

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND  
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
DURING THE YEAR  
1936

---

THE Eighty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society was held at Wells on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, June 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th. The last meeting of the Society at Wells took place in 1909.

### First Day's Proceedings

At 10 o'clock the members met at the Bishop's Barn, in the south of the City, and proceeded *via* Silver Street, St. John's Street and Priest Row to the

### Hospital of St. Saviour

in Chamberlain Street and on the north side of St. Cuthbert's Church. The Rev. Preb. E. B. Cook gave an account of its history and its working, and said the institution was founded for twenty-four men and women by the executors of Bishop Bubwith (1407-24); the chapel was added a few years later by William Gascoigne. Mr. R. S. Bate, hon. librarian at the Wells Museum, exhibited a deed relating to the hospital written soon after its foundation.

Professor A. HAMILTON THOMPSON added some remarks upon the plan of the building. It was a good example of the normal plan of a medieval hospital, found in all European

countries, in which the long hall, with or without aisles, was occupied by the inmates, while at the east end, divided from the hall by a screen, was the chapel, the whole arrangement resembling that of the nave and chancel of a church. The earliest examples of the plan in England were probably the aisled infirmary halls of monasteries, as at Canterbury and Ely. Of the aisled plan the most conspicuous instance was St. Mary's Hospital at Chichester, belonging to the later half of the thirteenth century and still little altered: the Trinity Hospital at Leicester, founded in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, preserved its chapel with aisles and chancel and the arcades of its hall. The unaisled plan, as in the present instance, was very common: a good parallel from this neighbourhood was the small hospital of St. John Baptist at Sherborne (*Proc.*, lxxxii, 26). In all cases the division of the nave into separate chambers was a late arrangement which came in towards the close of the middle ages. In the hospital at Wells the building, as at Browne's Hospital in Stamford, was divided into an upper and a lower floor, with the chapel common to both. A certain amount of variation of plan was to be found, and in some places, as at the hospital of St. Cross, Winchester, the chambers were arranged in collegiate form round a quadrangle, with a common dining-hall on one side. Several foreign examples were also cited, such as the great hospitals of Beaune (Cote-d'Or), the Holy Cross at Toledo and the Holy Spirit at Lubeck, in all of which the main structure was the hall, though some variation was shown with regard to the position of the chapel.

At 11.30 a.m. the members assembled in

### **St. Cuthbert's Church**

The Rev. Preb. E. B. COOK, Vicar, gave a long and interesting address on the Church and its history.

A description of this great Church has been printed more than once in the *Proceedings*, and these were descriptions, too, from the hands of very expert people, but as the years pass the membership of the Society changes and it becomes necessary to say enough to make its story live again.

Perhaps the best way of approach is to regard the Church as a thirteenth-century building which was very largely altered in the fifteenth century. The Church is longer to the west than the thirteenth-century building by the last span of the arcade and the tower, and longer to the east by the lengthened sanctuary which provided an altar-space, and by the building of the sacristy on its north side.

When in the fifteenth century the Church was made loftier the chancel was provided with early Perpendicular pillars and arches. At the west end the great tower was built in the churchyard while yet the old central tower stood at the crossing of the transepts, upheld by the chancel piers and the two flat piers in the nave. West of these, the old piers and arches were taken down carefully. About 8 feet of new work in imitation of the old pillars was built upon the old bases. The piers and arches were put back upon this; the west wall was taken away, and the lofty arcading joined to the great tower by a western arch of Perpendicular design.

The windows were enlarged and re-designed in Perpendicular fashion. Only two Early English windows remain; they are in the middle of the Jesse and in the choir vestry.

Later, but very soon afterwards, the nave-roof was removed, the clerestory windows built and the present fine roof added. The whole work seems to have been done within the fifteenth century, from its beginning in the choir (the building of the tower and east end may be dated between 1410 and 1430) to the raising of the nave, and finally the addition of the clerestory and the flat roof.

The last great change came in the middle of the sixteenth century, when the central tower was taken down, or as some say, fell, and the whole crossing reconstructed. At this time the transept-arches and the chancel-arch were raised, and the tower-space added to the nave. Towards this work the Corporation collected £55 5s. 8d., a sum sufficient to do a great part of the reconstruction.

But the Church had an earlier history before that of the changed thirteenth-century building. The remains of a Norman pillar-piscina may be seen on a shelf in the south-west corner: the stones were found about 1860, built into the walls

of the north transept. There was a small Norman Church here, built between the years 1135 and 1165.

Again there must have been an earlier Church still. It is remarkable that this Church is the only old one in the south country dedicated to St. Cuthbert. That the name of an early Northumbrian hermit should have been chosen by Norman builders is improbable, and the dedication may be a sign of a pre-existing Saxon Church. Miss Arnold-Forster in her book on Church dedications sees a connection between the West Country and St. Cuthbert through Alfred the Great who regarded the saint as his patron and who made many great gifts in his honour, especially in the neighbourhood of Chester-le-Street where the saint's body lay before it was buried at Durham.

Since the last visit of the Society, the south-east chapel has been brought into use; the chapel of St. Cuthbert has been cleared for use as a children's corner; and the north chapel has been restored. This chapel, constructed in the fourteenth century, was formed by building the north wall between the projecting transept and the wall of the treasury, and then opening the chapel into the Church by means of a double arch. A similar method was employed in making the chapel of St. Cuthbert between the projection of the porch and the transept.

The north chapel is the chapel of the Holy Trinity. The Corporation and the burgesses formed the Guild of the Holy Trinity, and the chapel was closely associated with it. The Trinity wardens took part with the Corporation when new local bye-laws were issued, and in the time of Mary and Elizabeth every burgess undertook to be a brother of the Guild of the Blessed Trinity and pay a penny a quarter to its wardens or be deprived of the freedom and privileges of the city. This was probably the continuation of an ancient custom.

On the east wall of the north chapel there exists a fresco<sup>1</sup> beneath the plaster to the north of the empty transept window. There is a description of it in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1848. It is described as of considerable merit, and as repre-

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Mag.*, n.s., xxx, 636; xxxii, 184; xxxvi, 522.

senting Our Saviour in the act of preaching, with an angel above, bearing a shield emblazoned with the five wounds, and sacred monograms running horizontally in rows beneath the figure, and underneath the words 'Salvator Mundi' in large Lombardic capitals. It was uncovered about 1847; however, later on, probably about 1860, it was concealed by the existing rough-cast.

The Treasury is now the choir vestry. After its contents were dispersed in the sixteenth century, it became the city armoury, and later the house of the city fire-engine. The large door was probably made to allow the engine to be rushed across the Church when it was required for use.

The Sacristy formerly was entered only from the Sanctuary. It was built in the early fifteenth century when the great tower was erected. There are two aumbries; over that in the south wall are the remains of a fresco of the Nativity in which the figure of the Blessed Virgin may plainly be traced.

The little room over the porch is interesting. It was once a library, but the books were removed to the Cathedral Chapter Library in 1661, and it was left empty. Next it was used as the city gun-powder store; later as a vestry-room for the out-parish, and it still contains books and papers connected with the bygone system of local government.

The Jesse reredos in the south transept which was built across the thirteenth-century window (and so preserved it), and the reredos in the north transept, older and more beautiful than the Jesse, are two of the most famous features of the Church.

Prebendary Cook also called attention to many of the other treasures preserved in the Church.

## **The Annual Meeting**

After luncheon the members assembled in the small Town Hall, at 2.15 p.m., and were welcomed by the new President, the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells (Dr. St. J. B. Wynne Willson), supported by the Very Rev. Prior E. Horne, F.S.A. (*Chairman of Council*), Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson, F.B.A. (*one of the Vice-Presidents*), Mr. A. W. Vivian-Neal, F.S.A. (*one*

## The Annual Report

Mr. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, Asst.-Secretary, read the Annual Report, which was as follows :—

‘ In presenting the eighty-eighth annual report, the Council wishes to state that since the last meeting, which was held eleven months ago, 49 new names have been added to the list of members and associates. Losses by death and resignation for the year 1935–36 have been 65, and the net loss is 16. The total membership to date is 974, against 990 at the Sherborne Meeting in 1935, 982 at the Wellington Meeting in 1934, and 992 at the Shepton Mallet Meeting in 1933.

‘ The Society has sustained the loss by death of the following members during the period under review : The Rev. A. W. Baynham (1909), who published a short history of Ash Priors, Sir Dennis F. Boles, Bart. (1912), Mr. E. F. Broderip (1911), Miss M. L. Brutton (1920), Mr. E. J. Burrow (1923), the well-known Cheltenham publisher who was born at Wellington, Mr. Charles E. Clayton<sup>1</sup> (1926), who was custodian of Glastonbury Abbey, Mr. F. S. Copleston (1904), Mr. A. M. G. Daniel (1932), Mr. J. C. Davis (1923), Mr. G. M. S. Farmer (1922), Dr. Wm. Fligg (1893), Dr. R. B. Gibson (1924), Mr. A. J. Howard (1922), Mr. R. T. A. Hughes (1913), Mr. V. H. King, A.R.I.B.A. (1918), the Rev. F. E. W. Langdon, of Parrock’s Lodge (1893), the Rev. F. J. Montgomery (1902), rector of Halse, for several years a local secretary of the Society, Miss E. S. Newland (1925), Mr. B. Ormerod (1926), Mr. Roland W. Paul, F.S.A.<sup>1</sup> (1880), the Rev. Prebendary D. J. Pring (1880), a member of the Council for many years, Mr. Clement Salaman (1912), Mr. F. J. Snell (1900), the West-country writer, Dr. W. M. Tapp, F.S.A. (1910), Lady Taylor (1934), Mr. J. G. H. Warren (1918), and the Rev. Prebendary A. P. Wickham<sup>1</sup> (1916), president of the Society’s Entomological Section ; also Miss L. M. Badcock, who, although not a member of the Society, did much for the acquisition and arrangement of the Needlework and Lace Collections ; she and her sister, Miss M. M. Badcock, bequeathed a collection of glass and English china to the Society’s Museum.

<sup>1</sup> See obituary notices in *Proceedings*, vol. lxxxi, for 1935.

‘ There was a balance of £15 15s. 9d. on the Society’s general account at the end of 1934, besides which £125 was put aside towards the production of the *Proceedings*, vol. lxxx for 1934. At the end of 1935 there was a balance in hand of £15 18s. 0d., and in addition £100 which was placed in reserve to meet part of the cost of *Proceedings*, vol. lxxxi for 1935. This volume is overdue, but is on the point of being issued. It is one of the largest of recent years owing to the somewhat exhaustive contribution by Mr. B. W. Tucker on *The Rookeries of Somerset*; a large part of the cost of production is to be defrayed by special grants and by the author.

‘ The total cost of the *Proceedings* for 1935 to the Society will be published as a footnote to this Report in the volume for 1936.<sup>1</sup> Members are reminded that they are invited to contribute to the Publication and Illustration Fund; the donations are now separately acknowledged in the annual volume.

‘ From time to time it has been found necessary to revise the Rules and Bye-laws of the Society to meet the varying conditions of the Society’s development, and you are asked to-day to grant Teacher Members the privilege not only to use the Library but to borrow books from Taunton Castle, as other members are entitled to do. It is proposed also to amplify Rule IX, so that the Council may include representatives from other associated bodies as well as fifteen elected councillors.

‘ It is with much pleasure the Council reports that its application to the Education Committee of the Somerset County Council for aid to the Society as an educational institution and for the better equipment, more rapid development and proper maintenance of the Museum has met with a welcome response, and a letter was received from the Chief Education Officer on the first of January informing the Society’s Council that a grant at the rate of £300 per annum had been made, to begin on 1 April 1936, and to be renewable from year to year at the discretion of the County Education Committee. That Committee has appointed as their representatives on the Society’s Council, Major F. M. E. Kennedy, C.B., and Mr. E. P. Thursfield.

<sup>1</sup> Later in the year it was found that the cost of Vol. lxxxi for 1935 had been £272 5s. 8d.

‘ A similar application for a lesser grant has been made to the Taunton Borough Education Committee, which has reported that it is unable to grant any financial assistance to the Society for the purpose desired.

‘ However, the proper recognition of the Society’s educational work by the Somerset County Council has enabled the Society’s Council to take steps to increase the staff, so that, following upon Mr. Wyndham’s generous gift of buildings, the regular development and re-arrangement of the Museum will be rendered possible without in any way diminishing the other branches of the Society’s activities.

‘ But Museum work has not by any means been at a standstill, for Mr. Wyndham has during the year given £230 to continue the furnishing of the new galleries which he presented nearly two years ago ; and the Society’s general funds have provided an excellent cork flooring for the lower gallery of the new building. In this new wing all the archæological remains found in Somerset from organized excavations and otherwise, will eventually be exhibited, together with similar objects from other parts for comparison.

‘ The work of re-arrangement and cataloguing of the local ‘Geological collections’ by Mr. A. D. Hallam has been continued during the past year, and will soon be completed as far as exhibition space can be provided. There will also be a good deal of geological material available for students, preserved in cupboards and cabinets. The Society is to be congratulated on having now found the means to carry out this long overdue work.

‘ Turning to the Library department, it will be seen in the obituary notice in *Proceedings*, vol. lxxxii, of Mr. Roland W. Paul, F.S.A., that he has bequeathed to the Society, of which he became a member in 1880, his Somerset topographical books and drawings and the sum of £250. The drawings, mostly of heraldic glass and other devices and of architectural subjects, have to be catalogued and made available for reference.

‘ It was at the Minehead gathering in 1931 that the Annual Meeting gave approval to the general policy of handing over, on loan, from time to time as might be considered desirable, documents relating to Somerset in the possession of the Society



to the Somerset Records Committee, Shire Hall, Taunton. The Council later determined to begin this transfer as soon as the Somerset County Council had appointed an archivist. This post was created a few months ago and a number of the later documents have already been sent to the Shire Hall, where the archivist is calendaring them and supplying the Society with a duplicate copy for the library at Taunton Castle.

‘Last November it was resolved by the County Records Committee and confirmed by the County Council that members of the Somerset Archaeological Society would have free access not only to the documents deposited in the muniment rooms by the Society, but to all other documents of the same character preserved in the Somerset Record Office.

‘In this connection it is interesting to report that Mrs. Byard Sheppard, lady of the manor, has permitted the transference of the manuscripts of the Manor of Taunton and Taunton Deane from the Exchequer rooms at Taunton Castle to the Somerset Record office. In January 1936, Mrs. Sheppard’s rights to the Exchequer rooms were conveyed to the Society for £25. The space thus gained will be useful for the expansion of the Society’s ever-growing library.

‘In regard to literary matters, enquiries have been made as to the publication of further volumes of the *Victoria County History, Somerset*, but a large sum will have to be guaranteed before any progress can be made.

‘There is reason to hope that during the next few years a number of short guide-books to Somerset churches, of a reliable character, will be published, and the Society has offered assistance in their compilation, especially in the use of the fine library at Taunton Castle.

‘The Society has been presented with a number of new copies of “The Reclamation of Exmoor”, by C. S. Orwin, published at 10s. 6d., which can be obtained at Taunton Castle at 5s. a copy.

‘The Society naturally takes a keen general interest in the preservation of ancient sites and buildings, but has no funds available for rendering financial assistance. At the present time one feels much concerned as to the fate of the Leper, or St. Margaret’s Hospital (otherwise the Spital Almshouses) at

Taunton, but the Ministry of Health will probably be holding an enquiry.

‘ Negotiations in two or three quarters have been proceeding recently in the hope that Glastonbury Tor and St. Michael’s Tower may be safeguarded for all time, but there is nothing definite to report in this connection at the present time.

‘ Owing to the death of Mr. Charles Clayton, custodian of Glastonbury Abbey, archaeological excavations on that site have had to be suspended for this season. Prior Horne dug some ditches at Camerton in the spring; further work there may solve the problem of their significance.

‘ As will be seen in *Proceedings*, vol. lxxxi, the excavations at the Meare Lake Village in August-September 1935 proved of great interest, especially in the discovery of a well-preserved rectangular arrangement of oak mortised planks. This work will be resumed under the direction of Dr. A. Bulleid and Mr. St. George Gray on 24 August. Donations of varying amounts are now being appealed for. It is hoped that a first volume on the Meare Lake Village will be issued in a year or two.

‘ A week or so before this report was drafted a coroner’s inquest was held at Meare, relative to a discovery made on Shapwick Heath by a peat-cutter on 18 May. The “find”, or hoard, was represented by a small earthenware pot which contained 120 silver coins (*siliquae*) of the late Roman Empire; the pot stood in a handled vessel of pewter and the whole was covered by a pewter bowl and platter superimposed. The greater part of the “find” will be acquired for the Somerset County Museum.

‘ The Natural History Sections of the Society have held their meetings periodically at Taunton Castle, and in the cases of the Botanical and Entomological Sections their usual expeditions. The Ornithological Section has produced a report on Somerset Birds for 1935, covering 47 pages, and reference has already been made to the *Rook Census* in which many of the members of the Society rendered valuable assistance to Mr. B. W. Tucker.

‘ Taunton Castle was visited during 1935 by 8,780 persons, including 1,730 attendances from members, as against 8,865 persons in 1934.’