led the way, swerved a little to the right, and the excursionists found themselves in the pretty rectory grounds. The rector caught the ear of listeners, and imparted a halo of interest in the spot sacred with the memories of Archbishop Whately and other notables, who had at various times occupied the rectory. Pointing to the charming lake at the edge of the lawn in front of the house, the Rev. A. R. Upcher remarked that Rev. John Keble spent a great deal of his time upon that lake, being very intimate with Archbishop Whately, who was Rector from 1822 to 1831. On one occasion Keble modestly produced some verses which he had written, and he asked the then Mr., afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, if he should publish them; “certainly,” replied the rector, after he had

carefully perused them. The Rev. A. R. Upcher mentioned other facts connected with the *locus in quo*, stating, amongst other things, that Keble was believed to have written much of his "Christian Year" at Halesworth.* The rector also pointed to a flourishing elm tree of considerable girth at the entrance to the rectory grounds, and told how that it was reported of Whately that he used to mount this tree with his surplice on in order to frighten the boys who used to steal the fruit from the orchard, which then existed on land now divided from the grounds by a high brick wall.

After crossing the bridge over the river Blythe, the notice of the visitors was called to the curiously carved Brestsummer of a small shop. A little higher up the road, the Rector drew attention to the Old Chantry House, which, he said, originally belonged to the Bedingfield family. He explained that the carving was in pine, which was supposed to have been rarer in those days than oak. A halt was made in the Market-place close by, and once again the Rector, finding himself in the centre of an attentive group, had to offer some particulars about what was evidently a very interesting spot. This he did, mentioning that the Lord of the Manor had a special charter from Henry VIII. to hold a market there. The rev. gentleman invited the visitors to inspect the timbered and panelled sides of some of the principal apartments of the "Three Tuns" Inn, facing the Market-place, as demonstrating that this was in centuries gone by a very important centre.

The Rev. A. R. Upcher gave an entertaining description of the Church, which consists of chancel, nave, and double aisles on both North and South sides, with West Tower. The party proceeded round the Church and the various features of special interest were pointed out by the rector. The Font is Perpendicular, an octagon, with emblems of Evangelists, its date being about A.D. 1500. There are in the edifice several singular brasses. The visitors spent much time in the vestry looking over the almost unique collection of ancient mss., some of which were placed within covers. One was a list of Communicants, and dated 1587, and the amount of wine they were accustomed to consume appeared very remarkable. A nice copy of Erasmus was pointed out amongst the collection. The entries in the parish registers were scanned by some, one having reference to the appointment of the parish schoolmaster—"John Evans has been chosen by the inhabitants thereof; was sworn before me May 24th 1553 and was approved of by Mr. Samuel Hawker." A remarkable feature about the book is the beautiful calligraphy. In the Vestry was also exhibited the church plate, and it was observed that the oldest piece was not silver. This was an enigma he could not quite solve, but it certainly appeared the oldest; the gold had worn off. Amongst other points of interest which came under notice during the stay in the Church was:—the crest of the Bedingfield family, a very handsome two-light window with elaborate tracery, and the credence table discovered during alterations to the fabric.

* Life of Archbp. Whately, by E. Jane Whately, Vol. I., p. 51, pub. 1866.

The exterior of the Church also came in for critical examination, and there were many noticeable features pointed out.

At one o'clock lunch was served at the "Swan Hotel." The Rev. A. R. Upcher occupied the Chair. After luncheon the Rev. F. Haslewood, the Honorary Secretary, proposed a vote of thanks to the rector, not only for his kindness in presiding on that occasion, but for his efforts to enhance the pleasure of the visit by explaining the various objects of interest in his church.

The excursionists then took seats in vehicles which were in readiness, and were soon on their way to Wissett. They halted at the church of S. Andrew in that parish, an ancient building with round tower. The Vicar pointed out some of the chief features of the structure. Having made a critical examination of the interior of the church, the Vicar conducted the party round the exterior, drawing special attention to a perfect specimen of a Norman doorway on the north side. There is another on the south side, but not in quite such good condition.

After a short drive Rumburgh Church was reached, and the travellers were received by the vicar, the Rev. W. L. Wilson, who showed them round the building and the Priory. The Rev. Canon Raven, D.D., F.S.A., read from the pulpit a valuable paper.

"The Old Minster" at South Elmham, which was reached about four o'clock. This was *par excellence*, from an antiquarian point of view, the most hallowed spot visited during the live-long day. The whole locality is rich in features of antiquarian research. South Elmham Hall itself was the ancient palace of the Bishops of Norwich, and as for "the Old Minster," it was traditionally the church built by S. Felix, the Burgundian, first Bishop of the East Angles, and Sir Hugh E. Adair very kindly granted admission to these places.

The Rev. Canon Raven, D.D., in one of his carefully prepared papers, brought the "Old Minster" back to the mind's eye. The reading of the paper led to further information being sought upon various portions of the old ruins, and the learned Doctor courteously replied to various questions.

The Rev. G. F. and Mrs. Smith Rewse very kindly entertained the members to afternoon tea at the rectory; and then a brief visit was paid to S. Margaret's Church, South Elmham, and the rector, Rev. G. F. Smith-Rewse, described the building, which consists of nave, south porch, and west tower. The church was built about the time of King John. The south doorway is Norman, with shafts in the jambs. The chancel and porch are Perpendicular, the tower being a good specimen of the period. The stand for an hour-glass remains *in situ*. There remains some medieval painting on panels, formerly part of the rood screen.

The excursionists left South Elmham a six o'clock, and were driven to Halesworth, where they caught the 7.21 train for Ipswich and other towns, the day having proved very enjoyable.