

‘You know my personal interest which caused me to start an Excavation Fund nearly two years ago bearing my name. And for that established fund I make a further appeal for cash contributions and small bequests. To round off a red-letter day in my life, at this Centenary Meeting, I should like to add a further contribution of £20.

‘Again, we thank our kind friends *most* cordially.

‘I also thank you, Sir, for the kind allusions concerning the award of the O.B.E., made to me by the Patron of our Society.’

## **The Presidential Address**

BY SIR ARTHUR HOBHOUSE

BEFORE embarking on the main subject of this address, may I mention one or two current matters. The Annual Report, which you have just heard, gives a very good account of the many-sided work of our Society, and I congratulate the Council and Secretary in having nearly caught up with war-time delays in publication. It is noteworthy also that between 17 and 18 thousand persons visited the Museum in the year.

I am asked to refer to three developments which the Council have in contemplation. They are preparing a scheme for setting up a collection of Somerset birds in larger cases with a naturalistic background, as has been done so effectively for Norfolk birds at Norwich and, of course, in the Natural History Museum; they intend to make fuller use of early costumes; and they are in negotiation with the Carnegie Trustees for a grant towards the cost of larger cases for the display of bygones and folk material in the Somerset Room, but the success of this must depend on satisfying the Carnegie Trust that the financial position of the Society is sound now and for the future.

This brings me to a short reference to the efforts made in recent years for sharing financial responsibility for the Museum and the Castle with the appropriate local authority. In these days public authorities have so much greater powers and duties, educationally and for the general public enjoyment,

than formerly ; and with the altered value of money and the reduction of private incomes it becomes necessary to rely on the public authority to provide much of the finance if such historic buildings as Taunton Castle and its rich Museum are to continue. Actually the County Museum in Taunton Castle is the largest in the kingdom, which is still supported by a private Society (the next in order of size being Newcastle-on-Tyne).

We have two public bodies who could assist in this way—the County Council and Taunton Borough Council—both of whom would be very properly contributing to educational and museum facilities as well as to the upkeep of the Castle as an historic building, all for the benefit of the public of the County and Borough respectively. Efforts made, with much good will on all sides, have not so far proved completely successful, largely owing to legal complications.

The County Council as Education Authority cannot apparently take over the maintenance of the Castle and Museum under the Education Acts, although it can make grants to the Society for educational purposes. We gratefully acknowledge what they have done so far. The Borough Council cannot share its Museum powers under the Libraries Act with the County Council as only one museum authority is permitted by law in each area. The Borough of Taunton could, however, relinquish its museum powers to the County Council.

But, however it is brought about in view of legal limitations, I think it would be a fair arrangement for these two bodies to share a substantial part of the cost, in view of each body's responsibility to its respective ratepayers. I sincerely hope that some solution will be found to this dilemma at no distant date.

## II

The Council have very properly chosen as the title for the Centenary Address 'The Society's work, 1849 to 1949', but I venture to think with too little regard for your President. To deal with this subject adequately one would need much time and research. A complete account of the Society's activities over 100 years might well be the subject of some future article in your *Proceedings*—and I commend this



suggestion to some writer member of the Society—but for a short Presidential Address I can only give some comments and observations which may be of interest to you today.

Let us look back and ask what were the objects of the founders of the ‘Somerset Archæological and Natural History Society’ in 1849. They were certainly very wide in scope. The answer briefly is the study of the *whole* field of archæology and natural history, and of archives too (if we add the allied work now done by the Somerset Record Society and County Records Committee).

Those were the days when there was great enthusiasm for learning, scientific discovery and records of the past. There was no Office of Works to take over the preservation of ancient buildings, no National Trust to hold places of historic interest and natural beauty, no local authority with power to collect deeds and documents of the past or to spend money on museums, and no state education system to stimulate interest in the study of nature. Whatever was done 100 years ago in this direction was left to private persons.

And so, in September 1849, the first Annual Meeting was held at Taunton; ‘about 350 people were present and an adjoining room was fitted up as a temporary museum’. The Chairman, Sir Walter Trevelyan, referred *first* to natural history, *then* to architecture (Roman and medieval), *then* to records (family and parochial). The report of the promoting committee referred to the old controversy about Somerset’s capital: it says ‘there is no single town in Somerset which from its position and importance can be regarded as the capital’, and ‘we think that probably the best arrangement will be that the annual meetings should take place in rotation at all the principal towns in the County, while one place is reserved for the Society’s library and museum’.

Dr. Buckland, the learned and witty Dean of Westminster, gave the first address—on Somerset Geology—and showed how it has influenced the places and peoples of the County. I give one extract from his Address:

The existence of such towns as Bath, Wells and Taunton, in the richest valleys, and the non-existence of any towns at all upon the tops of Quantock, or Blackdown, or Exmoor, depend upon geological causes. Why were the meadows of Bridgwater and the rich



marsh lands of Somerset so productive of fat cattle and well-fed inhabitants?—Why was the Vale of Taunton favoured so much before all other localities in—I might say almost in the whole world?—Why that full and perfect development of the human species both male and female? When travelling over Europe in 1820 with a German Geologist more observant than myself, whenever we came to a town where there were more pretty faces than usual, he would say—‘We are coming to a good geological formation’—And the moment we got into the mountain regions—the Alps, for instance—ugliness was the universal characteristic.

Much more of interest can be culled from examination of earlier volumes of the *Proceedings*, but suffice to say that the Society started very much on the lines which it has followed throughout, and this is no mean tribute to the sagacity of our founders. Perhaps the major variation has been the subordination of natural history to archæology leaving the former more and more to individual field clubs and the Schools of the County. I do not, however, overlook the fine work which is being done by our Ornithological, Botanical and Geological Sections. Was this subordination perhaps because natural history became in the second half of the last century both more specialized and more popular?

### III

The work of the Society throughout the century can be divided into four main activities: (i) the Annual Meetings with Excursions into the different parts of the County, (ii) Field Work and Research, (iii) the *Proceedings* and published Papers, and (iv) the Society’s Library and the County Museum at Taunton Castle. I want to say a word about each of these and to mention any landmarks in their development.

(i) In the first few years Quarterly Meetings were held, but these were discontinued at an early date. Excursions were a regular feature from the beginning even in spite of the County’s poor railway service. The hey-day of Excursions arrived with the early 1900’s rising to a maximum of 230 at the Glastonbury meeting in 1926.

It is interesting to note the growth and relative strength of the Society. The first Annual Report records: We have a



list of 250 subscribing members and amongst them a very good proportion of our principal landed proprietors and literary men.

When Mr. Gray was appointed in 1901 there were 550 members which reached 1082, our top limit, in 1923. In both wars, numbers dropped to about 850 and rose again afterwards. They now stand at 955. This is a very creditable figure, and shows that public interest and support and the Society's vitality are undiminished.

Lady members have figured in the Society's list from the outset, but the rapid growth in numbers is shown by the following figures given me by Mr. Gray: 1901, about 40; 1948, about 400.

The Annual Meetings and Excursions have undoubtedly been the main feature which has encouraged your membership and kept the Society a live organization. Every part of the County, and from time to time places outside our borders, such as Bristol and Sherborne, have been visited, to the great benefit, enjoyment and instruction of members. Obviously there is a limit to numbers, but in these days of popular appeal everything should be done to interest the larger public to share in the activities of the Society.

(ii) I now come to the second main activity of the Society, which perhaps I should have mentioned first, for without Field Work in Archaeology and Natural History and Research for documents and archives, there would be little new for the members to discuss, and see, at their meetings and excursions. Throughout the century the publications of the Society record a long series of field work done by its members and officials.

The most outstanding works in archæology were the excavations of the two Lake Villages at Glastonbury and Meare—in which Mr. Gray and Dr. Bulleid have collaborated—Mr. Gray's excavations at Castle Neroche, Wick Barrow, Burrow Mump and many scattered earthworks through the County, and Bligh Bond's excavations at Glastonbury Abbey. In geology the outstanding work has been the exploration of the Mendip Caves by Professor Boyd Dawkins and Mr. Balch. There has also been a wide variety of study in our Somerset churches, medieval monuments and documents, family history and folk-lore.

I have no doubt that this work will continue in the coming



years, as Somerset is still rich in archaeological sites. Apart from leading experts who from time to time carry out work in this county, more and more individuals are interested in taking up some line of discovery—making for themselves a hobby of some branch of learning, and this Society through its Secretary and officers can well supply advice to them and ensure that their work is not wasted, but adds to the total sum of knowledge of the past.

(iii) The central focus of all learned bodies is their proceedings and publications, and this side has not been neglected by the Archaeological Society. Indeed, the level of writing and scientific standard has been very high and remarkably uniform throughout. Our *Proceedings* are reckoned to be second only to those of the Society of Antiquaries. For this we are largely indebted during the last half-century to Mr. Gray's editorship. Even through the two World Wars the annual volume of *Proceedings* was continued, and I refer you to the following passage written in 1942 :

Two or three members have expressed their surprise that the annual volume should be published during the war . . . but it is generally realized that . . . such Societies as ours are rightly regarded as performing a useful service to the community by keeping up their normal activities to act as a connecting link between the culture of the past and that of the future.

I venture to think that this passage still holds a truth, because in a rapidly changing world it is vital to preserve as much knowledge of the culture of the past as possible.

Although many of us have not the time to study these publications, to some members and many students of archaeology throughout the kingdom the *Proceedings* have been of great interest and incalculable benefit to learning.

(iv) We have seen that a collection of objects of the past was staged at the first meeting. After various vicissitudes Taunton Castle, or to be more precise the Inner Ward, was purchased in 1873, not only to save that ancient building from destruction but to house the Society's Library and Museum. Since then this Library and Museum have grown by leaps and bounds, and the problem has been to exercise the very difficult art of discrimination, both as to subject matter and specimens.

As to the Library, the advent of the County Record Society,



a private body founded in 1886, has relieved the Society of much of the work entailed in research and investigation of county records. The County Council Records Committee and Muniment rooms at the Shire Hall have, on the other hand, enabled us to dispose for safe keeping of a considerable number of documents and archives. I should like here to pay tribute to the County Council and its forbears, the Quarter Sessions, for the care of records, as the present County Council Records Committee is a successor to the original County Record Office which was established in 1618.

On the Museum side we were fortunate in obtaining the historic buildings of Taunton Castle, and indeed as a base these are second to none amongst similar societies in this country. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. William Wyndham, the old Grand Jury room was replaced by a gallery and work-room, and an Annexe, which bears his name, was added to provide better accommodation for the Lake Village collections and other County Archæological remains. With the change of Keeper it is hoped that still further accommodation may be available.

In many counties public bodies have taken over the care and collection of objects recording past history, and now that our collections have grown so large and tend to increase so rapidly, we look forward to some practical arrangement for sharing this great trust with the local authorities.

#### IV

There have been a long line of distinguished men in the Society, too numerous to record here, but amongst those outstanding I must mention—

Professor Freeman, the historian.

Sir Edward Fry, the eminent judge.

Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte, the most distinguished Head of the Record Office.

Dean Armitage Robinson, the medievalist.

Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, historian of West Somerset.

F. T. Elworthy, the authority on Somerset dialect.

Professor Hamilton Thompson, expounder of church architecture.

Preb. E. H. Bates Harbin, a prominent Somerset historian.

Sir William Boyd Dawkins, explorer of the Mendip Caves.

Bligh Bond, excavator of Glastonbury Abbey.

Dr. Bulleid, discoverer of the Glastonbury Lake Village.

Sir Matthew Nathan, indefatigable lover of records.

Rev. F. W. Weaver, a devoted Honorary Secretary for 23 years.

All these persons, distinguished in their own lines of learning, have filled the century which we are recording. During this period changes have been made in the method of archæological research, and I suggest for your consideration three main stages, which can be called the romantic, anthropological, and scientific.

In the early days the traditions of the eighteenth-century antiquaries, such as Sir Richard Colt Hoare who covered Wiltshire and the edge of Somerset, still persisted. This was the romantic period of study of ancient monuments without much attempt to understand the civilization of the past.

Then came the school of General Pitt-Rivers, again near the borders of the County at Rushmore in Wiltshire, who developed archæology in this country by comparison with the primitive tribes of the world, reconstructing the mode of life of neolithic man.

Finally the modern school, which, with precise scientific and almost laboratory methods, have gleaned evidence from every potsherd and added masses of data from which has been built up, within the limits set by available material, a more accurate picture of the cultures of bygone races. It is interesting to note that in the current number of the *Journal of the Royal Archæological Institute*, Mr. St. George Gray is described as the chief survivor of General Pitt-Rivers' archæological staff and the unique link between that historic school of archæology and the modern generation.

I conclude these observations on the hundred years of our existence with the confident hope that the study of archæology in Somerset will continue to flourish so long as it is backed up by a substantial body of keen supporters in this Society.

In the words of Lord Bacon—

Out of monuments, names, words, proverbs, traditions, . . . and the like, we do save and recover somewhat from the deluge of time.



A vote of thanks to the President was proposed by Preb. G. W. Saunders and seconded by Maj.-General R. Evans.

Mr. Philip Sturdy put forward a resolution to the effect that a telegram on behalf of the Society be sent immediately to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning protesting against the wholesale destruction of deciduous woodlands on the Quantock Hills (and the intended replanting with conifers by the Forestry Commission).

The meeting approved and the Chairman agreed to send such a telegram followed by a detailed letter.

## TAUNTON

After lunch members assembled at the Castle and were conducted round the Museum by Mr. H. St. George Gray and afterwards through the gardens by Mrs. Gray. At 2.50 p.m. the party left via the garden and North Street for the Church of St. James (Rev. E. Hirst) where the church was briefly described by Mr. F. G. DOWELL. From here the members made their way to the Church of St. Mary Magdalen (Rev. Preb. W. H. Heaton-Renshaw) where Maj.-General R. EVANS described the principal features and gave an outline of the history of the Church. Afterwards inspection was made of the Church Plate.

At 4.20 members were entertained to tea, by invitation of the Mayor and Mayoress of Taunton, in the Municipal Hall, and the Municipal Offices and Council Chamber were inspected afterwards. (A brief description of the building is to be found in *Proceedings* for 1937, lxxxiii.)

## POUNDISFORD PARK

In the evening members visited the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Vivian-Neal at Poundisford Park, 4 miles south-east of Taunton. Mr. Vivian-Neal gave a brief history of the Park and the present house, which was built by William Hill in the reign of Henry VIII and Mary I. (An illustrated article by Christopher Hussey describing Poundisford Park appeared in

*Country Life*, 4 and 11 August 1934. See *Proceedings*, lxxvi, i, 59-60.)

After a tour of the house, followed by refreshments, Mrs. Hedley Golledge proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Vivian-Neal for the courtesy they had shown in allowing members to visit their interesting house.

This concluded the first day's programme.



## Second Day's Proceedings

The coaches left Taunton at 9.20 a.m. for Barrington Court, the residence of Lt.-Commander Ian Duff Lyle, D.S.O., R.N.V.R. This stately Tudor house, with its former stable, has been described in *Country Life*, March 1928 (2 parts); *Proceedings*, lxxvii, i, 31-3; 'National Trust Guide—Buildings,' 1948, 118-20, so no detailed summary will be given here. A short history of the descent of the Manor was given by Capt. BEACHAM, who conducted the party over the house.

At 11.10 a.m. the coaches and cars proceeded via Lopen Head to Martock, where the Church of All Saints was described by the Vicar, the Rev. Preb. G. W. SAUNDERS. He said that the open-work timbered roof should be compared with that at Somerton. It dated from 1513. In 1227, by an arrangement between Bishop Jocelin and the Abbey of Mont St. Michel, the bishop acquired the advowson of Martock and made it the portion of the Treasurer in Wells Cathedral (see *Proceedings*, lxvii, i, 36-9).

### THE TREASURER'S HOUSE, MARTOCK

On leaving the church the members crossed the road to see the Treasurer's House (under repair), proceeding through the remains of a late medieval gateway.

Mr. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, O.B.E., when the members had assembled in the great hall (32 ft. by 22 ft.), said he hoped on his retirement to take further steps for the preservation of that ancient house. They saw in that room architectural features dating from c. 1330, with a finely timbered roof which was of the collar-braced type. At the south end was the gallery overhang. On both sides of the hall were two fifteenth-century windows under foliated rear-arches of the fourteenth century. The sills were dropped in the centre to form two window-seats. The carved brackets for lights were similar to those at Tickenham Court, near Clevedon. A door led directly from the hall into the west garden: that somewhat rare feature was to be found at Stokesay Castle in Salop.

To the south of this large room is the thirteenth-century first-floor hall, which became solar to a ground-floor hall in the fourteenth century. That building with its interesting window on the west side dated from c. 1250-60, and was approximately east and west, the great hall being added forming a T-plan and lengthened by a later cottage. To the south-west of the solar was a large kitchen of the fourteenth century.

The screens passage by which the house was entered either from the east or from the west had the ancient doorways remaining, including that in the centre on the south leading towards another ancient doorway—all presumably of the thirteenth century.

In the west wall of the 'undercroft' were two three-light windows of the fifteenth century, with a buttress between them to give sufficient support to the solar and thirteenth-century window above. Within that window was another stone-carved bracket for lights similar to those in the great hall.

After lunch at Houndstone Corner Restaurant the party left at 1.45 p.m. for Brympton d'Evercy, where they were received by Mrs. Clive and her son, Mr. Clive-Ponsonby-Fane, and his wife. The party split up into groups to visit the charming little Church of St. Andrew, the combined fifteenth- and sixteenth-century house with its splendid Renaissance wing, and the well-set-out gardens (*Proceedings*, lxvii, i, 53 and lxxxv, 30; *Country Life*, May 1927, 2 parts).

At 3.30 p.m. the party proceeded via Crewkerne and Chard Junction to Forde Abbey, the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. D. Roper. Assembled on the lawn in brilliant sunshine the visitors heard Mrs. Roper give a short address on the history and architecture of the Abbey. Members were later conducted round part of the building in groups, each in the care of a guide (*Proceedings*, lxxiii, i, 39-43, *Trans. Devon Association*, lix, 249-64; 'The Story of Forde Abbey', by S. Heath, 1911).

After tea at the Oaklands Hotel, Chard, the party returned to Taunton where they arrived at half-past six.



### Third Day's Proceedings

The coaches left Taunton at 9.15 a.m. *en route* for the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Somerton, where the party was received by the Vicar, Rev. T. H. O. Hayter. The Rev. Preb. G. W. SAUNDERS described the church in some detail, calling attention to the fine roof, similar to that at Martock (*Proceedings*, xl, i, 36-7; lxxi, i, 39-42).

The coaches left Somerton via Kingsdon and arrived at Lytescary at 11 o'clock, where access was gained by permission of the National Trust who had not yet opened the house to the general public. Mr. ST. GEORGE GRAY read notes on the history of the house before members made a tour and inspected the early fourteenth-century Chapel. The main block of the house with hall and great chamber was rebuilt about 1450 and the hall has a beautiful roof of this period. Additions and extensions were made in 1533 upon the marriage of John Lyte and Edith Horsey (*Country Life*, 18, 25 July and 1 August, 1947; *Proceedings*, xxxviii, ii, 1-10; lxx, i, 42-4).

The party then proceeded via Sparkford, Wincanton, Zeals and Maiden Bradley to Horningsham, arriving at about 1 o'clock, where members enjoyed a picnic lunch outside the Bath Arms Hotel, a few of the more energetic visiting the tiny Elizabethan Presbyterian Chapel for the Scottish freemasons who built Longleat. It is considered to be the oldest of its kind in England. After luncheon the coaches took the members down the long drive to the house, where they were conducted round in five parties. (Photographs and a description of this magnificent Elizabethan mansion, built by Sir John Thynne between 1567 and 1579, appeared in *Country Life*, 8, 15, 23 and 29 April, 1949; a short general account is in the *Proceedings*, lxxviii, ii, 9-13; an illustrated handbook by the Marchioness of Bath, published in 1949, price 2s. 6d., gives an entertaining account of Sir John Thynne and the heirs in succession up to the death of the late Marquess of Bath in 1946.)

After a late start tea was obtained at the George Hotel, Frome, at 4.15 p.m.

Afterwards the coaches returned to Taunton by way of Nunney, where the party inspected the church and ruins of the Castle and the following notes were read by Mr. ST. GEORGE GRAY, taken from a summary by Sir Charles Peers :—

### NUNNEY 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, and crossed by a bridge on the north-west 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 south-east tower, and that the north-west 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 north-west 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 north-west wall that no part of it could be reset, as had been hoped. After its fall twenty years elapsed before the Office of Works could take the matter in hand, and in the interval much of its materials had disappeared.

(*Proceedings*, lvii, i, 52-4; lxxviii, i, 12-13. Nunney Church, *Proceedings*, lxxviii, i, 14-19.)