

FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society,

Held at the Assembly Rooms, Bath, September 21st, 1852.

W. H. P. GORE LANGTON, ESQ., M.P., IN THE CHAIR.

THE meeting commenced, as usual, at eleven o'clock, for the transaction of the formal business. The President, Vice-Presidents, general Secretaries, and the district or local Secretaries, were severally re-appointed. The Worshipful the Mayor of Bath (for the time being) was elected a Vice-President. A. C. Ramsay, Esq., F.R.S., C. C. Babington, Esq., F.R.S., F.L.S., and Professor Owen, were elected as honorary members. Thomas Patton, Esq., Dr. Metford, and Dr. Kelly, were newly elected, and W. F. Elliot, Esq., W. E. Gillett, Esq., and Rev. Dr. Everard, were re-elected, members of the Committee.

The Rev. W. R. CROTCH read the Report of the Committee, as follows:—

“The Committee, in presenting this, the Fourth Annual Report, have the satisfaction of announcing the accession of 105 members since the last published list.

This fact is gratifying, not only because it evinces the growing interest taken in the proceedings of the Society, and justifies the anticipations of those who called it into existence, but because it will be impossible to follow out satisfactorily the numerous fields of research and investigation which this county offers, without such an increase of subscriptions as they trust they are now justified in looking forward to.

“The cost of publishing the Annual Volume of Proceedings, together with the constant expenses of the museum, absorb so much of the Society’s income, that little is left for other and most desirable purposes. Hence when an opportunity offered for the Society to become purchasers of the Williams Geological Collection, it was found necessary to raise the amount by an independent subscription amongst the members and others, by which means this valuable collection of specimens and maps is deposited in the Society’s museum. It will not be necessary for your Committee to enter into detail regarding the important contents of this collection, since Mr. Baker has kindly undertaken to read an account of it before the meeting.

“The Committee feel that it would be superfluous in them to call attention to the interesting papers contained in the Volume of Proceedings just published ; but they cannot refrain from congratulating the Society on being the means of bringing such an amount of valuable information regarding the county of Somerset into a distinct and condensed form; since, had it not been for the Society, it is probable that many of the papers would never have been written, or they must have been sought for and separated from the contents of some periodical or general publication.

“The delay which has attended the issuing of this volume has been a great cause of regret to the Committee, but it was wholly unavoidable. The illustrations of such volumes as this, while they are the life of the work, are a serious drain upon the funds of the Society, so that the Committee cannot express too strongly their sense of the courtesy of those gentlemen who have aided them, particularly of B. Ferrey and E. A. Freeman, Esqrs., who have supplied the views of Wrington Church, and the sculptures of St. Cuthbert’s. An arrangement has been entered into with the publisher, by which the Society is freed from the encumbrance of the remaining stock of its publications, and the inconvenience of having to dispose of them in retail.

“The examinations on Worle Hill, Weston-super-Mare, a full account of which is given in the paper by the Rev. F. Warre, are being continued, through the kindness of Mr. Pigott, the owner of the property, under the superintendence of Mr. Warre.

“The *Conversazione* evening Meetings of the Society, at Taunton, were resumed during the winter months, with manifestly increased interest on the part of the members and their friends. To prevent any possible misunderstanding on this subject, the Committee beg to repeat that none of the expenses of their meetings are suffered to trench upon the general funds of the Society.

“In closing this Report, the Committee have the pleasure of acknowledging various donations to the museum, of important books and objects of scientific value, both in the department of Natural History and of Archæology; and they cannot but feel, with such a spirit abroad, the Society must succeed in its object, of becoming a public benefit to the county and kingdom.”

burial, human bones and black mould being discovered in a small stone trough or coffin. The rev. reader, at the conclusion of the paper, made allusion to the frequency of the discovery of stone coffins in the neighbourhood of Bath.

Mr. C. E. DAVIS read a paper containing some judicious remarks on Church Restoration.

Mr. W. STRADLING made some remarks on relics which he had secured in the neighbourhood of his residence.

The morning meeting was followed by the Ordinary.

The Evening Meeting.

Mr. W. BAKER read an interesting paper on the Williams Museum, which has recently been purchased by the Society. The paper first enumerated the contents of the museum originally possessed by the Society, and then proceeded :—

“It is now my pleasing task to speak of the large and highly interesting addition to our museum lately obtained, viz., the geological collection of the late Rev. David Williams, of Bleadon, which was procured by means of a liberal subscription, raised amongst the friends of this Society. Some of the most striking specimens are now set in frames, and displayed on the walls of the museum ; and thousands of fossils are stored away in drawers and boxes, to be exhibited as we can procure proper cases for the purpose. Perhaps the most valuable part of this collection is the great store of Palæozoic fossils, from West Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall, which, after amply furnishing the Society’s museum, will supply several of our national museums with numerous required

species, and will, I trust, help us to the means of displaying our collection to good advantage.

“Many of these fossils of the ancient strata are figured in Professor Phillips’s ‘Illustrations of the Ordnance Survey of Cornwall, Devon, and West Somerset,’ and many are unique. The collection contains other interesting Palæozoic fossils, from different parts of the kingdom, as well as numerous species from the Mountain Limestone of Mendip, from the Coal Measures, the Lias, Oolites, Green Sand, Chalk, Tertiary beds, and other strata.

“The specimens displayed on the walls of our museum are *ichthyosaurus tenuirostris*, *intermedius*, *communis*, parts of the huge *platiodon*, and a large and almost unrivalled *plesiosaurus dolichodirus*, which was found near Watchet. Besides these, there are numerous portions of saurians of the different species. One of our specimens is an infant *tenuirostris*; another has the sclerotic, the bony ring, beautifully preserved, one part of which laps down on what appears to be the crystalline lens; another has two masses of food preserved between the ribs; and one is especially interesting, being the identical *tenuirostris* represented on plate 9, fig. 1, of Dr. Buckland’s ‘Bridgwater Treatise.’

“Most of these Saurians were obtained by the late Mr. Williams, from the Lias quarries of Street, near Glastonbury.

“A very important part of the Williams collection is the multitude of remains of animals from the bone caverns of Mendip. Some of the caverns were explored at the expense of Mr. Williams, and he was enabled to procure good and abundant specimens to supply the museums of London, Oxford, Bristol, etc., besides retaining the large collection which now enriches the museum of this Society.

We have bones and teeth of the rhinoceros, elephant, wolf, fox, hyæna, tiger, bear, buffalo, stag, deer, horse, hog, and many other animals. The occurrence of vast accumulations of bones in the caverns of Banwell, Bleadon, Hutton, and elsewhere, is a circumstance of great interest, and, I think, not satisfactorily accounted for by all that has been written on the subject.

“Most of the species of these huge creatures are now not only removed from England, but are altogether extinct. It is difficult to picture to our minds our rural hills and vallies, much more so the sites of our populous towns and cities, thickly occupied by hippopotami, rhinoceri, elephants, lions, tigers, wolves, hyænas, bears, boars, etc., although there can be no reason to doubt that these animals were once denizens of our beautiful and peaceful county.

“With this collection, the Society came into possession of an important unpublished work, by the late Mr. Williams, on the Geology of Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall. It is a work of great research, and contains new views of the order of stratification in the western counties. The manuscript book is accompanied by Mr. Williams’s field maps of the counties, geologically coloured, and large and extensive diagrams of the district in various directions, with the strata numbered, so that the Palæozoic fossils, which are also numbered to correspond with the numbers on the diagrams, can be readily referred to their proper beds.

“The interest evinced by the public, encourages confidence in the steady progress of the Society, and its museum.”

Mr. DICKINSON said that he was one of those gentlemen who had assisted in obtaining the museum, and it

was on the understanding that the Society should retain such portions of it as would be useful and interesting to the county, but that the remainder should be sold to other museums, to obtain the means for supplying the Society with things which they needed for the proper display of the museum. A hint had, however, been thrown out that some difficulty had arisen in taking this course. He begged to ask Mr. Baker if this were really the case.

Mr. BAKER said there would be no difficulty whatever in carrying out the object sought. He had a letter in his pocket, which he had received since he had been in Bath, announcing that a gentleman would visit the museum on the part of the Museum of Practical Geology, to purchase articles of which there were duplicates. He (Mr. Baker), with the valuable assistance of Mr. Moore, had selected the species which he thought ought not to be parted with to any Society. The directors of the Museum of Practical Geology had been informed that they could not have any specimen of which the Society did not possess a duplicate. (Hear.) The authorities of the British Museum, he might add, had applied to purchase the duplicates of the Society, also the Cambridge Museum, and a private gentleman. The reply of the Society had invariably been that only those articles of which there were duplicates, would be disposed of. He was glad to say, too, that such was the liberal feeling displayed by the authorities in London, that the Society would obtain the means, by the sale of duplicates, not only of fitting up their museum, but of adding many rich and valuable specimens which it did not now possess, and thus carrying out the designs of the Society, to increase the importance of the collection.

Mr. C. MOORE read a paper on the Palæontology of the Middle and Upper Lias, which is given in Part II.

A paper on the Fungi of Somersetshire, by Mr. C. E. BROOME, was read by the Rev. W. R. CROTCH, who took the opportunity of exhibiting a series of beautiful illustrations of fungi, and added some further information. (See Part II.)

The evening's proceedings terminated with a *Conversazione*, at ten o'clock, in the Octagon.

Second Day.

Wednesday, September 22nd, 1852.

THE proceedings were resumed at half-past ten o'clock, when Mr. MARKLAND was requested to preside.

The first Paper read was by Mr. FREEMAN, in continuation of that presented by him at the last meeting of the Society, on the Perpendicular Churches of Somersetshire, which is given in Part II.

The Rev. F. WARRE followed with a Paper by Mr. H. G. TOMKINS, containing remarks on some Cornish Hill Castles, as compared with the ancient fortress on Worle Hill, instancing various points of resemblance, and referring the probable date of both to the Celtic period. He then alluded to the investigations which have been carried on at Worle Hill, since the publication of the Society's former volume. During the last spring, he had opened several hut circles, with great success. Various articles of pottery had been found, and three vessels had been thoroughly restored. Amongst other articles discovered were remains of burnt grain, wheat, barley, and a small pea; many bones of a large bird; a ball and socket joint, apparently of a human subject; a piece of horn shaped like the mouth-piece of a musical instrument; a heap of corn, burnt more at the

top than at the bottom, showing that the fire came from above. Several skeletons had also been found in a position in a pit, which showed they had either fallen in, or were carelessly thrown in. Fragments of Roman remains had been removed from a spot five or six yards in diameter, sufficient to fill thirteen or fourteen large baskets. These were the only remains of undoubted Roman date, which had been discovered. The constructors of these curious habitations appeared to have been unable to work through the solid limestone, and had, therefore, followed the strata of the stone. He was of opinion that the huts now opened were, neither granaries, nor tombs, nor permanent residences, but simply places of shelter in time of danger; that the roofs had been destroyed by fire; that the place was not occupied after the Roman invasion; that a very considerable time elapsed between the destruction of the roofs and the deposits of the skeletons; and that a desperate struggle once took place there. (Some of the most curious of the above articles are figured in the accompanying plates.) Much remained for further investigation, which he trusted to be able to follow up in the course of the next summer.

At noon the company proceeded on an Excursion to Hinton Abbey, Farleigh Castle, and Norton St. Phillips. At Farleigh, the excursionists were hospitably entertained at the Vicarage, by the Rev. S. CLARKE, who read a Paper on the Antiquities of the Castle, by the Rev. J. E. JACKSON, which is given in Part II.

At Norton, Dr. TUNSTALL gave a short description of the old Inn and the Church. (For the former of these, see the frontispiece).

After a dinner at the York House, the Meeting was resumed at the Assembly Rooms, at Eight o'clock.

Third Day.

Thursday, September 23rd, 1852.

AFTER an early Meeting at the Assembly Rooms, the company proceeded on an Excursion, to Wellow, where Mr. PAUL read a short Paper on the Church, prepared by himself and the Rev. J. E. JACKSON; thence, to the old Manor House, the Keltic Kist, and through the valley to the opposite side of the hill, to the tessellated pavement, displayed for the occasion by the kindness of Mr. Gore Langton, who, at Newton Park, hospitably entertained the party to a collation.

After the repast, Mr. C. E. DAVIS read a Paper on the Castle of St. Loe, or de Sancto Laudo, which, dating prior to the Conquest, passed from the possession of the Bishops of Coutances to that of William de Sancto Laudo, the representative of a family who came from St. Loe, in Normandy, with whose descendants it remained nearly 200 years. The present remains are interesting.

On Friday morning a Paper on the Roman Antiquities of Bath was read by the Rev. H. M. SCARTH—Mr. BRITTON in the chair. It is given in part II.

The CHAIRMAN, in putting the vote of thanks to the able Author, read a letter respecting the ancient British and other remains preserved in the collection at Stourhead, and which, it is to be feared, is but little known.