

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the Year ended December 31st, 1913.

THERE has been considerable activity this year in the gradual development and rearrangement of the Museum collections, which is to a large extent the result of the useful work of the Entomological, Botanical, and Ornithological Sections of the Society. At the same time it should be noted that the work of the past twelvemonth has included a larger amount of secretarial labour and business details connected with the Society's welfare than in any previous year. The agenda papers and minute books of the Council, the various Committees—including the Museum and Library, the Building, and Editorial Committees,—the Natural History Sections of the Society, and the Glastonbury Abbey Excavation Committee, show an ever increasing growth of interest in the work and purposes of the Society. The preparation of the volume of *Proceedings* for the press and its distribution, the issue of occasional extra publications, the upkeep of the Library, the correspondence with members and affiliated societies, and the keeping of the accounts of the Society, alone absorb a large proportion of the Curator's time. After the work arising from all the above is properly carried out, but little time remains—perhaps not more than 25 per cent.—for the improvement and development of the Museum, which is one of the largest in the South of England. First attention is always given to new acquisitions, their preservation, cataloguing, and labelling.

A full account of the acquisitions to the Museum and Library is given in the following pages. In the former de-

partment the most important addition is the collection of Charms and other specimens (with the four cases in which they are now shown in the Coin Room) bequeathed by the late Mr. F. T. Elworthy, F.S.A., of Wellington, at one time the editor of the Society's *Proceedings*. Included in the bequest is a valuable manuscript catalogue of the collection, which, it is hoped, may be published some day. Archæological excavations have also been the means of enriching the Museum with antiquities from the Meare Lake Village, Ham Hill, Cadbury Camp, and Barrington. To the collections have also been added several objects of the XIX Century which are now classified as "Bygones."

The most valuable additions to the Library have been the seventeen handsome volumes of Somerset Prints, Portraits, Drawings and Maps, presented by Mr. C. Tite; and the new Oxford Dictionary (purchased from the Woodward Fund). The Rev. E. H. Bates Harbin is still doing useful work in connection with the improvement of the Library. In the spring the Committee Room, which is also the Curator's office and the ground floor Library, was thoroughly cleaned, painted and decorated, and in this room many of the books have been rearranged.

A beginning has been made in the proper exhibition of the Society's collections of coins, tokens and medals in the room now partly devoted to them. In the spring of the year the new coin cases were completed and placed in position. When all the coins have been removed from the Norman Keep, more room will be available for the archæological remains from Somerset, which at the present time are much crowded. In the Coin Room leakages in the south windows have caused trouble with the show-cases on the window-ledges, but this has now been remedied; and it is hoped that the bank-notes and medals will no longer suffer from moisture. The arrangement and ticketing of the series of ancient British coins and early currency has been completed.

In the glazed drawers below the coin cases the collections of Lace and Needlework (which have been put away for two years owing to want of space) are now being arranged by Miss L. M. Badcock.

In the Norman Keep the series of British Arms, Armour, Spears, Staves, and Sporting appliances (mostly obtained in Somerset) has been overhauled, cleaned, and re-ticketed, and it will be rearranged in due course. In the next case a small series has been brought together, entitled "Receptacles for Liquid other than Glass and Pottery" (the materials being leather, wood, horn and metal).

On the staircase and elsewhere additions to the framed portraits of Somerset Worthies have been frequent.

In the Great Hall there have been several minor alterations in the arrangement of the collections. Another large plate-glass ebonized case has been added from the Brereton Fund for the Society's collection of Glass, which was until last month shown in a dark case in the Keep. The specimens are grouped under the headings of Nailsea Glass, Somerset; English wine bottles; English beer, mead, and wine glasses of the late XVII and XVIII Centuries; foreign glass; and Roman glass (most of which belongs to the Woodhouse loan collection). The series of glass contains a large number of wine bottles of various capacities, having seals bearing the names or initials of persons for whom they were manufactured. Many of these bottles are dated; the earliest 1714, the latest 1807. Some of them are also inscribed with the name of the place where the owners of the bottles lived. There are also a few pieces of old Venetian, German, and Norwegian glass. The most interesting local specimens are those manufactured at the Nailsea Works, near Clevedon, the glass industry being carried on there from 1788 to 1873. The collection is as yet small but fairly representative. The two finest collections of Nailsea Glass are those of Mrs. Challicom (Clevedon) and Bristol Museum. The former collection was described and

illustrated in *The Connoisseur*, xxx, June, 1911, by H. St. George Gray; it includes a complete history of the works.

Some re-ticketing has been done in the Great Hall, and a large part of the Woodhouse Collection (deposited on loan in 1907) has been labelled and exhibited under the subjects to which the objects refer.

The local botanical specimens are by degrees being arranged and remounted by Mr. T. W. Cowan, F.L.S., and Miss Cowan, and placed in the cabinet now fitted for their proper display.

Mr. H. Doidge has, during the year, been actively engaged upon the arrangement of the type collection of Somerset Lepidoptera in the cabinet provided for the purpose. A map has been attached showing the distribution of the species.

In connection with ornithology, a considerable amount of work has been done in the Great Hall, especially in regard to the recently acquired "Charles Haddon Collection of Somerset Birds," which was purchased for the Museum by subscription (see full particulars in the report of the Ornithological Section). This collection consists of seventy-eight cases of birds, most of which were shot by the late Mr. Haddon. All of them have been cleaned and re-papered, and the ticketing of these cases is now in progress. The cases comprising the general collection of birds and the Bidgood Collection have also been re-papered by the museum assistant. The Section has been responsible for some of the improvements in connection with the bird collections, but much yet remains to be done in this department of the Society's work.

The Entomological Section held its annual meeting at the Castle on February 20th, the Botanical Section on March 8th, and the Ornithological Section on March 12th (besides other smaller meetings for special purposes). The Taunton Field Club held conversaciones for lectures and recitals on January 16th, March 6th, and December 4th.

The Somersetshire Archæological and Nat. Hist. Society at this date consists of 895 members, viz., 883 ordinary members,

ten life members, and two honorary members, the total at the end of 1912 being 877.

The following is a list of the monthly attendances of visitors to the Museum and Library for the year just completed :—

	No. of Members.	Total Visitors.		No. of Members.	Total Visitors.
Jan. ...	148	427	July ...	109	556
Feb. ...	112	310	Aug. ...	99	1289
Mar. ...	153	639	Sept. ...	102	739
Apr. ...	106	428	Oct. ...	136	645
May ...	96	599	Nov. ...	99	285
June ...	111	461	Dec. ...	110	369
Total for the year				1381	6747

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