

ANNUAL EXCURSION.

On Thursday, August 14th, 1913, the members of the Institute paid a visit to the old town of Thetford. Among those present were Mr. G. Horsfield, Ipswich; Rev. Canon Cowell, Ashbocking; Rev. R. R. Cobbold, Hitcham; Mr. T. T. Methold, Hepworth; Rev. H. H. Bartrum, Alpheton; Mr. J. H. Landon, Lavenham; Mr. V. D. Colchester, Ipswich; Miss Colchester, Cockfield; Mr. Stokoe; Mr. C. S. Wolton, Lavenham; The Honorary Secretary of the Institute and Mrs. A. W. Darwin, Stonham Aspall; Rev. and Mrs. A. J. Bedell, Cratfield; Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Balding, Woodbridge; Mr. K. Sache, London; Mr. V. B. Redstone, Woodbridge; Miss L. J. Redstone, London; Mr. C. Smith, Bealings; Rev. E. Hill, Cockfield; Mr. T. Miller, Ipswich; Rev. C. H. Wright, Playford; Mr. A. E. Alston, Manningtree; Miss E. A. Everitt, Falkenham; Miss Nina F. Layard, Ipswich; Rev. H. A. Harris, Thorndon; and Mr. J. P. Creagh, Haughley. Prince Frederick Duleep Singh wrote regretting that he could not be present, as he was in Austria, and the Duke of Grafton wrote expressing his wish to be present, but regretting his inability to do so, and stating that he should be glad to receive the visitors at Euston on Friday. The party were met at the station by Mr. J. Edgell, of King's House, Thetford, who had consented to act as guide to the various places of interest in the town. The success of the excursion was largely due to the deep interest taken by Mr. Edgell in all the arrangements which were made. The Hon. Excursion Secretary was greatly assisted by this gentleman, and by the Rev. A. Darwin, our Hon. Secretary.

The first place visited was the Abbey Ruins, situated close to the railway station. These ruins are the remains of the fine Cluniac Priory of St. Mary, one of the five largest monasteries of that order in England. The Priory was founded by Roger Bigod in 1104 on the Suffolk side of the river, but in 1107 a larger site was secured on the Norfolk side. The site of the present ruins, and the foundation stones were laid in that year by Roger Bigod and Abbot Stephen. In 1114 the monks took possession of their new priory, the chapel being dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and SS. Peter and Paul. The monastery was one of the last to be suppressed in England in 1540. Its possessions in eighty-five parishes in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Essex, were granted to the Duke of Norfolk. The visitors were able to inspect the abbey gate and various other parts of the ruins. The abbey gate, which is in the Perpendicular style, is of late 15th century work. It is 36 ft. square and 42 ft. high. The Abbot's fish-pond proved very interesting to many, though most expressed the opinion that they would not care to eat fish from it now.

The next visit was to the Guildhall to view the Corporation regalia and records. Here they were welcomed by the Mayor (Mr. G. Brown), the Deputy-Mayor (Mr. R. Tilley), Alderman F. H. Millington, and the Deputy Town Clerk (Mr. C. Bartram). Mr. Millington, speaking on behalf of the Mayor and Deputy-Mayor, expressed their pleasure in meeting so many members of the Institute who had come to visit Thetford to see what the old town had to show them. In the way of regalia, perhaps, there was not much to be seen. The two silver maces dated from the reign of James I. and bore the arms of England. In the reign of Charles II. a celebrated man, Sir Joseph Williamson, made his residence within the

borough. He became a great benefactor to the town, and presented the Corporation with the handsome sword and mace. The mace was an almost exact copy of that in the House of Commons, and like that belonging to the Corporation of Yarmouth. The salver and loving cup with cover were presented by James Sloan in 1698, and the silver-mounted staff was added to the regalia in 1800, when the Guildhall was restored. Thetford is one of those places which form a connecting link between Norfolk and Suffolk. It was also on the border of the Diocese of Norwich and Ely, and situated on the great highway. The seat of the East Anglian Bishopric was here for a time before it was fixed at Norwich. Thetford was also an Assize town, and when Norwich tried to get the Assizes removed a native of Thetford, James Mingay, restored the Guildhall. Coming to more modern times, after the restoration of the Town Hall, Mr. Walter Fison, a former Mayor, presented the Corporation with the very handsome Mayoral chain. There were one or two small things of interest, such as the seal of the borough and the Corporation deeds and books. A cartulary of Thetford Priory, formerly in the possession of Peter de Neve, Norroy, 1719, is now among these records. In 1804 many were lost; under what circumstances is not known. The large portrait to be seen on the walls of the Guildhall was that of the second Duke of Grafton, who was connected with the town in Charles II.'s reign.

Mr. Redstone expressed the thanks of the members present to the Mayor and Corporation, and to Mr. Millington for the interest taken in their visit.

After luncheon, partaken at the Bell Hotel, the party proceeded to view the Old Cathedral Walls and the Boys' Grammar School. The site of the school

is of special interest. Before the Norman Conquest there stood upon the same spot the Parish Church of St. Mary the Great, which was rebuilt in 1078 by Bishop Herfast and converted into a Cathedral. The See was removed to Norwich in 1094, after which removal the site was bought by Roger Bigod, who built the small priory near by for Cluniac monks as before mentioned. Later it passed into the possession of the Dominican Order of Black Friars, who held it till the Dissolution. The principal feature of the ancient buildings on this site is a fine arch of mediaeval structure. Leaving the Grammar School, a visit was paid to the ruins, on the Brandon Road, of the Priory of the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, founded by William, third Earl of Warrenne. The old tithe barn excited much interest, as did also the site, just opposite, of St. John's Hospital and Burial Ground for Lepers. Great interest was evinced in the font, archway, and tombs standing within St. Mary's Church. Many came to the conclusion that the font was of uncertain date, and that the carving round the top of it was very modern.

The next visit was to the gas works, where St. Edmund's Church once stood. Here a view was had of a remarkably fine stone coffin which was discovered in an adjacent garden, only about 18 inches below the surface, in July, 1907. The coffin is 6ft. 10in. long and 2ft. 7in. wide at the head, and contains the skeleton of a man of 6ft. 1in. The next visit was to the old Nunnery now converted into racing stables. Most of the ancient character of the buildings of this early religious house has gone, but a particularly fine Norman arch may be seen. Many of the ladies admired the horses far more than the old arch. Leaving the Nunnery the party passed over the Nuns' Bridges, the site of the famous ducking stool, where scolding wives at

one time had their tempers cooled ; and thence on to the brewery. Here, by permission of Mr. J. B. Winder, they were enabled to view the home of the Grey Friars. Built into the wall in an upright position is to be seen a stone coffin.

The famous King's house was next visited. This, as Mr. Edgell, the occupier, explained, was the one-time royal home of James I. An archway was pointed out leading into St. Peter's Churchyard, through which the monarch used to pass every Tuesday when in residence, to return thanks in the church for his deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot. With kindly thought the party were entertained to tea on the lawn by Mr. and Mrs. Edgell. A large number of Thetfordians were also present to meet the guests. After tea Mr. Robert Field, of Brandon, gave an interesting exhibition of flint-knapping. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. and Mrs. Edgell for their kindness and hospitality.

During the evening Miss Nina F. Layard, F.L.S., of Ipswich, delivered at the Town Hall an excellent lecture on "Pre-historic Workshops," and Mr. V. B. Redstone, of Woodbridge, lectured on "Suffolk Castles in History." Both lectures were illustrated by lantern slides, the lantern being lent and worked by the Rev. J. P. Watts, Rector of St. Peter's, Thetford. Miss Nina F. Layard most kindly gave her lecture at a very short notice, when Mr. F. H. Millington was prevented by illness from giving an address.