

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
DURING THE YEAR
1930

THE Eighty-Second Annual Meeting of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society was held at Yeovil on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, July 22nd, 23rd and 24th. The last meeting of the Society at Yeovil took place in July 1910.

Messrs. Whitby's Glove Factory

At 10.30 a.m. a large number of the members visited the Glove-making works of Messrs. Whitby Bros., Ltd., where they were received by Lt.-Col. F. D. Urwick, D.S.O., T.D., and Mr. W. E. Palmer, M.A., M.Sc., directors of the company, which had just celebrated its 150th birthday in its present name.

Mr. PALMER in an introductory explanation suggested that the ancient craft of glove-making was certainly a fit study for antiquaries, as gloves had been made in the Yeovil district for at least three or four centuries, and the craft was notable in the following particulars,

(1) The fact that the manufacture of gloves remains essentially a hand craft, and that at least in its most characteristic operation, 'glove-cutting', the use of machinery never seems probable.

(2) The highly localized organization of the industry due to the craft being handed down from father to son and mother to daughter for successive generations.

(3) The important effect of the industry on countryside cottage economics, as much of the work organized in Yeovil and similar centres is actually undertaken in the cottages of villages within a twenty-mile radius of the factory. This applies to most of the actual sewing of the glove whether by hand or as generally at the present time by sewing-machine. The women of the village are given piece-work by forewomen responsible to the factory. In this way a substantial source of income is added to the farm labourer's resources, and instead of leaving the industry when they get married women normally continue to work in it for their lifetime with increasing skill of hand.

The factory imports sheepskins from several parts of the Empire in a dried state, turns them into leather and dyes them. The sources of supply are, in the first place, Arabia, South Africa, Nigeria, India ; also Spain, and formerly Russia.

The next item on the programme was

The George Inn

which was visited at the invitation of Mr. J. Lock Lovibond.

This old house, one of the very few remaining links with the prosperous medieval borough of Yeovil, is a well known one in the County of Somerset where half-timber buildings are not common ; and an excellent illustration of it appears in the *Proceedings*, lvi, i, 27.

We are indebted to Mr. JOHN GOODCHILD for the following notes :

The George Inn was, till quite recent years, part of the property which formed the endowment of Woborn's Almshouse, refounded in 1476 by William Woborn, canon of St. Paul's, and others. Of the three properties in Pyt-lane (now Middle Street) mentioned in the accounts of William Scarre '*procurator domus elemosinarie de Yevell*' in 17 Henry VII (1502), the larger, let at a rental of 6s. 8d., is probably that of 'The George'. The others were smaller and have long since disappeared. Its sign is ancient and it may be that its derivation had something to do with the founders' dedication of the almshouse to 'the honor of St. George and St. Christopher, the martyrs'. To

this day the almsmen of the foundation wear on their left breasts a red cross 'in honor of St. George the Martyr'.

It has been suggested that Giles Penne (or Penney) who, with his first wife, are commemorated on the well known brass in Yeovil Church, lived here—he lived in Pyt-lane (Middle Street). It is not clear if he was inn-keeper or merchant, but in 1527 he was the richest man in Yeovil with goods value 20 *li*. The Yeovil churchwardens' accounts for 1566 record the burial of 'Mistress Penye' (the second wife, who is not recorded on the brass); payment for the ringing of the bells at her burying, and for lime to make good her grave 'in the Chancell'. It is significant that in 1568, two years later, the churchwardens received twelve pence for 'a peale on all ye bells ye 24th daye of October givynge by Master Penye at ye George'. This would appear to be evidence in support.

Daniel Vickery in *A Sketch of Yeovil*, 1856, mentions that the house was formerly called 'The Three Cups'. He gives no authority, and there does not appear to be any confirmation. There has been no opportunity of inspecting deeds, though careful enquiry has been made in other directions.

Vickery, however, mentions the tradition still current, that fugitives from the plague of London coming to 'The George' in a cart or wagon brought the pestilence to Yeovil 'destroying its hundreds, some say thousands, and the rank grass nourished by the pestilential atmosphere grew in the street, then a narrow thoroughfare, in which the inn is situated'. That a pestilence did rage in Yeovil is certain, but it was in 1647, and though the published *Quarter Sessions Records* reveal that 'many hundred souls died and that there was no one to bury the poor dead infected bodies', there is nothing to connect 'The George' with it. What is certain is that the plague and the results of the Civil War reduced the borough of Yeovil from its medieval prosperity to dependence on its more wealthy neighbours.

Just before noon the members arrived at

St. John's Church, Yeovil

of which the Rev. J. E. S. Harrison is vicar. The edifice was described by Mr. JOHN GOODCHILD.

He said : I propose to confine the few remarks I have to make entirely to historical matters, and to make some additions to what was said by Prebendary Bates Harbin, who was President when the Society last visited the church in 1910.¹

The date of the building of the church had then been established, and there was ample proof that it had been begun in or about 1380, during the rectorate of Robert de Samborne. There is further confirmation in the muniments of Woborn's Alms-house which include wills of Yeovil men about this time and who leave money ' to the works of Yeovil Church '. The great feature of the church is that it was designed, built and completed in one style, and remains a perfect example of a fourteenth-century Perpendicular parish church almost exactly as the builders left it. It was a work of some magnitude, and the question arose as to where the money was found.

Robert de Samborne, who had been rector since 1360 died in 1382, and bequeathed the residue of his estate to the ' works of Yeovil Church begun by me '. Mr. Bates Harbin thought that de Samborne, as canon of Wells and rector of Yeovil with its very large tithes, was in a good position to build the church. Further examination of this point leaves a doubt, having regard to de Samborne's benefactions in other directions, particularly to the chantry of Holy Trinity in this church on which at one time he seems to have largely depleted his resources.²

I should like to direct attention to a source from which the necessary money may have come in addition to de Samborne's benefaction and the usual gifts of parishioners. It is possible that the older church, Norman or even earlier, on this same site was ruinous or insufficient for the needs of such an important town as Yeovil was at this period. Also the fact that the church had been desecrated by scenes of violence and acts of bloodshed when bishop Ralph was attacked there in 1349 may have been a very potent reason. But it is necessary to go back a little.

The conferring on the church, by the Empress Maud, of an important part of the manor had been a cause of strife for two hundred years. By this grant the rector of Yeovil for the time

¹ *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* lvi, i, 27-33.

² *Som. Rec. Soc.* xix, 287; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* xxxii, ii, 7.

being became lord of the town with extraordinary powers. In or about 1205 King John gave a charter to the town,¹ which altered the day of the market from Sunday to Friday, and this came into immediate conflict with the Friday market of the church. This and the question of other revenues were the main causes of contention.

In 1219 an extraordinary court at Ilchester decided cause between Waleran le Tyes, the first recorded rector and John Maltravers of Hendford. The verdict, which amply confirmed the rights of the rector as conferred by Maud, contains a very significant passage :

And the daughter of a certain king conferred the tenement in this wise : that all the rents of the tenement ought to be placed upon the altar and converted to the profit of the church, so that neither the parson nor any other received anything therefrom, but they are all converted to the uses of the church.²

Reliefs, amerciements and fines for the breaking of the assize of bread and ale were also to be so converted.

Despite brief intervals of peace, the discontent of the townsfolk was expressed in various ways. The outbreak against bishop Ralph was one. De Samborne once complained that the commonalty had chased him into his rectory house and threatened to kill him, and there were various actions at law.

Ultimately, the burgesses repented and affirmed all the rights of the rector and the church, and it is significant that this concordat was arrived at only a short time [1372] before the building of the church was commenced.

For nearly two hundred years the revenues of the borough had gone into the treasury of the Church, and it is, I submit, that from this source came the bulk of the money to build this great church, which seems to have been finished within ten years. Moreover, it marks a beginning of permanent peace between church and town, which was concurrent with a period of prosperity.

There is evidence that the interior was of some magnificence, though little remains. The well-known lectern is now on loan at the Exhibition of English Medieval Art in London. The

¹ *Som. Rec. Soc.* xv, 172.

² *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* xxxii, i, 20.

Penne brass has been removed from the floor of the choir to the east wall of the south choir aisle. A great screen extended the whole width of the church, and parclose screens returned from it made chapels of the choir aisles. Both transepts were enclosed by screens and an organ stood on the choir screen from at least the end of the fifteenth century till about 1644. The screens remained till the middle of the eighteenth century, when they were taken down to make way for galleries. Those in the choir are a recent memorial replacement.

It may be that the plan of the church was influenced by the number of its altars. There were originally six chantries, five within the church and one without, though only four, all in the church, remained at the suppression.¹

The sites of the altars can be determined with exactitude from some early Elizabethan churchwardens' accounts re-discovered a few years back. For a long time after the restoration of the Protestant forms of worship, the transepts and aisles retained the names of the altars which had formerly stood in them. That of Holy Trinity in the south choir aisle and the Name of Jesus in the north choir aisle had appropriate glass in the windows. In 1564 the churchwardens paid for ink to 'blot out the Trinite in the glassen windows', and the clerk was ordered to 'hang a cloth before the Name of Jesus'. The chantry of the Blessed Virgin within the church was in the south transept, and that of the Holy Cross in the north. These four were in existence at the suppression.

It is necessary to say a few words about the chantry of Holy Cross. This chantry was founded in 1432 by John Botreaux of Trent, and others, to maintain a priest to celebrate daily at the altar of the Holy Cross in the church of St. John Baptist at Yeovil. Preb. Bates Harbin in a paper, 'John Botreaux of Trent and his Chantry',² concluded that this chantry was established in a chapel at the south-west corner of the tower of the church. This chapel was taken down about 1854 and the greater part incorporated in the building now standing opposite the west door. The ground for the conclusion was a shield of arms appearing in the roof.

¹ 'Somerset Chantries', *Som. Rec. Soc.* ii, 138, 314.

² *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* lxiii, 21-29.

The king's commissioners' report says: 'The chantry of Holy Cross founded within the said parish church', and the churchwardens' accounts before mentioned clearly show that the site was the north transept.

The commissioners reported that the inhabitants desired to have the chapel in the churchyard as a schoolhouse, and this chapel seems more likely to have been the site of the choir school of which there are indications of existence in the fourteenth century.

More than this, amongst the benefactors of the chantry was a Warmwell, of Newton, a descendant of the ringleader in the attack on bishop Ralph, and it was from this that the present connection of Newton with the north transept probably sprang. The evidence for this theory has of course been discovered only recently.

Benefactors to Holy Cross also included Stephen Hoper and his wife Joan, persons of note in Yeovil in the early fifteenth century, who gave the great tenor bell and the ninth bell to the church.

The church has suffered much at various times from the hands of restorers, especially in the eighteenth century. The wonder is not that so little of its medieval furniture is left, but that its fabric remains in practically its original splendour.

The Annual Meeting

There was a good attendance at the Annual General Meeting, which was held in the Town Hall, Yeovil, by kind permission of the Mayor and Corporation. The chair was taken at 2.15 p.m. by the senior Vice-President, the Rt. Hon. Henry Hobhouse, in the absence of the retiring President, Mr. Ernest E. Baker, F.S.A. He was supported by Lt.-Colonel Sir Matthew Nathan, P.C., G.C.M.G. (*President-Elect*), the Very Rev. Prior E. Horne, F.S.A. (*Chairman of Council*), Mr. Arthur E. Eastwood (*Chairman of Finance*), Dr. R. L. Meade-King (*one of the Hon. Secretaries*), and Mr. H. St. George Gray, F.S.A. (*Asst.-Secretary, Curator and Excursion Secretary*).

After apologies for absence had been announced, the chair-

man introduced the Rt. Hon. Sir Matthew Nathan, the President-elect.

Nine ordinary members and one associate were elected at this meeting, and their names, with proposer and seconder, are recorded in the minute book of the Society.

The Annual Report

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

‘ In presenting the eighty-second annual report, the Council wishes to state that since the last meeting 65 new names have been added to the list of members and associates. Losses by death and resignation for the year 1929-30 have been 74, and the net loss is 9. The total membership at date is 1,043, against 1,052 at the Weston-super-Mare Meeting last year, and 1,061 at the Bath Meeting in 1928.

‘ The Council regrets to record the death of : Mr. H. Napier Abbot (1900), Mr. James Alder (1920), Mr. Robert Alford (1907), Mrs. Bailward (1922), Colonel Malachi L. Blake (1902), Mr. David Brown (1898), Dr. F. A. Bruton (1906), Mr. W. G. Cotching (1891), Mrs. Ewing (1890), Miss G. A. Fryer (1916), Mr. W. M. Hale (1914), Mr. L. R. C. Higgins (1914), Mr. J. Cooke Hurle (1908), Mr. A. R. Jennings (1893), the Rev. Preb. G. M. Lambrick (1908), Mr. Samuel Lawrence (1898), Mr. R. G. Mansfield-Haysom (1916), Mrs. W. T. Reeder (1913), Mr. G. W. Short (1918), Mrs. W. Stewart (1909), the Rev. H. Toft (1896), Mr. A. N. Waterman (1907), and Lt.-Colonel C. E. Whitting (1885).

‘ There was a balance in hand of £153 10s. 1d. on the Society’s General Account at the end of 1928. This was reduced to £37 10s. 10d. on December 31, 1929, owing to the fact that the cost of re-roofing Castle Lodge was paid for from the current account. Had the Society not been exempted from the payment of rates there would have been a considerable deficit.

‘ The expenses attending the issue of the *Proceedings* for 1929 (recently circulated) amount to £214 13s. 10d. This is the lowest figure since 1926 ; but the volume for 1928 was abnormally large, as explained in the last report (vol. lxxv, p. xviii).

‘The eighty-first annual report contained considerable reference to the excavations at Taunton Castle, for the greater part of the work had been carried out from 1928 to 1929. Since the Weston-super-Mare meeting the excavations as decided upon up to that time have been completed, and all the spoil-heaps removed by those requiring hard material for making roads, etc. During the first three months of the present year the most important of the ancient walls were covered by tarpaulins kindly lent for the purpose by the Great Western Railway Company. Since then, H.M. Inspector of Ancient Monuments has visited the excavations, but no definite course has been decided upon with regard to the permanent preservation of these interesting walls.

‘In the spring circumstances arose—in fact they had been gradually developing—which have made it necessary to instal a turnstile at the entrance to the Society’s premises, the cost of which it is estimated ought to be covered by additional receipts in the course of three or four years. In carrying out this work and repairing and altering an adjoining room, to be used as one of the Society’s offices, it was found that the thick wall forming part of the south front of the Castle and the Curator’s residence was badly split longitudinally for a distance of some 40 feet.

‘An emergency meeting of the Council was called and it was decided to issue an Appeal for funds not only to carry out urgent work of repair, but to attend to other matters of a similar nature which must receive early attention. The roof and walls of the Jury and Witnesses’ Rooms are in very bad condition, and these rooms have been required for some time past for offices and workrooms to carry on the business of the Society and the Museum in a proper manner.

‘The Council feel, therefore, that they are unable at the present time to carry out the scheme of extension alluded to in the two last annual reports, owing to the necessity of attending to the urgent requirements of the existing fabric. The Council have Sir George Oatley’s sketch plans and elevations in their possession, which will be available when extension is possible.

‘The amount subscribed in response to the Appeal for Repairs since June 21st has been £307 17s. 0d.

‘During the year Mr. W. Wyndham has very kindly given

the sum of £120 for providing a large number of mahogany-fronted drawers to fill up the space under the central cases in the Norman Keep. This gift will be a considerable help in providing space for additional specimens useful for reference and for students, the chief objects of the series being exhibited in the glass cases above these tiers of drawers.

‘ Last autumn an appeal for further financial help was made to members still paying the old subscription of 10s. 6d. A resolution was passed at the Bridgwater Meeting in 1920 to the effect that all new ordinary members of the Society must in future pay 21s. per annum, but it was optional whether the old members paid more. The result of the appeal was most successful and it has been the means of raising our income by about £44 a year. A few members have indicated that they will not require a copy of the *Proceedings* sent to them.

‘ In the Library department Mr. Wyndham has kindly presented the Society with £25 to purchase a collection of about a thousand deeds, and Mr. Tite has given a bound typewritten copy of the “Catalogue of the Charles Tite Collection of Somerset Books”.

‘ The excavations at Glastonbury Abbey in 1929 were reported upon in the *Antiquaries Journal* and the Society’s *Proceedings*. The work in the field, under the same directors (Mr. C. R. Peers, Mr. A. W. Clapham and the Very Rev. Dom E. Horne) was resumed on May 12th, and it is hoped to continue the digging during the summer.

‘ The examination of Kingsdown Camp, Mells, was completed, with very satisfactory results, in October last, and the paper on the subject which Mr. St. George Gray read at the Society of Antiquaries in February will be published in *Archæologia*, vol. lxxx for 1930.

‘ The investigations conducted by Dr. Bulleid and Mr. Gray at the Meare Lake Village last September were carried out in fine weather and with excellent results. The work will be continued from August 25th.

‘ The work on Ham Hill, directed by Mr. St. George Gray, was resumed on June 18th, and was recently brought to a close for the present season.

‘ The Very Rev. Dom E. Horne continued the examination

of the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Camerton last August, and hopes to resume operations next month, after which a further paper will be published on the subject.

‘Mr. R. F. Parry has continued his work within the entrance of the caves at Cheddar (formerly Gough’s Cave), and has completed his digging in Soldier’s Cavern higher up the gorge.

‘Taunton Castle was visited during 1929 by 8,524 persons, including 1858 attendances from members, as against 8,866 persons in 1928 and 8,650 in 1927. The turnstile came into use on June 30th.’

The Very Rev. Dom ETHELBERT HORNE proposed the adoption of the Report, and explained the reason why it had been necessary to issue an Appeal to members and others, for the urgent repairs required to keep the Castle safe and watertight.

The Rt. Hon. HENRY HOBHOUSE seconded, and spoke on the preservation of our ancient buildings, monuments and earthworks, and the manner, he thought, in which the unnecessary disfigurement of the countryside could be prevented.

The adoption of the Report was carried unanimously.

Finances

Mr. A. E. EASTWOOD asked the meeting to adopt formally the Accounts of the Society for the year 1929, which had already been published in the *Proceedings*, vol. lxxv. This was accordingly done.

Special Appeal

Mr. EASTWOOD then moved the following resolution : ‘That this meeting, having heard further details with regard to urgent requirements at the Society’s headquarters, pledges itself to make every effort in its power to support the special Appeal which was sent out in June in the hope of being able to place the Castle and the County Museum in a state of thorough repair.’ He added that they wanted at least £2,500 to put the buildings in a proper condition.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. PHILIP STURDY and carried.