



PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
DURING THE YEAR
1898.

THE fiftieth annual meeting of the Society was held at the Municipal Hall, Taunton, on Tuesday, August 30th. The proceedings commenced at twelve o'clock with a reception by the Mayor (Ald. WM. POTTER).

The PRESIDENT opened the meeting by saying that probably some of them were surprised to see him occupying the chair at their annual meeting for the second time in succession, but, unfortunately, the committee to whom was deputed the duty of electing the President of the year, had unanimously conferred that position upon him again. He was sure that in all parts of Somerset the greatest regard was felt for the town of Taunton, and he had never known a chief magistrate who was more anxious to maintain the honour and position and glories of the town of Taunton than the present Mayor.

The MAYOR, on behalf of the inhabitants of the town, heartily welcomed the members of the Society in their midst, and he hoped the many historic associations with which Taunton abounded would be of great interest and afford equal pleasure to them. He was glad to be able to welcome the Society in that hall, which had been recently restored by the Town Council—a hall which he was quite sure would not be

devoid of interest to them, as it was once a schoolroom in connection with the school founded by Bishop Fox of Winchester, in the year 1522. His worship concluded by expressing the hope that the members would favour the Mayoress and himself with their company at luncheon in the Castle Hall.

Report.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE presented the Annual Report of the Council as follows :

“Your Committee have the pleasure of presenting their fiftieth annual report, and of congratulating the Society at being, after an existence of nearly half-a-century, in a very prosperous condition.

“The first meeting of the Society was held at Taunton, on the 26th Sept. 1849. The report in your first volume of *Proceedings* does not say *where*, so it may be as well to place it on record that it was held in the Assembly Room at the Market House.

“It was then stated that there were 250 members, and the usual difficulty arose as to Somerset having no common centre. If the phrase is permissible, the county had, as it has still, several centres, and it was almost necessarily determined that the annual meetings should be migratory.

“*Now* the Society consists of 637 members, and if the county is still, by force of circumstances and railways, without a common centre, your Society is possessed of a noble habitation in the ancient Castle of Taunton, which, thanks to the liberality of its members and others, it acquired twenty-four years ago.

“The annual meetings are, however, still migratory, and are held so far as possible as fairly to cover the whole of the county. In this manner your Society has, since its formation, visited Taunton five times ; Bridgwater four times ; Wells four times ; Bath three times ; Glastonbury twice ; Langport twice ; Frome twice ; Wellington twice ; Crewkerne twice ; Shepton

Mallet twice; Weston-super-Mare twice; Yeovil twice; Bruton twice; Clevedon twice; Ilminster once; Williton once; Axbridge once; Wincanton once; Chard once; Burnham once; Minehead once; Castle Cary once; Dunster once; and Wiveliscombe once.

“ Meetings have, for the convenience of visiting localities, been held outside the borders of the county on four occasions—twice at Bristol, 1867 and 1887, and twice at Sherborne, 1874 and 1896:

“ It may be said, ‘ What is the use of visiting places over and over again ;’ but it takes some twenty years to visit the whole of the county, and in that time there is practically a new generation sprung up—only sufficient of the older members are left to hand down the traditions to the younger.

“ Since your last meeting, sixty-one new names have been added to your list of members. The loss by deaths and resignation has been sixteen, leaving a net gain of forty-five.

“ The debit balance on your Society’s General Account at the end of 1886, was £9 6s. 9d. This has now been wiped out, and at the end of 1897 (to which date your annual accounts are made up) there was a balance of £76 16s. 10d. in favour of the Society. But in neither of these cases was the cost of the volume of the Society’s *Proceedings* for the year then expired—£100, more or less—taken into account. The accounts for the current year will, however, show an ample provision for this liability.

“ The cost of volume XLIII (for 1897) has been:—Print and binding, £81 5s. 0d.; illustrations, £14 5s. 3d.; postages of volumes, £8 0s. 0d.; total, £103 10s. 3d.

“ The debit balance of the Castle Restoration Fund has again been reduced—from £44 11s. 9d. at the end of 1896 to £39 7s. 8d. at the end of 1897. Considerable repair is urgently necessary. Various work has been done from time to time where absolutely unavoidable, and some temporary measures adopted for rendering the Great Hall clean and

available for use. But as the measures taken were, from want of funds, of a very minor character, your Committee determined on laying the facts before the members and County generally, and appealing for subscriptions towards more general and effectual work. Such appeal was issued in April last, and has so far resulted in contributions (including £25 from your President) of £351. In addition to this, your Committee have received notice from the executors of the late Col. Pinney—who was at all times a warm supporter of your Society—that he, by his will, left a legacy of £300 to be applied for the repairs of the Castle. This amount will form a very welcome addition to the Fund, but the buildings are very extensive, and a good deal of the work is of an urgent character. Your Committee hope, therefore, that further subscriptions will be sent in with as little delay as possible.

“The Castle House still remains void. The purpose for which the adjoining premises are used is very detrimental to the Society’s property.

“The number of visitors to the Museum in 1897 was 5,236, as against 4,610 in 1896 ; a very satisfactory increase of 626. It may fairly be anticipated that when the Great Hall can be made available for the proper display of the Society’s large collections, there will be a very great increase in the attendance.

“The Index to Collinson has been very satisfactorily completed by Messrs. Barnicott and Pearce, and is in the hands of the subscribers.

“The Index to the Society’s *Proceedings*, volumes XXI to XL inclusive, compiled by Mr. Elworthy, is now ready for distribution to the subscribers. The printing of the Bibliography of Somerset, by Mr. E. Green, F.S.A., is also proceeding in due course.

“The Library is gradually increasing as opportunity and funds permit. The exchanges with other societies are kept up to date. The Society has long been in want of a set of *Archæologia*—almost a first necessity in the library of such a

Society. Until recently it contained only some ten volumes, part of the Serel Collection. A further twenty-nine volumes have this year been added by the gift of your Hon. Secretary, Lieut.-Col. Bramble, to whom your Committee have expressed their cordial thanks. If members or others would kindly examine their 'duplicates,' and contribute any which they may be able to spare, the set might easily be completed, or the cost of completing it brought more within the means of the Society. A list of volumes wanted to complete this and other sets will be furnished on application to the Curator.

"The following are among the books relating to the county acquired during the year: "Somerset Towers"; "The Cornish Drama," by Edwin Norris; "The Note Book of the Tristram Risdon"; "The Year Book of Edward III," vol. I; Barrett's "Somersetshire"; Trask's "Norton-sub-Hamdon"; Williams' "Somerset Mediæval Libraries"; and several printed "Acts" relating to roads, etc.

"The Society was, in November, 1881, presented by Miss Atherstone with the valuable oil painting, by the well-known John Martin, of the Coronation of Queen Victoria. This had been from the first somewhat out of order, and the costly frame was broken and dilapidated. The picture has, during the last year, been put into thoroughly good condition and the frame repaired and re-gilt at the sole—and considerable—expense of our Vice-President, Mr. H. Duncan Skrine, who occupied the chair on the occasion of our last Bath meeting. Your Committee feel that the best thanks of the Society are due to him. The picture has been removed from the Great Hall, and is now displayed in the Upper Museum, where it is less liable to injury.

"The Photographic Record Committee have been actively at work during the past year. Their report will be presented to you.

"Your Committee have taken into consideration the amount at which the buildings and collections were insured against fire, and have deemed it necessary to make substantial increases.

“The title deeds relating to the various properties have been scheduled and placed in a box deposited with the Society’s bankers.

“Under the rules which you adopted at your Minehead meeting, in 1889, two branch societies have been formed in the county, both of which are doing good service, by keeping up the interest of not only their associates but the inhabitants generally of their respective localities, in the preservation of objects of antiquarian interest—a matter of the deepest importance, when it is remembered that their injury or destruction is, as a rule, not attributable to mere wantonness but to ignorance of their value. The elder of the branches—the northern—has given special attention to the preparation, by those most competent to do so in the different localities, of parochial histories. Flax Bourton, Tickenham, and Barrow Gournay have already been issued, and we are informed that others are in preparation. Your Committee venture to recommend such work as being in many respects of superior value to mere detached papers. The other—the Axbridge—branch is also about to issue a volume of *Proceedings*.

“Your Committee regret to have to record the death of the Right Hon. the Lord Carlingford, K.P., who since the year 1889 had filled the office of Patron of your Society. The state of his health had for some years prevented his taking any personal part in your meetings, or in the work of the Society; but he acted as its President for two consecutive years, 1884-5, and long took an active interest in its welfare. The vacancy caused by his death in the office of Patron should be filled up at this Annual Meeting. Under Rule ii the election is for life.

“Your Committee also regret to report the death, at the age of ninety-two, of Col. Pinney, an original member of your Society, and one of your Vice-Presidents, who so long back as the year 1853 filled the position of President at your Yeovil meeting. His great age had prevented his attendance at our meetings for many years past, and to a large number of our

younger members he was unknown ; but in bygone years he rendered the Society good service, and in many ways promoted its objects. . By his will, as already stated, he left the liberal legacy of £300 towards the repair of the Castle, but your Society was previously indebted to him for rebuilding the staircase turret to the Exchequer Tower, and also for the piece of garden ground at the N.E. corner of the Society's property.

“The late Mr. Henry Alford, L.S.A., F.R.C.S., died on the 29th June last, in his ninety-second year, ‘from old age.’ He also was an original member of our Society, and ever since 1859—thirty-nine years—had been an elected member of your Committee. So long as his health and strength permitted he was a most regular and useful attendant at our meetings, and he never lost his interest in the Society or its pursuits. Your Committee feel great regret in recording his death.

“The Right Hon. Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, Baronet and Privy Councillor, was one of the original Vice-Presidents of your Society, being at its inception a resident in the county. But his work was more especially devoted to public business of a different, and it may be a more important, character than that of your Society, and left little time for archæological pursuits. None the less, your Committee desire to express their regret at the loss of so valuable a life.

“The Very Rev. Dr. Jex-Blake, Dean of Wells, has, ever since he came into the Diocese in 1891, been a regular attendant at the meetings of your Society, and has on numerous occasions been of material assistance to us ; your Committee have added his name, as well as that of Bishop Hobhouse, an old and very valuable member, to the list of Vice-Presidents, which will be brought before you for confirmation in the usual course.

“On the occasion of your Bridgwater meeting, Professor Burrows, Chichele Professor of Modern History at Oxford, was kind enough to contribute a valuable paper on Admiral Blake. In consideration of his eminence as an historian, your Committee recommend that he be invited to allow his name to

be added to the list of 'Honorary and Corresponding Members,' under Rule xiii."

Mr. HOBHOUSE, M.P., in moving the adoption of the report, said that for the last fifty years the Society had laboured, and laboured successfully, to foster an interest throughout the county in all that was ancient, curious, rare, and beautiful. It had laboured to increase the knowledge of its members, and of the outside public in their county history, buildings, architecture, and works of any kind. He could not help thinking that if at this day there were many more Somersetshire men and Somersetshire women who felt interested in those great and elevating subjects than there were fifty years ago, when that society was first formed in Taunton, they owed not a small debt to the labours of that Society. He sincerely hoped that the support given to them throughout the county during the past fifty years would not grow less, but would steadily increase. They had just been reminded that their members, who were 250 on the occasion of the first meeting, had now become over 600, but that to his mind was a small proportion of the people who ought to be interested in its efforts. They had veterans falling out of their ranks, and it was necessary that the gaps should be filled. Although he came from the east of the county, he recognized that no more appropriate headquarters could be found for the Society than the building which now belonged to it, and which was justly denominated its noble habitation. Mr. Hobhouse went on to speak of the necessity of a good county history being prepared, and said that they wanted someone to bring together all the *disjecta membra* in the shape of papers, parish histories, &c., into one learned and at the same time readable work. He expressed the opinion that archæological subjects had during the past few years rather overshadowed those relating to natural history. In conclusion, he said that the best thanks of the Society were due to Col. Bramble and the Rev. F. W. Weaver, the hon. secretaries, for their services.

Prebendary BULLER, vicar of North Curry, in moving the adoption of the accounts, said they could heartily congratulate themselves on the statements which had just been read. Having had many years' experience of the extraordinary business capacity of their friend and treasurer, there was no necessity for him to make any remarks on the figures presented.

Dr. WINTERBOTHAM seconded the resolution, and only hoped that the balance in their favour would not remain as a balance, but would be spent in promoting the various works of the Society. He congratulated the President on entering upon his second year of office, a compliment due to him for the admirable way in which he discharged the duties last year, and for the hospitality he showed on that occasion.

The resolution was carried.

The PRESIDENT proposed the election of the Earl of Cork and Orrery as patron of the Society, in the place of the late Lord Carlingford, whom he described as one of his most intimate friends for the last fifty years. It had been his pleasure to meet Lord Cork in a great number of capacities, and he could not recollect that at any time he had not seen him distinguish himself in every one of them. He might say, in the words of the Latin author, *Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*.

Mr. H. D. SKRINE seconded, and said there was not a man in the county they could have chosen more fit for the office.

The motion was adopted.

The Rev. Preb. ASKWITH proposed the re-election of the officers of the Society, with the addition of the Dean of Wells, and Bishop Hobhouse to the list of vice-presidents.

Dr. NORRIS seconded.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE said that as regarded spending money, he was expressing the views of the committee when he said that they were prepared to spend the whole of it, and as much more as the public liked to give them. There was this difficulty, with such a big building as they had there it was difficult

to spend a little money ; they wanted a great deal more than they had really got.

The resolution was carried.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE read a letter from Lord Cork, who expressed his regret at being unable to attend and enclosed a cheque for £10 towards the Restoration Fund. The Dean of Wells, who was in Scotland, and Canon Church, who had been called away to Belfast, also sent letters regretting their inability to be present.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER presented a list of new members of the Society (sixty in number) and proposed that they be elected. He mentioned that when the Society met in Taunton in 1872, they had a membership of 370 and twenty-seven new members. Now they had a membership of 592 with sixty new members, making a total of 640.

Preb. HOLMES seconded the election of the new members, and the list was agreed to.

Preb. HOLMES, the Hon. Sec. of the Somerset Record Society, then made a statement as to the position of that Society. He said that it was doing a great work with regard to which Mr. Hobhouse had spoken, viz., towards acquiring a county history. The volume this year which they proposed to issue is the second volume of "Feet of Fines," by Mr. Green. Each volume of the Somerset Record Society cost about £100, and, after receiving money from the subscribers, they had about £7 or £8 in hand for transcriptions. They were financially in a very bad position, and more subscribers were needed. The Society was now searching for the Cartulary of Athelney, which was in existence last century. They had found another cartulary of Muchelney, which confirmed the idea that Muchelney was founded by King Ine. The Society had also obtained, and proposed to issue, a piece of Bishop Giffard's Register. He was only Bishop of Bath and Wells for three or four years and then he went to York. This register had been bound up with the

York register, and it was only a few years ago recognised to be part of the register of Bath and Wells. It had been transcribed and sent to the Somerset Record Society, but for the future they had no plans, because their funds were so low. If they could not increase the number of subscribers, perhaps Mr. Green would come forward again and give them another volume of "Feet of Fines." In conclusion, Preb. HOLMES mentioned that the Rev. E. H. Bates had been appointed honorary secretary in his place.

Mr. C. H. BOTHAMLEY, presented the report of the Photographic Record Council, which was only appointed last year, and the list as yet was only fragmentary. Through various causes little progress had been made in the actual collection of photographs, but promises had been made of a large number of subjects, in various parts of the county.