

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the year ending December 31st, 1908.

THE Annual Report of the Council of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society for 1907-8, prepared for the Diamond Jubilee and printed in the foregoing pages, is so comprehensive that little remains for me to report in this place, and repetition will not be desirable.

The Library has increased largely, chiefly owing to the arrival of the Somerset Books bequeathed to the Society by the late Mr. W. J. Braikenridge, of Bath. These books have been catalogued. The Library now contains duplicates of a number of Somerset books, second copies being useful for lending to members. But besides these a list of duplicate books, Somerset and otherwise, which are for sale has been prepared, and may be seen on application. The average amount of binding has been done this year, including thirty-three volumes of the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*.

Early in the year an illustrated Guide Book to the Charbonnier Collection of Pewter was issued, which is sold at 6d. (by post, 7d.) Four hundred copies of the Rev. D. P. Alford's *History of Taunton Castle* have been sold this year.

During the Diamond Jubilee year, the extra clerical work consequent on the large increase of members, the labelling of Museum specimens in time for the Taunton meeting, and several alterations in the arrangement of the collections, has rendered it necessary to employ an assistant as well as a Museum attendant. Although this new arrangement has had to be discontinued temporarily, a staff of three must now be

regarded as a permanency, especially in view of the proposed extension of the Museum and Library into the portion of the Castle formerly occupied by the Curator, who took up his residence at Castle House early last April.

This increased space is being utilized temporarily. On the ground floor, a good-sized room, intended eventually for Coins and Medals, has been devoted to the exhibition of the Collection of Needlework and Lace presented by Miss L. M. Badcock. The small rooms adjoining are being used as Museum workshops. The large room above, decorated in Adam style, which is intended for the new Library of the Society, is at present used for the exhibition of the Wilfred Marshall Collection of North American Indians industries, and for lectures (the Great Hall being now too full to be available for the purpose).

In the Great Hall, the John Marshall Collection of Albino Birds has been set up on dull black stands, but they have yet to be labelled. In this room the antiquities found by Mr. A. Bulleid, F.S.A., at the Meare Lake Village near Glastonbury in July last, are displayed. On temporary exhibit are the series of red-deer antler picks found at Avebury and Maumbury Rings during the year. The large collection of Somerset "Pole-heads" or "Club-brasses" has been added to considerably and chiefly by donation. The fine hoard of bronze implements found at Wick Park, near Stogursey, and the reputed watch of Abbot Whiting of Glastonbury, have attracted much attention.

At least five series of excavations have been conducted during the year in Somerset, the foremost in importance being the interesting discoveries made by Mr. Bligh Bond at Glastonbury Abbey (fully reported upon in this volume). Other excavations have taken place at the Meare Lake Village (trial digging), Norton Camp, Lansdown, and Downend—all of which will be recorded in due course.

The Axbridge Branch of the Society visited the Museum

on September 19th; the Castle has also been visited, for educational purposes, by students attending the Oxford University Extension Lectures (on February 22nd), and by three forms of Bishop Fox's Girls' School (January 31st, December 15th and 16th).

The usual lectures and conversaziones of the Taunton Field Club have taken place in the Museum (February 20th and October 1st). Three lectures were given during the autumn in aid of a Fund for purchasing a case for the relics found at Wick Barrow. The series was as follows: October 22nd, *Excavations at Wick Barrow, near Stogursey*, by the Curator; November 5th, *The Superstitions and Traditions of the North Quantock District*, by the Rev. C. W. Whistler; and November 19th, *Screens and Screenwork in Somerset Churches*, by Mr. F. Bligh Bond. The profit from these lectures amounted to £5 0s. 10d.

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.	...	138	443	July	...	107	673
Feb.	...	97	371	Aug.	...	397	1647
Mar.	...	101	417	Sept.	...	136	960
Apr.	...	98	713	Oct.	...	144	664
May	...	93	528	Nov.	..	171	537
June	...	91	557	Dec.	...	82	392
						1655	7902

On comparing these figures with previous years it is seen that the attendance during 1908 has been the largest yet attained—about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. greater than in 1907, and 67 per cent. more than eight years previously. The admission fee to the Museum on Saturdays has been increased from 1d. to 2d.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY,

*Assist.-Secretary, Som. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Society,
Curator of Taunton Castle Museum.*