

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
DURING THE YEAR
1932

THE Eighty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society was held at Frome on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, June 21st, 22nd and 23rd. The last meeting of the Society at Frome took place in 1911.

First Day's Proceedings

Motor cars and coaches assembled in the Market Place, outside the George Hotel, and left at 9.30 a.m. and proceeded, via Nunney Catch, to

Holwell Quarries

belonging to the Mendip Limestone Works. The quarries were described by Dr. F. S. WALLIS, of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, who drew attention to the fact that the Carboniferous Limestone was exposed at Holwell, in consequence of the activities of the Nunney Brook which through long ages had excavated a small gorge. Although the exposures of the Limestone are of value to the specialist, the chief interest to the members of an Archæological Society lay in the numerous infillings or so-called dykes.

These vertical cavities were probably the result of subaerial erosion during the long terrestrial period which followed the deposition of the Palaeozoic rocks. The Rhaetic sea then spread

over the Carboniferous Limestone ridge bringing with it mud and sand which filled up these cavities and at the same time washed into them the remains of marine organisms, more especially the teeth and scales of fishes and reptiles.

Standing in the *Microlestes*-quarry of Charles Moore, the leader paid tribute to the indefatigable labours of that geologist and related how he had taken three tons of the greenish clay to the Royal Literary and Scientific Institution at Bath. There, by careful methods of washing and sifting, he had obtained many thousands of organic remains. Chief amongst these were twenty-seven teeth of *Microlestes*—the earliest British mammal—and remains of over twenty species of reptiles and fishes. Dr. Wallis said that all these fossils could still be seen in the new buildings of the Institution at Bath, and he urged members to renew their acquaintance with that rich geological museum.

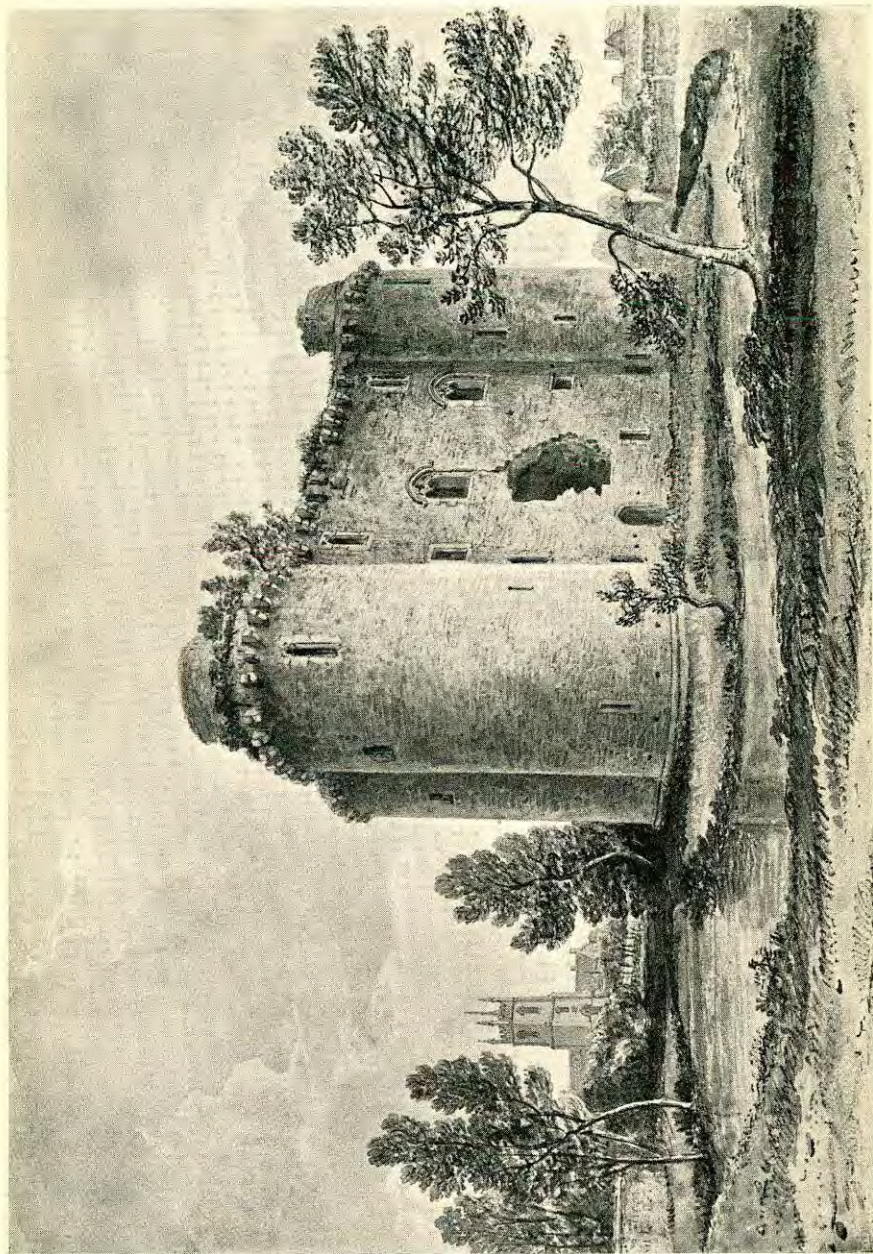
The quarry on the other side of the road, to the north-west of the Inn, was also visited, and many members were able to obtain specimens of the clay showing small fragments of teeth and scales.

At 10.15 a.m. a visit was paid, by permission of H.M. Office of Works, to

Nunney Castle (Plate II)

where the structure was described by the President, Sir CHARLES R. PEERS, Pres.S.A., Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments. The following is a résumé of his remarks on the Castle :

The structural history of Nunney begins with the licence to crenellate, granted to Sir John de la Mare in 1373, and the plan of the Castle, affected as it is by the character of its site, offers an illustration of contemporary military design. In spite of its small scale it is still rather a Castle than a fortified house, and is really to be considered as an example of the rectangular courtyard plan, with a round tower at each corner, such as may be seen in the contemporary work at Farleigh Hungerford. At Nunney, owing to the nature of the site, the plan has been telescoped, as it were, and its corner towers are set close together in pairs at either end of an oblong building of four stories, which contains the whole living accommodation. It is defended by a wet moat, fed from the neighbouring stream,



NUNNEY CASTLE

N.E. View, in 1822, from a drawing by J. C. Buckler in the Pigott Collection at Taunton Castle
Photographed by Mr. H. St. George Gray, F.S.A.

and crossed by a bridge on the n.w. side. Outside the moat, except where it is flanked by the stream, there were substantial curtain walls, but these have now disappeared. The internal arrangements of the Castle are of the normal character, with kitchens, storerooms and offices on the ground floor, hall and living rooms over them, and further rooms and bedchambers in the upper story. Beyond this it is only possible to say that the chapel was in the s.e. tower, and the n.w. tower, though not originally a stair-tower, was made into one at some period. The original stair was far less commodious, rising in the thickness of the west wall from the lobby at the entrance of the Castle, and continued upwards by a vice in the same wall. The approach to the upper story of the Castle must have been at first by a wooden stair which has left no trace. The castle is provided with garderobes in the usual manner, discharging through the walls, and there is a well at the north end of the ground floor. The details of the building are simple, the most effective feature being the corbelled parapet walk at the wall heads, which has lost its battlements. When complete the towers had conical roofs and must have provided a very effective finish to the building. The active history of the Castle ended with its siege, capture, and burning in 1645, and during the siege the n.w. wall was damaged by bombardment at its weak point, where the stair ascends in the thickness of the wall. It stood neglected thereafter, and eventually in 1910 the damaged wall collapsed, bringing down the whole side of the building. No attempt was made to repair it till within the last few years, when Nunney came into the hands of the Commissioners of Works. It is now cleared of fallen masonry, its walls thoroughly consolidated, and the moat cleaned out and filled with water. Unfortunately so little was left of the fallen n.w. wall that no part of it could be reset, as had been hoped. In the twenty years that had elapsed since its fall much of its materials had disappeared.

An illustration of Nunney Castle is given as a frontispiece to *Proceedings*, vol. lvii for 1911.