

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the year ending December 31st, 1909.

ALTHOUGH the objects acquired for the Museum during 1909 are, numerically, rather fewer than for the last two or three years, some of the acquisitions, especially those of archæological and local interest, are of great importance. Foremost among these is the gold torc, or necklet, of the Bronze Age found at Yeovil, which is fully dealt with by the Curator in a paper in the second part of this volume (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LV, 1909). A facsimile of the torc, in silver-gilt, has been made for exhibition, but the original can be seen on application by those specially interested in the discovery.

From excavations conducted by the Curator, additions have been made to the Museum from Charterhouse-on-Mendip and Maumbury Rings, Dorchester ; while another series of antler picks and other objects found in the excavations at Avebury are temporarily exhibited, and the 1907 relics from the Glastonbury Lake Village are still on view in the Society's Museum. Excavations have also accounted for archæological acquisitions from Downend, Preston Plucknett and Portland. "Finds" from quarrying operations on Ham Hill have perhaps not been so numerous this year, but some of the objects from that place, added to the Museum by Mr. Hensleigh Walter during 1909, are of considerable interest.

Of other acquisitions of local interest the Museum has been enriched by a staff of office of the ancient borough of Newport, North Curry, the old coach of the High Sheriff of Somerset, and the Tudor archway of oak removed from the site of the

new Post Office at Taunton. An important deposit is the officer's uniform of the West Somerset Yeomanry, 1833.

The collection of Somerset "pole-heads" or "club-brasses" has grown, chiefly through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Hopkins; and a large amount of permanent ticketing for this series has been done during the year.

Besides the explorations above referred to, this year has seen a continuance of the excavations at Glastonbury Abbey under the direction of Mr. Bligh Bond. Further explorations have also been carried out at Lansdown, and in Wookey Hole, and Mr. Arthur Bulleid has dug two sections at "Ponter's Ball," near Glastonbury.

In addition to the case which has been made for the Yeomanry uniform and the large stand for the Shapwick boat, a case has been provided by the Wick Barrow Excavation and Lecture Fund for the relics found in that tumulus and the model which has now been ticketed in white oil-paint.

A considerable amount of Museum ticketing has been completed during the year, the senior attendant (M. S. Bevan) having now been trained to do useful work in this direction. Besides the ticketing of the "club-brasses" and several miscellaneous specimens, special attention has been paid to the collection of albino birds, the little series illustrating human form in art, and the bronze implements; and at the present time, the objects illustrating the ethnography of the Pacific, etc., are receiving attention. Indeed ticketing is being systematically done with a view to the re-arrangement of the Society's collections when the new rooms are available for their proper exhibition.

The purchase of an iron safe has already proved of service for the safer custody of rare objects temporarily placed in the possession of the Society, and of valuable papers and manuscript records relating to the Society's history and management.

The store rooms of the Society have been cleared of much

rubbish, the contents being sorted and re-arranged to lessen the difficulty of finding objects and papers when required for examination or reference. With the same object in view the unbound files of local newspapers have received much-needed attention.

Early in the year a handbook on "Courts Leet and the Court Leet of the Borough of Taunton," by Mr. H. Byard Sheppard (with illustrations of the staves of office), was published by the Society ; price 1s. ; by post, 1s. 1½*d.* The first edition of the Rev. D. P. Alford's "Short History of Taunton Castle " having become sold out in September, the author prepared a second edition, containing additional information, which has now been published ; price 4*d.* ; by post, 5*d.*

As will be seen from the following pages, the Library has been considerably added to, one of the most important donations being a number of copiously illustrated catalogues and guide books issued by the British Museum, and presented by the Trustees of that Institution.

The inauguration of an Entomological Section of the Society (the first meeting being held at Taunton Castle on October 20th, 1909), has entailed some additional work, one of the most useful results up to the present time being the re-arrangement and cleaning of the cabinets of lepidoptera already the property of the Society, which work is being kindly undertaken by Mr. H. Doidge, of Taunton.

Lectures and conversaziones of the Taunton Field Club were held in the Museum on February 18th, October 7th and December 8th ; and on January 7th, Mr. Bligh Bond lectured on the Glastonbury Abbey excavations of 1908, in aid of the fund for the continuation of that work.

It is with pleasure that we report that the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society at this date consists of 813 members, viz., 802 ordinary members, 8 life members, and 3 honorary members. It is believed that at the present time the Somerset Society is the largest provincial

society having similar aims in Great Britain, although the membership of the Kent and the Sussex societies are very little behind this total.

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.	...	154	566	July	...	110	782
Feb.	...	112	393	Aug.	...	92	1341
Mar.	...	95	394	Sept.	...	116	1066
Apr.	...	96	780	Oct.	...	107	681
May	...	107	588	Nov.	...	89	389
June	...	96	614	Dec.	...	90	464
						1264	8058

On comparing these figures with previous years it is seen that the attendance during 1909 has been the largest yet attained, about 2 per cent. greater than in 1908, and 70 per cent. more than nine years previously.

The totals for the past ten years are as follows :

	No. of Members.	Total Visitors.		No. of Members.	Total Visitors.
1900	1119	4740	1905	1386	7623
1901	943	5047	1906	1248	6889
1902	1275	6696	1907	1460	7724
1903	1118	6844	1908	1655	7902
1904	1074	7421	1909	1264	8058

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Curator of Taunton Castle Museum.*