PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

FOR THE YEAR 1874.

THE Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Society was held at SHERBORNE, on Tuesday, August 24th, 1874, in the Town Hall.

The public proceedings began at 12.30 p.m. The Chair was taken by the President, the LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS. The President said that he resigned his office with satisfaction, because he felt that he had the power of nominating an able successor. He had great pleasure in proposing Mr. H. DANBY SEYMOUR as President for the year, and, he believed that, that gentleman would be able to perform the duties of the office more effectually than he had been able to do. The proposal was seconded by the Rev. THE PROVOST OF ETON. The Bishop then left the Chair, and Mr. H. D. Seymour was voted into it with acclamation. The new President thanked the Society; he repudiated the idea that the duties of the office had not been ably performed by his noble and learned predecessor. He felt sure that the

Society was deeply thankful to the Bishop, not only for the singularly interesting address delivered by him last year, but for the kind interest which he had shown on all occasions in their proceedings.

The Honorary Secretary, Mr. O. W. MALET, then read the

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

"The Members of the Society may remember that at the last Annual Meeting the Council reported that, it was in contemplation to purchase the old Castle at Taunton by public subscription, in order that the building might be used for the purposes of the Society.

"The Council now have to report that the purchase has been completed for the sum of £2,850. Of this, £1,350 was supplied from realised subscriptions, and £1,500 was a loan from Stuckey's Banking Company. An additional sum of £87, also from realised subscriptions, was paid for fixtures, furniture, &c. Up to this date about £500 more has been collected by subscriptions. One of our tenants has notice to quit at Michaelmas, after which we hope to begin to move our collection. To the above sum must be added about £6, obtained by letting out the Hall for public meetings, entertainments, &c. These sums will, of course, go to reduce the debt due to Stuckey's Banking Company. It is calculated that about £400 will be required for alterations of the building, so that, altogether about £1,500 is required, including furniture and other expenses. With a hope of raising a large part, if not the whole of the amount still owing on this account, it is proposed that a series of fêtes be held for a week in the course of next spring, to be called the "Castle Week." These may include a bazaar, a ball, and other entertainments, and especially an exhibition of science and art. The sanction

of this meeting is requested to this proposal of the Committee.

"The Council are glad to be able to report that, during the progress of collecting they have received most encouraging offers of support from almost every one of the influential residents in the county, and nearly all have stated how fully they concur in the wish to preserve and utilize the Castle as proposed. Many have given real proof of their sympathy, by increasing or doubling their original subscriptions; to these especially, to all who have aided in the work, and to all who have given the encouragement of kind words, the Council beg to express their most grateful thanks.

"As one of their chief supporters in this matter, the Council trust the Society will permit the special mention of one of their late Vice-Presidents, Mr. Gore-Langton, M.P., who, with his natural kindness and liberality, was always ready, even at personal inconvenience to himself, to give the Society his most valuable and valued aid. While regretting the loss of his assistance, the Council wish to put on record this tribute of respect for the memory of one who had gained the affection of all who knew him.

"On account of the purchase of the Castle, and also on account of the large amount of valuable property now in the Museum, and under the advice of Counsel, it has been found necessary to make some alterations and additions to the Rules of the Society. These were accordingly done on the 26th March, at a Special General Meeting convened for the purpose. If the Members will kindly refer, they will see that to Rule I. has been added "and the establishment of a Museum and Library;" to Rule II. the word "Trustees;" to Rule VIII. "The property of the Society shall be held in trust for the Members by six

Trustees, who shall be chosen from the Members at any General Meeting;" Rules VII. and XIX. were also slightly modified, but Rule XX. only requires notice on this occasion. This provides that, "In case of dissolution, the real property of the Society in Taunton shall be held by the Trustees for the advancement of literature, science, and art, in the town of Taunton, and county of Somerset.

"At the same Special General Meeting the following Members of the Society, their consent having been previously obtained, were appointed to act as Trustees:—Messrs. H. J. Badcock, of Trull; J. Batten, of Yeovil; H. G. Moysey, of Bathealton; G. F. Luttrell, of Dunster Castle; W. A. Sanford, of Nynehead Court; and W. E. Surtees, of Tainfield. The thanks of the Society are due to these gentlemen.

"At our last meeting the Bill for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, promoted by Sir John Lubbock, had not been brought before Parliament. It has since been so. It was lost; but perhaps this is less to be regretted, as the list of monuments was incomplete. The Council reiterate the wish that all owners or occupiers of land on which objects of interest are situated will do their best to preserve them; and hope they will forward to the Museum, or give notice of, any that may be in danger of destruction.

"Several additions have been made to the Museum during the past year, but nothing worthy of special notice, except a large plesiosaur, from Street, by Mr. Sanford; a kite (now a rare bird), by Mr. Helyar; a red deer, from Exmoor, by Mr. Bisset; and two silver pennies of William I. and II., to the purchase of these Mr. Marshall, of Belmont, kindly contributed.

"As education advances the Society grows in popularity.

No less than twenty-one new Members have joined since the last Annual Meeting. The Museum is now seldom without daily visitors, and on fête days the place is thronged.

"The Council have to report that the copies of the Wells Registers mentioned in the last two yearly reports have been received, but, in the present state of the finances, the Council cannot recommend that the Society should burthen the general fund with the expense of their publication. The papers also require some further editing. The Council therefore recommend that a Committee be formed for the purpose of taking into consideration the question of publishing, and the mode of publication, of the papers now in our possession, and also of selections from the Episcopal Register.

"The Council are very anxious to make their Annual Volume of Proceedings more efficient, and especially to secure its regular publication before the meeting of each year. This year, owing to the unavoidable late appearance of Vol. XVIII., there has been considerable difficulty in doing this; but by making strong efforts, kindly aided by the contributors, Vol. XIX. is now in course of distribution. It is hoped that all who are kind enough to supply papers will send them at once to the Secretaries, and in a form ready for immediate publication.

"In conclusion the Council beg to bring prominently to the recollection of Members of Society that they are now the proprietors of a Castle of the oldest known foundation in Great Britain. To repay Stuckey's Banking Company, and to restore the Castle to its former state, funds are wanted. It is earnestly hoped that all interested in this matter will do their utmost to further the scheme of the "Castle Week" by their personal patronage and assistance, and thus make the whole affair a success."

Mr. F. H. DICKINSON, in moving the adoption of the Report, congratulated the Society upon the work which it was doing, and upon the purchase of Taunton Castle. He confidently expected that, though there was still some pecuniary difficulty, the Society would be able to surmount it. He referred to the proposed publication of the Indexes of the Registers of the Dean and Chapter, and advocated also the preparation and publication of Indexes of the Bishops' Registers. He pointed out the great value which these documents had, as they were in almost unbroken succession from about 1310 down to the present time. He hoped that a Committee would be appointed to consider how the Indexes which had been prepared might be published, and, if necessary, to make alterations in them.

The BISHOP agreed with Mr. Dickinson as to the value of efficient Indexes to the Wells Records, and, on his Lordship's motion, a Committee was formed, consisting of Mr. F. H. Dickinson, Mr. J. Batten, Mr. T. Serel, and the Hon. Secretaries, with power to add to their number, to take such steps as might appear advisable to them to publish by subscription or otherwise Indexes to the Wells Records.

Mr. T. SEREL, in seconding the adoption of the Report, brought under notice the state of the Chapel and Hall of the Vicars' Close at Wells. The former, "one of the architectural gems of the city," was, he said, in a deplorable state of decay and dilapidation, so much so that, if prompt steps were not taken, it must inevitably share the fate of other rare examples of mediæval art which had disappeared in Wells within the last few years. After briefly sketching the history of the Close, and its possessors, the Vicars Choral, he proceeded to say that, within

the previous three or four months the Vicars had rejected a voluntary proposition to thoroughly repair and restore the Chapel and Hall, at a cost of nearly £600. He stated that it seemed to him that the Vicars altogether forgot their legal obligations, as well as the obligations they owed to their founders and benefactors; they forgot that they held their Close more in the character of *trustees*, with incident conditions and responsibilities, than as absolute owners. Mr. Serel continued, "It is but fair to say that the Vicars themselves cannot undertake so costly a work, but when the means were ready, without resorting to their own exchequer for a penny, it is unaccountable that the generous offer made to them has been so unceremoniously and so inconsiderately rejected." He then suggested that a representation should be made to the Vicars, either direct, or through the Lord Bishop as their "Visitor," who had power to deal effectually with the subject. He then spoke of another matter of almost equal importance to the preservation of the Close. It appeared from his remarks that the Vicars had a few years ago surrendered their estates to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in consideration of an annual money payment. This had given the Commissioners power to alienate, absolutely and for ever, the houses in the Close, except those which were retained for the present body of Vicars. In this way the Close, so valuable and interesting in its connexion with the Cathedral, might be wholly severed from the church, and its ancient characteristic feature obliterated to suit the tastes and conveniences of its new owners. To avoid this danger, as well as to consider the question of repairing the Chapel and Hall, Mr. Serel suggested the appointment of a Committee with powers to act in the name and on behalf of the Society, quoting the words of Mr. Freeman

in one of his lectures on the history of the Cathedral, when referring to the destruction of old buildings in Wells, "We must keep a sharp eye about us, or this city of ours may lose, almost without knowing it, the distinctive character which makes it unique among the cities of England."

The BISHOP said that he had not yet made up his mind exactly as to the course to pursue, but they would agree with him that the powers of a visitor ought to be exercised with the greatest reservation. He was not by any means indifferent to the condition of the Chapel of the Close. During the last twelve months certain negotiations had been going on between the Vicars and those interested in the Theological College, and a part of the plan proposed was the restoration of the Chapel. Whilst these negotiations were going on it was undesirable to exercise visitorial powers, but, if necessary, he should be prepared to take means to put the Chapel in such repair as was necessary for the decent observance of the worship of Almighty God.

Mr. F. H. DICKINSON was glad to hear the statement of the Bishop. What Mr. Serel wanted, however, was that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners should not sell the property in the Close by lots and bits, so as to deprive it of its distinctive character. He proposed the appointment of a Committee, consisting of the Bishop, Canon Meade, the Members of Parliament for the division of Mid-Somerset, Mr. W. A. Sanford, Mr. T. Serel, Mr. F. H. Dickinson, and the Rev. W. Hunt, as secretary, to secure the preservation of the buildings of the Close, and to forward any plans for judicious restoration.

Mr. MEADE KING asked what powers the Committee would possess.

Mr. F. H. DICKINSON said that they would have no

powers beyond that of conferring with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in order to obtain a more definite promise from them that they would not part with the reversions.

Mr. MEADE KING did not think that any benefit would arise from the action of the Committee, and considered that in its appointment the Society was travelling out of its proper province. At the same time, if the meeting considered the appointment necessary, he would not oppose it.

The Committee was appointed as proposed.

The Report of the Council was then declared adopted.

The following FINANCIAL STATEMENT was then presented by the Treasurers :—

The Treasurers in Account with the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society.

Dr. *Cr.*

1873. Aug. 13.	£	s	d
By Balance of former Account	25	0	4
„ Excursion Tickets ...	12	12	6
„ Museum Admission Fees..	22	11	3
„ Entrance Fees	13	10	0
„ Subscriptions	204	0	0
„ Sale of Volumes	3	9	0
„ Donation from Mr. J. Marshall towards purchase of coins	3	11	0
„ Transferred from Castle Purchase Fund, on account of Printing, Postage, &c.	20	0	0
	£304	14	1

1873-4.	£	s	d
To Annual Meeting Expenses, Advertising, &c. ...	26	5	2
„ Repairs, &c.	1	5	6
„ Stationery, Printing, &c. ...	24	11	7
„ Coal, Gas, &c.	14	6	4
„ Curator's Salary (1 year to August 3, 1874)	57	10	0
„ Rent (1 year, to Midsummer 1874)...	30	0	0
„ Insurance	4	1	6
„ Purchase of Books and Specimens	11	17	3
„ Balance of account for printing Vol. XVIII.	96	6	6
„ Illustrations, Photographs, &c.	12	3	6
„ Subscription to Ray Society, 1874	1	1	0
„ Ditto, to Palæontographical Society, for 1874	1	1	0
„ Ditto, to Harleian Society, 1874	1	1	0
„ Postage of Volumes of Proceedings	7	3	8
„ Sundries	1	9	4
„ Postages, Carriage, &c. ...	14	5	4
Balance		12	5
	£304	14	1

H., H. J. & D. BADCOCK, *Treasurers.*

Examined, compared the vouchers, and found correct, Aug. 14th, 1874.

HENRY ALFORD.
R. MEADE KING.

The Report of the Treasurers was received and adopted.

The Vice-Presidents, the Treasurers, and the Hon.

General Secretaries were re-appointed. The Local Secretaries were re-elected, with the addition of the Rev. W. Lyon, the Vicar of Sherborne.

Mr. W. Bidgood was re-elected Assistant Secretary and Curator, and the Rev. W. HUNT, Hon. Secretary, expressed to the Society his sense of the value of Mr. Bidgood's laborious and intelligent services.

The Rev. H. H. WINWOOD proposed that the next Annual Meeting should be held at Frome, and that Lord Cork should be asked to accept the office of President on that occasion.

Mr. W. A. SANFORD said that he had hoped that the Society would meet at Dulverton, as there was a fine field for work in that neighbourhood.

Mr. F. H. DICKINSON seconded the proposition made by Mr. Winwood, and it was carried unanimously. At the same time it was resolved that, if possible, a meeting should be held at Dulverton in 1876.

Seven gentlemen were then elected by acclamation as new Members of the Society, the rule requiring previous notice being suspended for the occasion.

The PRESIDENT then delivered his