In conformity with Law xvi, the Treasurer exhibited the official List of the Members showing all the payments made.

The Secretary read an extract from a French newspaper, *Le Pilote de la Somme* of 23rd September, 1854, announcing the successful researches of M. Boucher de Perthes, respecting the objects of the "stone period." His travels had been during the spring and summer of 1854, in the North of Europe, as in 1853 they had been in the East.

The following Papers were then read:

Some sections of Mr. Worsaae’s recent work, "Sketches from the Royal Museum of Antiquities at Copenhagen," translated by Mr. J. H. Ludvigsen; and an Account of the Primstave and of Remarkable Days, written by Professor A. Munch for the Norwegian Folke Kalendar of 1848, and translated by Mr. J. H. Ludvigsen.

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8th March, 1855. LITERARY SECTION.

Rev. Dr. Thom, V.P., in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Rev. Charles White Underwood, M.A., Vice-Principal of the Collegiate Institution, was duly elected a member of the Society.

The following Donation was laid upon the table:


Dr. Hume exhibited a folio Concordance of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures, compiled on the basis of Clement Cotton’s Concordance, 1631,—by the Rev. Samuel Newman, minister of Rehoboth in New England. It was the first complete and enlarged book of the kind. Its date was London 1650.

Mr. Augustus Harding, manufacturer of the Model of Ancient Liverpool, exhibited two original views of the town, as seen from an elevation, in 1850 and 1855. He intends to publish them, on one large sheet with an explanatory key. An application from Mr. Harding to be permitted to dedicate the Views to the Society, was at once granted.

Mr. Buxton exhibited an ancient printed copy of the Scriptures, slightly imperfect, with the view of ascertaining its date.

In illustration of the paper to be read, Mr. Stonehouse exhibited the following:—Map of Cheshire; Drawing of the tomb of Hugh Starkie, in Over Church; the Church Porch; Water Basin; View of Weaver Hall from the Hunting Bridge; Rubbing of the brass on Hugh Starkie’s tomb; Drawing from the Church window, and sketch of carving from a pew.

The following Paper was then read:

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH AND CHURCH OF OVER, IN CHESHIRE. By James Stonehouse.**

Although the records kept in somewhat out-of-the-way country places do not present to notice any very remarkable circumstances, there is always something to be found in them of interest to those who have a literary or an antiquarian turn of mind.

The town of Over—for town it must be called, since it has a charter of both market and fair, and is presided over by a mayor, although not possessing a body corporate—is situated about a mile from Winsford, one of the Salt-producing towns of Cheshire, four miles west from Middlewich, and four miles from the Hartford station of the Great North-western Railway.

Over is mentioned in Domesday Book, and is there spelt “Ovre.” The manor of Over was bestowed by Edward, Earl of Chester (who became Edward the First), in the 54th year of the reign of Henry the Third, to his Abbey of Dernhall.

After the dissolution of monasteries, when Vale Royal Abbey, ceased, amongst other such like things, to be, the manors of Over and Waverham were granted (37 Henry
VIII) to Sir Thomas Holcroft, Knight, in consideration of the sum of £466 10s. 10d., and in exchange for the manor of Cartmell, subject also to a rent of £10 0s. 4d. From the Holcroft's this manor passed to a Mr. Edmund Peersall or Persell, a London merchant, who, about the time of Charles the Second, sold it to Thomas Cholmondeley, Esquire, the fourth son of the Lady Mary Cholmondeley, in the hands of whose descendant, the present Lord Delamere, it still remains.

The word "Over" frequently occurs in the names of Cheshire localities, as in "Over Peover," "Overchurch," "Overton," "Over Tabley," "Overpool," "Over Marsh."

The town of Over commences at the west end of Over Lane, which is the high road from Winsford to Delamere Forest. It is in appearance a mere village, having the houses ranged on each side of the road, without any lateral streets. Amongst these houses are some of those old-fashioned dwellings frequently found in Cheshire, of lath and plaster, or brick and timber, which, to the eye of the artist, present so picturesque an appearance. Although Over cannot rank in size beyond the extent of a village, it is, nevertheless, as before stated, a market town. Its charter of fair and market was granted to the abbot and monks of Vale Royal, by Edward I, 1280. The market day is Wednesday. It had been in disuse for many years until 1840, when an attempt was made to revive it, but without success, although a market hall was erected by a proprietary, who made a strong effort to bring it into esteem. The market for the neighbourhood is held at Winsford, on the Saturday, and it would seem that the habit of frequenting it by the country people could not be shaken. After a year or two the market at Over was given up, and the hall was sold to Lord Delamere, who applied it to educational purposes. The fairs, however, are still a favourite resort of the peasantry, farmers, and dealers. They are held on the 15th May and 29th September. Considerable sales of cattle and horses take place, while the usual amusements fill up the afternoons. Near the market hall is a modern cross, which superseded one of great antiquity, supposed to have been erected by the monks of Vale Royal, who erected one also on the high road, near where the branch road turns off to the church. Over Cross surmounts a flight of steps in a pyramidal form, and presents an interesting object to the passer-by. Under it is the terror to bucolic evil-doers, the lock-up, and at the back is the pound. The inhabitants of Over are principally employed in the neighbouring salt works at Winsford, and some of them in an extensive silk mill which is in operation in the vicinity of the town. Over is well supplied with excellent water.

Over has a singular custom attached to it, which has existed for centuries. Although not a corporate town, it has a mayor to manage its public affairs. The mayor is thus chosen. At the holding of the manorial court in October, there are two juries empanelled. One of these is called the grand jury, which acts for the town, and the other the county jury, to whom is confided the township affairs. The grand jury returns to the lord of the manor the names of six of the most respectable inhabitants. The lord of the manor selects one of these gentlemen, who, at an adjourned court, held fourteen days after the first court, is elected to fill the office of chief magistrate. The mayor thus remarkably chosen, does not obtain mere title, for his office is one of some influence. He sits on the bench at quarter sessions, acts as a justice of the peace, and his signature is necessary to be appended to that of a county magistrate in granting licenses to public houses. At the expiration of his term he enjoys the title of alderman. Before the establishment of the county court, the mayor had a sworn bailiff, who executed all processes relating to matters of debt within his jurisdiction.

William Smith, in his "King's Vale Royal," thus speaks of Over—"It standeth at the east end of Delamere Forest, not far from the river Weaver. It is but a small thing, yet I put it in here, because of the great prerogative that it hath. For it hath a mayor, and the church, which is a quarter of a mile from it, south of the town, is lawful, which privilege (because it standeth in Eddisbury hundred) I think it hath since the destruction of the city of Eddisbury, which stood some time in the Forest of Delamere, in the same place where the Chamber in the forest is still standing."

Now, Smith, I think, has mixed up in this statement that which is not, with that which is. There were three places of sanctuary, or places of refuge, for malefactors,
runaways, and persecuted persons, in Cheshire, one of which was at Over Marsh, or King’s Marsh, between Shochlach and Farndon. I suspect that Smith has confounded Over Church with this place. Over Marsh, as it was anciently called, was a piece of ground set aside for the use of persons who were fugitives. Smith also falls into an error in fixing the locality of Over Church as being a quarter of a mile from the town, as it is at least a mile by the nearest way across the fields, and certainly more than a mile and a quarter by the high road.

At a house called the Bridge End House, the notorious—or, if the term be better approved, the celebrated—Robert, or, as he is sometimes called, William Nixon, the Cheshire prophet, was born. It was only in the early part of the last century that anything was written respecting this person. Oldmixon, in his pamphlet published by Curll, in 1714, collected some particulars relating to him. It is a curious circumstance that neither in the registers of Over Church nor Whitegate is Nixon’s name to be found, while several dates are asserted by different authors to have been the times in which he lived. He is said to have died from neglect in Hampton Court, whither he had been taken for James I. to see him. In Lyson’s Cheshire there is an interesting account of him.

The progenitors of George Washington resided in Over township, and some of the name are still to be found, I believe, within its limits.

The country in the neighbourhood of Over, especially towards the Weaver, is of a very pleasing character. About a quarter of a mile from Winsford Bridge appear large sheets of water, which are hereabout termed “flashes.” These flashes are caused by the subsidence of the rock salt deposit beneath, worn away by the under springs; and it is doubtful from the sudden disappearance of the land, and the speedy presence of water in its stead, that the term for these little lakes has been obtained. The Weaver river runs through the middle of “the flashes.” The depth of water varies; in some places it is forty and fifty feet deep, while in others it is so shallow that a boat will not float. Above the flashes the river suddenly narrows, and, after winding about between sedgy banks for a few miles, ceases to be navigable even for small boats. The eastern bank of the river rises in well-wooded land of a most agreeable character.

Heavy craft only get up to Winsford Bridge.

The church of Over, which now claims our attention, is dedicated to St. Chad. It is distant from Over town about a mile, as the crow flies. It stands in a hollow, and has a very venerable and picturesque appearance. The style is that of the later period of English architecture. Though not mentioned in Domesday Book, there might have been hereabout at the time of the compilation of that remarkable work some sort of sacred building standing. It is believed that the present church is erected upon a Norman foundation, such foundation having been laid bare or traceable, and it is asserted that a portion of the original building is still extant. The rebuilding took place in the reign of Henry VIII, when doubtless the materials of the former church were used up. The tower is square, of four stories, battlemented, the buttresses ending in turrets, which have been much broken. A Gothic frieze is carried under the battlements. About half way up the tower, on the southern side, there is a stone let into the wall, which originally bore a sculptured effigy, probably that of the rebuilders of the church. There are also the remains of an inscription round it, but both figure and inscription are too much defaced to be traceable or legible, at any rate from the churchyard. On the southern side is a porch of two stories, embattled. Over the entrance is a window, and above it a shield, bearing the rebuilders’ arms, quarterly, with that of Olton. The entrance to the porch is obtained down a step, the churchyard having been gradually raised about it. On the right-hand side of the porch is a water basin, somewhat worn in the front, under a very graceful Saxon crocketted arch. The basin projects from the wall, exhibiting to view three sides of an octagon, ornamented with Gothic niches. The trefoil of this arch has been destroyed, and a representation of it in black paint substituted. This basin has been, and indeed still is, a very graceful piece of sculpture.

The interior of the church has a venerable appearance. On the north side there is a private pew room, occupied by the owners of Darnhall Hall; a portion of it is built out into the churchyard. Near the vestry is a remarkably large stone baptismal font, bearing the initials “T. W.,” and dated 1662, which some cleanly-minded churchwarden has
loaded with a thick coat of stone-coloured paint. Near the entrance to the private pew, and adjoining the communion rails, is the altar tomb of Hugh Starkey, the rebuild of the church. The base is of red stone. A singular distribution of the ornamental quatrefoils may be observable. The compartments on the right of the shield are three in number, while those on the left are two. It will be noticed that a portion of the quatrefoil next the shield, on the right hand, only is visible. In the quatrefoils in the wall under the arch, wherein the tomb partly stands, a similar distribution takes place of three and two, only in the latter case the former number is to the left instead of to the right. Now, this seems a curious arrangement, but I think the reason for it may be explained. When this altar tomb was first erected, it doubtless stood in an isolated position. In the course of time the tomb becoming decayed, or perhaps desecrated by sacrilegious hands, it was found necessary to repair it. In doing so, the ornamental parts were collected together, and exhibited in the best way they would admit. It seems clear that this was the case, because the wall in the recess at the base of the quatrefoils at the back covers over a strip of the marble top of the tomb, and hides a portion of the shields which are to be seen at the corners. Perhaps the obtuse arch ornamented with crockets was the original arch under which the tomb stood, while the roods or crosses, or what appear to be such, were a portion of the sides of the arch. It is clear that some alteration has been effected since the time when the tomb was originally erected. The top is of black marble, and bears an effigy of the pious gentleman whose ashes the tomb covers. The inscription, “Et gloria soli Deo honor,” is in beautifully formed letters, as are those of “H. S.” surmounting the arch. The roods, if such they be, are much broken and defaced, as are the niches in them, in which are the remains of sculptured or carved figures. The effect of the niche and arch is very pleasing—indeed, this tomb is of a highly interesting character. At the foot of the effigy is the following inscription:—

“Of your charitie pray for the soule of Hugh Starky of Oulton Esquier gentelm usher to Henry VIII and son to Hugh Starky of Oulton Esquier, which Hugh (the son) descessyd the yere of our Lord God MCCCC—On his Soule Jhu have mey. The shields at the corner, which are much defaced, bear the Starkey and Olton arms quarterly. At the steps of the chancel there is another tomb, containing the remains of the father of Hugh Starkey. The inscription is obliterated, but it is known to have been to the following effect:—“Hic jacet copora Hugonis Starkey de Olton armi et Marcie.” The tomb once bore two brass effigies, with armorial bearings. The Starkeys appear to have been persons of great influence and station at one time. They resided at a place called Darley Hall, which stood at the back of the present Oulton Hall, and which was pulled down by Mr. Egerton many years ago. Oulton Park and demesne were their property, and they held the manor of Knights Grange, the manor of Oulton, one-third of the manor of Erdswick, and lands in Minshull Vernon, Church Minshull, Worleston, Woodford, Eyton, Rushton, Tarporley, Thingwood, Budworth, and Surfich. One of the Starkeys, Sir Humphrey, was chancellor of the exchequer in Edward the Fifth’s reign, and again in the reign of Richard the Third. Another Starkey of note was Ralph, a literary man of some celebrity in the reign of James the First, who industriously collected a great deal of information relative to the arms of the Cheshire gentry. At Hugh Starkey’s death, 1555, the estates came into the possession of Oliver Starkey, an illegitimate son. This Oliver Starkey was a knight of Malta, and became grand prior of the order. He dying without issue, the estates descended to his brother James. Either by litigation, or from other causes, the property passed into the hands of the Egertons, with whom it still remains, in the person of Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton, Bart.

In the windows of the church there are remains of stained glass. In the east window there is some tabernacle work. Unfortunately there is but little of it. In the windows of the south aisle are the arms of Starkey and Oulton, quarterly, empaled with the coats of Done and Needham. In the windows of this side also are the figures of John Starkey, of Oulton, and his wife Agnes, daughter of Sir John Needham, of Shavington, as we may infer from the blazonry on the shields. Both figures are in kneeling posture, before a desk and book. The figure of the lady is so far mutilated as to leave nothing but the ample skirts of her robe. The male figure is in plate armour, very perfect, and
of beautiful colours and skilful execution. The mullions and tracery of the windows, which must at one time have been very tasteful, have been injudiciously or wantonly removed. In one of the pews there is a carving of a shield, bearing a cross moline, with a griffin’s head erased. In the belfry there is a remarkably large chest, elaborately carved, which it is a pity is not placed in some suitable part of the building. There is an organ in the west end, and a gallery fronts it which runs along one side of the church.

The impropriation of the church was given by Randle Gernons, Earl of Chester, to the Benedictine nuns of Chester. When Vale Royal Abbey was founded by Edward, the nuns released a portion of the tithes of a part of the parish, consisting of Little Over, Sutton, and Merton, for which they received 105s. lid. out of the rents of Middlewich. When the monasteries were dissolved, Bishop Bird obtained a grant of the rectory of Over, with the reversion to his successors. The present incumbent is the Rev. J. Jackson, M.A. The bishops of Chester still possess the right of presentation. In 1755 the vicarage was augmented, and in 1758 lands were purchased to the value of £400 for that purpose. £200 were given by the executors of the late Dr. Stratford, and the remainder by the trustees of Queen Anne’s bounty.

The registers commence in 1558. The baptisms are imperfect from 1564 to 1590. The burials are also imperfect from 1567 to 1590.

In Over there is another church, but of modern erection. It is one of the “Weaver Churches,” erected by the trustees of the Weaver navigation. The Independents have a chapel, with Sunday schools in connection with it. There is also a burying ground for the members of the congregation. The Wesleyans have a chapel and school. The Primitive Methodists have a chapel. In Over Lane is the Methodist Association Chapel, erected in 1836. The Whitegate School is under the patronage of Lady Delamere. The Whitegate and Over Free School was endowed by Thomas Lee, of Darnhall, in 1699, with the rents of certain lands in Newton by Tattenhall, containing 3163 statute acres. In 1818, a new school was erected, aided by the National Society. The Charity Commissioners discovered several charities bestowed on the poor of Over, which had been misappropriated and irretrievably lost, but at what time or by whom no trace was left.

Respecting the population, it may be briefly noticed, that Over is the designation of a Sub-District of the Registration District of Northwich. In this Sub-District (which is probably co-extensive with the Poor Law Union) there were, at the Census of 1851, 7129 souls, viz., 3608 males, and 3521 females. Of these, there were 11 men and 17 women between the age of 80 and 85 years; there were also 6 women between 85 and 90; 2 between 90 and 95, and 1 who had passed the age of 95 years, and 1 between 95 and 100.

In conclusion I may perhaps be allowed to observe, that in thus stringing together a variety of scattered facts, I think I am carrying out fully the purposes of our society; and to suggest also to any of our members who may accidentally visit some places not familiar to the many, that they cannot render better service than by devoting a little time to gathering together any particulars relating to the history of such place, and putting them down for our instruction. The traveller should come home burdened with information, as the bee wings its way back loaded with honey to the hive. If he think proper to keep the honey to himself, at any rate let us have the wax.

15th March, 1855. SCIENTIFIC SECTION.

Rev. Dr. Thom, V.P., in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. George Mansfield Browne, of 15, South Hill, was duly elected a member of the Society.

The following Donations were laid upon the table:

From John Nelson Wood, Esq. A Hand Bill of 1768, announcing the delivery of