

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum
for Ten Months, ending October 31st,
1903.

OWING to the publication of vol. XLIX of the *Proceedings* somewhat earlier than usual, it is not possible for this Report to include a summary of work effected in the Museum and Library during 1903, beyond October 31st; so that it cannot be very favourably compared with that of last year. The work of re-arrangement, and the progressive development of the Museum, are being kept well to the front, but much remains to be done before the several series have been systematically treated and more or less permanently arranged and labelled.

In the early spring of the year the Norman Keep, which contains most of the archæological and pottery collections, was practically cleared in preparation for much needed repairs, whitewash, and paint. The wall-cases have been coloured internally; the ceiling stripped of its dirty paper and whitened, which have been the means of providing more reflected light in this unavoidably dark room; the large north-west window and other parts have been painted. The carving in the recess on the south-west side has been re-arranged, and a glazed door fitted in front of a niche in the wall. A mahogany table-case, similar to those along the middle of the room, has been made, to occupy the window-recess on the east. It has been devoted to the relics found at Castle Neroche.

In the Keep, the Stone and Bronze series have been arranged in chronological order, the former also having been ticketed completely. Other series that have been brought together

and arranged are, "Relics from Churches, chiefly Somerset," "Mediæval Encaustic Tiles, XIII—XVI Centuries," and "Athelney Relics." The Pottery and China series is only temporarily arranged, but when finished will occupy the wall-case along one side of the room, illustrating, though somewhat incompletely, the ceramic art from Bronze Age times to the present day. The Keys have been entirely re-ticketed and brought together, with a view of forming a series by themselves; likewise the "Lighting Appliances." The black background to the Saxon Coins and the large series of local Tokens has been replaced by a light bluish-grey tint.

In the Entrance Hall, several minor alterations have taken place: the Rawlinson Butterfly Cabinet, and the White Tailed Eagle from Stolford, have been removed into the Great Hall—the room specially devoted to Natural History—not only to provide more space round the central table, but also to afford a complete view of the portion of the Reredos from St. John's Church, Wellington. The fine oak cabinet containing the Piggot Drawings has been removed upstairs to the "Walter Room," where it is seen, and the drawings referred to, to much greater advantage.

In the Great Hall, all the wall-cases containing the birds have been opened and every specimen has been cleaned, new labels being added in some cases. The pictures, diagrams, miscellaneous cases, etc., at the north-east end of the room have been re-arranged, and this portion of the room presents a much more orderly and cleaner appearance than it did two years ago.

In the "Walter Collection Room" a few additional labels have been added. An exhaustive Guide Book to the "Walter Collection" (59 pp., price 4d.) was first produced for sale to the public on March 2nd, since which time, viz. eight months, two hundred and fifty-three copies have been sold.

Several objects more have been permanently ticketed in the Ethnographical Room, with a view to an entire re-arrangement

of this department when time and funds for new cases permit.

New labels have been introduced in various places throughout the Museum, and several minor alterations have been necessary owing to the introduction of heating apparatus into all portions of the Museum, except the Great Hall, which was previously heated. All the acquisitions made during the year, except the "Dillworth Fox Collection," mentioned in the Annual Report of the Society, p. 2, have been identified and ticketed, and for the most part exhibited in their proper places in the Museum. The Romano-British pottery found by Mr. Walter Raymond at Preston Plucknett has been restored as far as possible.

One month of the Curator's time has been expended in conducting the Castle Neroche excavations and in recording the results of the same (see illustrated paper, Part II).

In the Library Department more work than usual has been accomplished. The "Surtees Library," presented by Lady Chapman in 1889, and consisting of some three thousand volumes, has been catalogued in rough manuscript form, and bound. The arrangement is alphabetical, and the books have shelf numbers. This catalogue is now ready for reference by members of the Society. The cutting of volumes of publications of societies and governmental records, commenced in 1902, has been finished this year. All the books in the Committee Room have been removed from their shelves and dusted. The usual Proceedings of Societies have been bound; and in addition some works have been rebound, including five volumes of *Archæologia*, and Collinson's *History of Somerset* (copy with plates).

As regards the number of visitors to Taunton Castle, very favourable results are maintained. August, 1903, was the record month in this respect, when 1,422 persons passed through the Museum; the record day was also attained in August, viz., on Taunton Flower Show day, August 13th, when 204 persons visited the Museum.

VISITORS TO TAUNTON CASTLE.

	1901		1902		1903	
	Visitors.	Members included.	Visitors.	Members included.	Visitors.	Members included.
January . . .	252	89	298	89	338	86
February . . .	269	126	302	107	308	94
March . . .	306	132	440	103	344	85
April . . .	477	111	437	103	558	82
May . . .	390	87	809	264	438	78
June . . .	329	65	911	70	555	102
July . . .	451	61	816	131	554	85
August . . .	1022	65	1336	86	1422	106
September . . .	583	82	769	81	921	101
October . . .	365	68	492	76	564	97
November . . .	274	77	451	100	—	—
December . . .	329	80	383	71	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—
	5047	943	7444	1281	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—

The large increase in the number of visitors from May to August, 1902, was due to the fact that the "Walter Collection" was opened to the public in May, and owing to its being "Coronation Year," when there were so many festivities going on in Taunton. In the other months, a steady increase in the number of visitors is shown by the above table from 1901 to 1903; but on account of the exceptional influx of visitors from May to August, 1902, it cannot be expected that the total number during 1903 will reach the total of 1902, although it will probably show an advance of some 35 per cent. above 1901.

The total number of visitors from January 1st to October 31st, 1903, has been 6,002, including 916 visits from Members.

It has been resolved by the Committee, that on and after January 1st, 1904, the admission to the Museum on Thursday afternoons (Taunton Early Closing Day) from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

will be reduced from 2d. to 1d. It is hoped that this arrangement will induce more Tauntonians engaged in business to visit the large collections here, of which the county town should be proud. The admission on other days will remain as formerly, viz. 2d., and 1d. all day on Saturday. The whole of the Museum is now heated during the Winter months.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

October 31st, 1903.