

BRANCH AND AFFILIATED SOCIETIES. During the year the Bridgwater and District Archaeological Society and the Wincanton Archaeological Group had sought affiliation and this had brought the number of Affiliated Societies up to 16. There were also the two Branch Societies.

PROCEEDINGS. During March 1967, Volume 110 of *Proceedings* was sent out to all ordinary members. The volume included the Address by the retiring President on "The Ecology of the Badger in Somerset". This paper was included in the Natural History Notes supplied to members of the Natural History Section, and a substantial number of offprints had also been ordered by the Somerset Education Committee for distribution to schools in the County.

EXCURSIONS. (i) 4 June 1966. Sandford Orcas and Kingston Lacey.

(ii) 7 July 1966. The Bishop's Palace and part of the Cathedral at Wells (Guide: Dr. R. D. Reid); Chewton and Priddy Minorities (Guide: Mr. Robin Atthill).

(iii) 26 to 29 Sept. 1966. West Sussex area, with visits to the excavations at Winchester (described by Mr. Mallett), Winchester Cathedral, Bosham Church, Chichester Cathedral, Petworth, Boxgrove Church, Arundel Castle, Parham House and Bignor Roman Villa.

EXCAVATIONS. From 10 August to 13 September 1966 an excavation was carried out at the Meare Lake East Village site under the direction of Mr. Michael Avery. This was a joint venture by the Somerset Archaeological Society and the Oxford University Archaeological Society. An interim report on the excavation would be published later in the *Proceedings*.

During the summer of 1967 it was hoped to conduct an excavation, under the direction of the Museum staff, on the site of the Old Town Mill near Taunton Castle.

MEETING OF LOCAL SOCIETIES. The annual meeting of Branch and Affiliated Societies was held in Glastonbury on 29 October 1966. Mr. J. T. Smith of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments gave an illustrated talk on vernacular architecture. The meeting was attended by representatives of most of the Local Societies and by some members of the Council of the Parent Society.

LECTURES. During the winter of 1966/7 the following lectures were arranged:

1966

26 October: Natural History Section social evening.

5 November: "Prehistoric Trackways of the Somerset Levels" by Professor H. Godwin.

19 November: "A Botanist in the Solomon Islands" by Mr. P. F. Hunt.

- 3 December: "The Hydrology of Somerset" by Mr. P. H. Baker.
10 December: "The Scrolls from the Dead Sea: Their Place in History" by Professor G. R. Driver.

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- 11 March: "A Traverse of Hadrian's Wall" by Rev. John Wall.
18 March: "Tiger Beetles" (illustrated by films) by Mr. G. H. Thompson.
31 March: "The Beginning of Early Celtic Art in the Somerset Region" by Professor Martyn Jope.

The lecture by Professor Driver was held in the hall of Bishop Fox's School and was open to the public. It was sponsored by the Museum Governing Body and the Somerset Archaeological Society.

JUNIOR SECTION. The Council had decided that a Section should be formed to cater specially for activities for Junior Members. Mrs. Wolseley and Mrs. Miles had kindly agreed to organize these activities, and Mrs. Miles would be speaking on the subject later in the meeting.

MEARE LAKE VILLAGE, VOLUME III. The final volume on the excavations at Meare by the late H. St. George Gray had been edited by Mrs. Aylwin Cotton and would be ready, it was hoped, on July 1st. A prospectus giving full details of this volume had been sent to all members.

LIBRARY. The Society were grateful to Mrs. A. J. Dodd who had been helping with a Shelf Catalogue of the Society's books which was in the course of being prepared.

TOPOGRAPHICAL PICTURES. A collection of pictures by Harry Frier of Taunton and district, recently acquired with the help of a grant from the Victoria and Albert Museum, would be found hung on screens near the entrance to the Somerset Room.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Secretary explained the accounts to the meeting and, on a proposal by Mr. Kelting, seconded by Mr. Pearce, they were adopted.

SOMERSET RECORD SOCIETY

The Honorary Secretary of the Somerset Record Society, Mrs. C. W. H. Rawlins, then gave her report for 1966/7. She recorded the deep regret felt by both the Record Society and the Archaeological Society at the death of Mr. Wilfrid Leighton. A member of the Record Society's Council since 1955 and its Chairman from 1962 to 1965, Mr. Leighton had been particularly helpful in reorganizing the Society to qualify as a charity. The charity covenant system had been put into operation, and the Society would begin to benefit from it in 1967.

Dr. R. W. Dunning had continued work on the Hylle Cartulary which would shortly be ready for the press. Miss Claire Cross, lecturer in history at York University, had undertaken to edit the letters of Sir Francis Hastings of North Cadbury, an Elizabethan M.P. and leader of the Puritan party in church affairs. Miss Cross had made a special study of the Hastings family in the 16th century and had had the opportunity of seeing the large collection of their letters and papers in the Henry E. Huntington Library in California. This volume should throw light on local politics and on ecclesiastical affairs in Somerset and elsewhere, in the period covered by the letters, and would contain an Elizabethan Survey of the Hastings estates in Somerset.

The Council wished to congratulate Dr. R. W. Dunning, a member of the Council since 1963 and honorary editor of Vol. 68, on being appointed Editor of the *Victoria County History of Somerset*. Work on this project, sponsored jointly by London University and the Somerset County Council would begin later in the year.

There had been a net increase of 12 in the membership of the Record Society.

JUNIOR SECTION

Mrs. Miles spoke on the proposed activities for junior members. Monthly meetings would be held on Saturday afternoons in the schoolroom at Taunton Castle. Their purpose would be to encourage individual projects with junior members making greater use of the Museum and the Society's Library. Any specialized help that could be given by senior members of the Society would be welcome. Records of archaeological and natural history finds would be kept and entered on distribution maps of the area, and it was hoped to arrange an annual exhibition of work done during the year.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

About 120 members were present in the afternoon when Mr. R. S. Simms gave his Presidential Address on the history of the Society. The Address was followed by tea at the Castle Hotel.

BRANCH AND AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

The *Ornithological Section* reports another successful year. Membership showed a steady increase to 335.

Two lecture meetings were held at the Wyndham Hall, Taunton Castle: (1) Dr. C. J. F. Coombes's outstanding film, "The Jackdaw's Year", followed by his account of a trip to the Middle Atlas region of Morocco; (2) two films kindly loaned by the B.B.C. Natural History Unit, "The Lone Fisherman" (on the Grey Heron) and "The Life of a Kingfisher".

Nineteen field meetings were held at, among other places, The Wildfowl Trust; Chew Valley, Cheddar and Sutton Bingham Reservoirs; Kingston Seymour; Brean Down; Huntspill; Steart; Goblin Combe; Winyards Gap; and Curry Moor.

Mr. K. B. Young was elected Assistant Secretary and has been dealing with the Section's affairs in North Somerset. He has also taken over the arrangements for the lecture meetings.

The *Weston-super-Mare Branch* of the Society made one half day and three whole day excursions in the summer of 1966. In the midst of a full winter programme of lecture meetings the Branch held an At Home in January 1967 to mark the 75th anniversary of its foundation; this was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Weston-super-Mare (Councillor and Mrs. R. W. Thomas) and other guests. At the same time an exhibition was staged at which photographs, paintings, etc. depicting Weston in the 1890's and today were on display. The exhibition included a special section on modern archaeological techniques prepared by Mr. David Tomalin, who is Museum Assistant at Weston.

The *West Somerset Branch* made excursions during the summer of 1966 to Brympton d'Evercy and Martock, and to Wilton House. The winter programme included four lectures and a film show, as well as the Annual Meeting held at Dunster Castle.

The *Glastonbury Antiquarian Society* went for their 1966 summer excursion to churches etc. in the Langport area. The three winter lectures were all on excavations carried out in Somerset during the previous summer.

Shepton Mallet Natural History Society visited Cothay Manor, Taunton Castle, Corsham Court and Lacock during the summer of 1966. Monthly lecture meetings were arranged during the following winter.

Membership of the *Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society* has risen to a record number of 318 and this has caused some pressure on the lecture room at Wells Museum and on the coach for excursions. The usual six lectures were given during the winter and the same number of excursions arranged.

The biennial report published during the year contains a preliminary account of the excavation at Witham Priory. The Great Cloister, which formed the basis of the Carthusian plan (Witham no doubt provided a pattern for the other 8 houses in England), has been accurately defined and a considerable length of the inner wall exposed. Owing to difficulty in getting helpers at this isolated spot work has to proceed slowly, but is being concentrated behind the

northern walk of the cloister where the church should be found, although there is some indication that its foundation trenches were completely robbed. The report also contains a note on a Romano-British site near Priddy.

The society has provided £100 towards the cost of the research station erected at Wells Bottom by its subsidiary group, the *Mendip Nature Research Committee*. It is hoped that the station will be opened in the autumn by Lord Waldegrave.

The Clevedon and District Archaeological Society held six lecture meetings at monthly intervals during the winter. In the previous summer, in addition to visits to Sudeley Castle and Hales Abbey, some members took part in excavations at Butcombe and Fyfield Down under Mr. Peter Fowler, and at Sea Mills under Mr. Max Hebditch.

After the Annual Meeting of the *Historical Association, Ilminster Branch*, slides of her visit to Russia were shown by the Chairman, Miss Hatfield. Five other lectures were also arranged as well as visits to the Parent Society's library at Taunton Castle, to Bath and Claverton Manor and to Cothay. Many members attended lectures on recording old buildings given under the auspices of Bristol University Department of Extra-Mural studies.

During the year members of the *Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeological Society* attended courses in archaeological technique and practical excavation organized by the Extra-Mural Department of Bristol University. Several outings were arranged to excavations and sites of archaeological interest, such as hill forts of the Mendip region. Advantage has been taken of the opportunity to visit sites on the other side of the Bristol Channel provided by the opening of the Severn Bridge. Work has continued on the examination of sites on Mendip where turf is being removed. A pattern of occupation is now being built up by the collection of artifacts from these areas.

The *Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society* has carried on with its examination of the Romano-British settlement at Nettleton, Wilts. A rectangular building erected during the Constantinian period was excavated and the interesting finds included an inscribed stone altar re-used in a furnace, bronze spoons, Kimmeridge shale spindle whorls and a curious iron harpoon weighted with lead. Over 500 coins, mostly of Valentinian and later issues, were found in a black layer, which had been deposited over the site after the building had been destroyed. A full report is being prepared and will be published as soon as possible.

In addition to a full programme of lectures and excursions, a well-attended conference was held in October 1966, when papers on various subjects connected with local history, archaeology and industrial archaeology were given by members and guest speakers.

During the year a number of members have continued to record monuments and other surviving evidences of the industrial revolution; and much conservation and restoration work has been done at the Society's headquarters at Gay Street, Bath.

The six summer excursions of the *Burnham-on-Sea Archaeological and Natural History Society* were well supported. The new Severn Bridge has brought many fresh places within reach and a visit to Wardour Castle was the first, it is hoped, of many trips "over the border". There was also a full winter programme of 5 lectures and the annual dinner.

Mr. S. G. Nash has been vigilant in surveying sites in the district; he has carried out a detailed excavation at Huish where mid 18th century pottery was found. Pottery from the 13th and 14th centuries had been found in the Fairford Road area of Highbridge, but it has not been possible to excavate there.

The six summer meetings of *Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society* included a visit to Winchester. Seven winter lectures included talks by Mr. Rahtz on his Ghana excavations and by Prof. Cunliffe on Portchester Castle. Excavations were continued this year under the direction of the Society's Chairman, Mr. L. C. Hayward, at the Roman villa site at Ilchester Mead.

The Portishead Preservation Society has during the year become the *Gordano Valley Society*. The widened scope of the Society's interests has resulted in a substantial increase in membership — from 52 in April 1966 to 95 a year later. That the people of Portishead and district had a deep interest in the history of their valley was made clear by the large audiences attracted by three talks arranged early in the season which were designed to outline the story of Gordano from prehistoric times down to Domesday; and the audiences in their turn were made to realize the useful role this Society could play in serving that interest. Plans were made for the formation of field study groups to investigate various aspects of Gordano — its archaeology, geology, botany, etc. In all seven meetings were held with an average attendance of 53.

Excavations in the grounds of Gordano School by pupils under the direction of Mr. A. B. Reid revealed a medieval barn, beneath which lay a small Roman building. It is expected that further work will be done on the site and that an account will be published in due course.

The full programme of trips and lectures arranged by the *Frome Society for Local Study* covered a wide range of interests. Among the thirteen outings, visits to local industries proved most popular. A short course on recording vernacular architecture was poorly supported.

The Frome Museum, which is staffed and maintained by members of the Society, was opened by the Chairman of the Frome U.D.C. on 11 May 1966. Of a number of "efforts" held by the Society to raise money for the Museum one was so successful that it was possible to pay for installing night-storage heaters out of the profits.

Membership is increasing rapidly and a total of over 150 members had already been reached by mid 1967.

Following up information supplied by Mr. R. Rossiter of Yew Tree Farm, Venus Street, Congresbury, the *North Somerset Archaeological Research Group* found two kilns of 3rd/4th century date in a field behind the house. These were completely excavated and photographed, and several complete pots were reconstructed from the hundreds of sherds recovered. Further work on the site is planned and a full report will be published.

Due to the observation of Mr. F. A. Kingcott of Ham Farm, Kingston Seymour, a Romano-British occupation site within a quarter of a mile of the modern sea defences has been located. Within 100 yards is a medieval site. These two sites should prove of considerable interest when it has been possible to investigate them properly.

Members of the group have kept an eye on various earth-moving operations all over the area. Iron Age pottery has been recovered from a pipe trench at Kenn Pier and an extension of the Dial Hill (Clevedon) Romano-British occupation site investigated.

Illustrated talks on local sites have been given by the Recorder to schools and other groups. Various chance finds by members of the public have been examined and several, by permission of the owners, are being deposited on permanent loan at the County Museum at Taunton.

During the year the *Bristol Archaeological Research Group* published their Field Guide No. 4 — *Industrial Monuments in the Mendip, South Cotswold and Bristol Region* by Neil Cossons. The Group's *Bulletin* continued to be issued to members.

There were a number of meetings for members and juniors and in April 1967 a weekend course on Wansdyke was arranged in conjunction with the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Bristol. A second season of training excavation, directed for the Extra-Mural Department and the Group by Mr. Peter Fowler, was undertaken on the native settlement of the Roman period at Row of Ashes Farm, Butcombe. A number of members took part in the excavations at Sea Mills, undertaken by the City Museum, Bristol, with Mr. Max Hebditch as director.

The publication of the *Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society's* first Study Groups report marked the end of a very successful year. Attendance at the series of winter indoor meetings averaged

around the 50 mark, while the numbers turning out for the more informal outdoor activities, such as the visit to J. S. Fry and Sons' Roman Museum and a public 'Walk into History' were almost embarrassingly high. But the principal concern of every local history society must obviously be to encourage individual and group research, and it is in this direction that the Society's officers and committee have the greatest reason for satisfaction. Of the nine study groups listed in the first annual report members from at least two — the Inns and Alehouses and the Industrial Archaeology Groups — have the publication of original documents as their immediate target.

A small excavation was undertaken by the *Bridgwater and District Archaeological Society* at Hackness, East Huntspill. Here workings for a new sluice had uncovered 14th century pottery in an old ditch, and also the stone foundations of a building of the 17th century. In the winter the Society investigated a Romano-British site on the banks of the Huntspill River, which was exposed at low water. Samples of pottery were sent to Birmingham University for laboratory examination. An excavation at the Old Post Office site in Bridgwater, where an attempt was made to trace the castle moat, proved unproductive.

An autumn series of lectures on various subjects was followed during January, February and March by a course of lectures, arranged for members by the University of Bristol, on "Aspects of Archaeology". A number of excursions were arranged during the summer and in addition field meetings were held at fortnightly intervals throughout the year to visit local areas of interest and to record field markings or other items of possible archaeological significance.

The *Wincanton and District Archaeological Group* came into being at the end of 1965. In the spring of 1966 it received a grant from the C.B.A. and began buying surveying equipment. Believing in self-help too, its energetic Treasurer raised money for more such equipment by holding a jumble sale. Surveying of the medieval moat, fields and fish ponds at Marston Magna was carried out.

A Manor House or Rectory of c. 1500 at South Cadbury was demolished in 1965 and, when the digging of a water-pipe trench for the bungalow being erected on the site revealed some interesting possibilities, the Group decided to investigate. But they had no idea, when they dug a trial trench at Easter 1966 of the spectacular evidence which they were to uncover. Further trial work followed at Whitsun and nine hectic summer days of excavation under John Laidlaw's direction. The result was the uncovering of the remains of a hearth and early Roman timber buildings occupied from after the Roman conquest until the 3rd century. Finds included 6 Roman

coins, a complete large shale bangle and the handle of a miniature votive shield. There was also some 12th century pottery. The work was done concurrently with the Camelot excavation and the Group records its gratitude to that august organization.

The Group, whose activities include the holding of lectures, has some 40 members, but wants 140.

During the summer of 1966 the newly-formed *Chard History Group* carried out field-work around and within the boundaries of the old town, discovering in the process considerable portions of a 'town wall'. The winter meetings were devoted to the study of communications in the town and vicinity. The group studies were split into four sections: Communications before the Turnpike Era; the Chard Turnpike Trusts; the Chard Canal; and the Century of Railways. It is intended to publish booklets recording these studies and to deal with later studies in a similar manner.

A photographic section has spent much time in recording buildings due for demolition or drastic alteration, and it has also photographed a number of items to illustrate the studies on communications. It has copied a few old photographs of buildings which no longer exist and is busily seeking more photographs and prints illustrating the town's past history.