

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SOMERSETSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
DURING THE YEAR
1897.

THE forty-ninth annual meeting of the Society was held in the Town Hall, Bridgwater, on Wednesday, August 4th. Mr. H. D. SKRINE, a former president of the Society, opened the meeting by introducing Mr. E. J. STANLEY, M.P., as their President. He said he had no difficulty in doing so, because he felt that the acquaintance that he had had with Mr. Stanley gave him the privilege of saying that that gentleman was likely to be a good President of the Society. He took a great interest in all matters connected with its neighbourhood, historic and otherwise; and living, as he did, near the Quantocks he was imbued with the history of that part. As a legislator, Mr. Stanley was a straightforward, loyal supporter of the Constitution and Church and State, and one of those men that certainly ought to be the legislators to guide the course of this great Empire.

Mr. STANLEY, M.P., who was received with applause, thanked the meeting heartily for the honour they had conferred upon him, but said he should defer any observations he had to make to a later time, when it was usual for the President to make some remarks.

Report.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE, F.S.A., Hon. Gen. Sec., then presented the annual report as follows :

“Your Committee beg to present their forty-ninth annual report.

“During the year forty-seven new names have been added to your list of members. On the other hand the loss by deaths and resignations has been twenty, leaving a net gain of twenty-seven members. The number is 604, as against 577 at the date of our last report. A County Society, numbering some 600 members, can undoubtedly claim a leading position, but there are still many names which your Committee would desire to see enrolled amongst their members, and they have to express the hope of a still further increase during the ensuing year.

“The debit balance on the Society’s General Account has during the year been reduced from £20 0s. 8d. to £9 6s. 9d.

“The cost of the volume of *Proceedings* was £77 16s. 5d., as against £108 12s. 6d. last year, and £192 4s. 5d. in the previous year.

“The debit balance of last year on the Castle Restoration Fund has now been reduced to £44 11s. 9d.

“Your Committee regret to state that the ‘Castle House’ still remains void.

“During the year ending 31st December, 1896, the number of visitors to the Museum was 4,610, as against 4,964 in 1895.

“The Index to Collinson’s History is making satisfactory progress. Upwards of one hundred pages have been already printed.

“The Committee have pleasure in announcing that Mr. F. T. Elworthy has prepared, and kindly placed at their disposal, a full and complete Index to volumes XXI-XL of the Society’s *Proceedings*. An index to the first twenty volumes was issued some years ago : the *Proceedings* are therefore now

indexed up to the end of the year 1894. This index now in the press, will be issued to subscribers at 5s. per copy.

“The Bibliography of the county, prepared some years since by Mr. Emanuel Green, F.S.A., is also in the press, and will be issued to subscribers at £2 12s. 6d. per copy.

“Subscribers to all or any of these publications are earnestly solicited.

“A deed has been prepared for the purpose of formally carrying out the appointment of new trustees made at the last annual meeting, and is now in course of signature.

“The additions to the library during the current year have been numerous and important. At the suggestion and on the application of your Hon. Sec., the Rev. F. W. Weaver, the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records has forwarded twenty-one volumes of the publications of the Record Office in exchange for a complete set of the Society's *Proceedings*. Mr. John Batten, F.S.A., past president and one of your trustees, a staunch supporter of your Society, has presented a complete set of annual reports of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Record Office, the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, 1839 to 1895, and other volumes. About fifty monographs on Natural History and antiquarian subjects have been received from the Royal University of Upsala, in exchange for a number of volumes of the Society's *Proceedings*. Numerous other volumes have been received by exchange, purchase, and donation.

“Your Society has been fortunate during the past year in losing few members by death; but amongst the number they deeply regret to record that of Mr. Edmund Chisholm-Batten, for a very long series of years one of your most active supporters and a constant attendant at the meetings of your Committee, where he frequently occupied the chair. The following resolution of sympathy has been passed and communicated to the family: ‘That this Committee desires to put on record an expression of its great regret at the loss of Mr. Edmund Chisholm-Batten, whose keen interest in the work of

our Society made him a most useful member of the Council and a pleasant and instructive companion at our Annual Meetings: and whose well-informed mind has enriched the volumes of our *Proceedings* with many valuable and interesting Papers. It would also express its hearty sympathy with his sons and daughters in their natural sorrow on account of the departure from amongst them of so good and honoured a father.'

The late Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks, K.C.B., F.R.S., President of the Society of Antiquaries, was a member of your Society, and his death is a severe loss to the country generally as well as to the special pursuits with which his name is particularly identified.

"In their last report your Committee suggested that the annual meeting in 1898, when your Society will have entered upon the fiftieth year of its existence, should be held at Taunton, its head-quarters and birthplace, and that a strong and well-organised effort should be made on that occasion to provide a fund for the repair and preservation—not restoration—of the Castle. The numerous festivities which have marked the current year have rendered it undesirable, well-nigh impossible, that any steps should be taken in the direction indicated. Now it is time that the matter should be taken seriously into consideration, and your Committee trust that every member will do his or her best to render the Archæological Week of 1898 a complete success."

Mr. H. HOBHOUSE, M.P., in moving the adoption of the report, said he thought they would all agree with him that on the whole it was a very satisfactory document and one that they could adopt without hesitation. It showed that there had been a steady increase of members during the past year, and also, what was still more satisfactory, a steady decrease of the various deficits on the various funds. What was more, the report showed that the work of the Society—its permanent work as apart from the more temporary interest and satis-

faction of the annual meetings—was being steadily carried on. They had a record of progress in various most important though laborious pieces of work, such as the indexing of Collinson's History and their whole *Proceedings*, and the publication of that most valuable Bibliography of Mr. Emanuel Green's. Then they had had several important records of parishes. Mr. Hancock had brought out an interesting monograph on the parish of Selworthy, and Mr. Trask was engaged in writing a 'History of Norton-sub-Hamdon,' and there might be others. They had a Record Society steadily at work, increasing its valuable and interesting volumes year by year; and in all these ways they had continual accretions going on towards that great work, which, he sincerely hoped, would not be long delayed—a new and complete and satisfactory History of the County of Somerset. If there were any part of the Society's work to which full justice was not being done he thought it was the Natural History section. He thought there was a very interesting contribution to it a year or two ago in a Flora of the county, but he thought more might be done towards elucidating and introducing practical interest in the very varied and remarkable geological formations which prevailed throughout that county. He hoped that at every yearly meeting there would be some one member with a practical acquaintance of the subject who would be selected to inform the audience on the most striking features of the natural history of the district. With regard to their place of meeting that year, he would like to say that he and others who were present at the last meeting at Sherborne, rather suggested that this year the meeting should take place at Glastonbury. Their wishes had not been carried out exactly in the form they were expressed; but yesterday they had a very remarkable meeting of a very distinctive archæological character at Glastonbury, and he recommended every member of that Society to read the address of the Bishop-elect of Bristol, which was delivered within those suggestive and venerable ruins yesterday afternoon, and which

struck him at the time as a discourse most suitable to be delivered to the members of the Archæological Society, as well as to that larger and more august audience to which it was actually delivered. He dared say it was partly on account of that great gathering of bishops that it was thought better that the Society should meet at Bridgwater that day. It was twenty years ago, he thought, that that Society last met at Bridgwater. He had cast his eye over their *Proceedings* at that time, and he was somewhat painfully struck with the great gaps made during the last twenty years in the ranks of the leading men of that Society, by death and other causes. He had no doubt their President would say something on the subject, but they could not but remember with regret that twenty years ago they had there such great authorities as Mr. Freeman, Bishop Clifford, Mr. Dickinson and others, who were now no longer amongst them. They were glad to see such veterans as Mr. Skrine there that day; and they found that the permanent Secretaries of the Society had been replaced by such very active, useful, and comparatively young members as Lieut.-Col. Bramble and Mr. Weaver. Next year the Society would, as the report had stated, hold its Jubilee at Taunton. They had heard a great deal of Jubilee, perhaps, recently and during the last ten years, but he hoped that as the report recommended, some effort would be made during the next twelve months to clear off the debt on the Taunton Castle Fund, to put it in a proper position to do justice to what was, after all, a most important possession of the Society; and generally on the question of funds he thought that in a comparatively large and wealthy county, with such interesting and extensive archæological associations, all their funds ought to be placed, at any rate by the conclusion of the Jubilee year, on a perfectly satisfactory basis.

The Rev. E. H. BATES seconded the motion. He dwelt upon the fact that works relating to local history were now being produced in very considerable numbers, and said this

(being members of the Society), with the substitution on the latter of Mr. F. T. Elworthy and the Rev. Preb. Askwith for Major Foster and the Rev. W. S. Tomkins; with Mr. W. Bidgood as Curator and Assistant Secretary.

The Rev. E. L. PENNY seconded the motion, which was adopted.

The Rev. JEFFERY WORTHINGTON proposed that the arrangements for the next meeting and the selection of the President for next year should be left in the hands of the Committee. He said that with regard to the place of meeting he thought they had for several years looked forward to the meeting of 1898 being held in Taunton, as in that year they would celebrate the Jubilee of their Society, and he hoped it would be most successfully carried out. He was quite certain that friends at Taunton would give a very hearty welcome to the Society, and that they would make the meeting as prolific of funds as of interest. He could not help recurring for the moment to the remark of Mr. Hobhouse with regard to those who had passed from them, and they would miss at Taunton the late Mr. Chisholm Batten, who would have been an excellent member of the Executive Committee had he been spared until next year.

Mr. E. A. FRY seconded the motion, which was carried.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER proposed the election of thirty-four new members of the Society.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE seconded the proposal, and said he was very pleased with the increase which the Society was making. Some of the large societies which extended over the whole of the country thought they had done well when they had 400 members, but the Somersetshire Society had 600, and he hoped that when they held their Jubilee meeting at Taunton next year they would have a still larger number. They had a valuable property in Taunton Castle—a more valuable property, he thought, than any other Archæological Society in England; and as they had a large building they

were in honour bound to fill it with a large library and a large museum. This was a matter for the whole of the county, and not for Taunton only. They should make Taunton Castle an honour to the county. The proposal was adopted.

Somerset Record Society.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER read a letter from the Rev. Preb. Holmes, Vicar of Wookey, Wells, who expressed regret that he was unable to be present, Mr. Weaver remarking that he was kept away by the ceremony at Wells. Preb. Holmes gave a short account of the proceedings of the Somerset Record Society, and mentioned that early in the autumn a volume of Somerset Assize Rolls, edited by Mr. Chadwyck-Healey, Q.C., would be published, and it was likely to be of great interest. Mr. Weaver said that some time ago the Town Clerk of Bridgwater kindly afforded him an opportunity of looking over the accounts of the Churchwardens of Bridgwater, which dated back to 1368, and were of a most valuable and interesting character. They were magnificently written and in a splendid state of preservation. They must have been kept in a peculiarly dry place. They often found that the old papers in Somerset were ruined by damp, owing to the humidity of the atmosphere, which was good for pastures and cattle, but bad for old documents. He hoped the meeting would result in the publication of the accounts. The Mayor and Corporation would naturally not allow them to go out of their custody, and the work of copying and preparation would therefore have to be done by a resident of Bridgwater. There were ancient accounts at Stogursey, which some years ago Sir Alexander Hood was kind enough to lend him. He copied them out and wrote a paper thereon.