

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the Year ended December, 31st, 1916.

FOLLOWING on the lines of past years a brief review of the additions to the Museum and Library will be given, followed by a short statement of work accomplished during the year.

One of the chief gifts was made early in the year by Miss M. Franklin and Mrs. Colson, consisting of art objects, Greek and local pottery, etc., formerly deposited in the Museum by their father, Mr. H. Franklin. These specimens, acknowledged in the list of acquisitions, have been labelled as being presented in memory of Mr. Franklin.

Mr. H. Martin Gibbs, of Barrow Court, near Bristol, has been a generous donor and presented to the Museum fifteen pieces of Nailsea and Bristol Glass, a valuable collection of Locks and Keys (including several beautiful cabinet keys of the XVII Century), and his collection of XVII, XVIII, and XIX Century Trade Tokens, Somerset and Bristol. The glass and metalwork have been labelled and are now exhibited in the Museum, but with regard to the tokens, which have yet to be catalogued and classified, some little time may elapse before they are ready for exhibition.

Another interesting collection is that acquired by gift at the time of the death of the Rev. W. F. Rose, of Hutton Rectory, who became a member of the Society in 1877. It includes a few local objects and some antiquities from the Mediterranean.

Through the instrumentality of Sir Hercules Read, of the British Museum, the Society has acquired a number of antiquities which formed part of the collection of the late Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock). These specimens, given by the present Lord Avebury, consist of archæological remains from the Dordogne and other parts of France, Denmark,

Ireland, and the Swiss Lakes, which are valuable for comparison with similar objects found in the West of England. These specimens have been catalogued and labelled.

Mr. C. Tite has during the year added considerably to the collections of portraits of Somerset worthies, maps and local views. All these were framed by the kindness of the donor, and are now well labelled.

Mr. T. Charbonnier has added a few specimens, including two interesting examples of stump-work of the Stuart period.

As stated elsewhere some of the Curator's time was expended in the summer in arranging a small exhibition in the Museum in commemoration of the tercentenary of William Shakespeare, which was open from July 18th (the day of the annual meeting of the Society) till August 17th. The exhibits, dating approximately from 1550 to 1650, were to a large extent drawn from the Museum collections; there were, however, a number of loans, and the Curator takes this opportunity of thanking those who kindly assisted him in making the exhibition a success.

Much time has been expended in cleaning, cataloguing and labelling a large proportion of the specimens comprising the Arthur Hull collection, from Chard, which arrived at the end of last year. The objects are being marked as belonging to the Hull collection, and are being placed in the respective groups of objects in the Museum to which they belong. This work has not yet been completed, but in due course it is hoped to publish an account of the collection.

Thanks to monetary assistance from Drs. Bulleid and Graham the prehistoric boat from Shapwick has been set up in a satisfactory manner and fully labelled. In the spring the arrangement and ticketing of the fine collection of Somerset Tokens of the XVII Century presented by Mr. C. Tite was completed. The objects from Somerset churches have been re-arranged, and the illuminated manuscripts and early printed books labelled. Several of the cases containing geological specimens have been cleaned out during the year.

Much more time than usual has been bestowed upon work in connection with the Library,—which now contains nearly 20,000 volumes and manuscripts. Most of the latter are pre-

served in the strong-room and some of them have been sorted by Prebendary E. H. Bates Harbin. Considerable numbers of Somerset Deeds and other papers have been presented by Mr. Arthur W. Marks; the Taunton Board of Guardians; Miss Elmes (chiefly relating to Chew Magna); and Mr. C. Tite (twenty-one volumes of manuscript, compiled by Mr. G. Sweetman, having reference to Wincanton and the neighbourhood). The Rt. Hon. Henry Hobhouse has placed on deposit fourteen note-books containing material for a county history of Somerset compiled by his grandfather.

Several books have been purchased from the Woodward Fund, including volumes of Calendars published by the Public Record Office and Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission.

The Society's large files of bound Newspapers, published in Somerset and the West of England, have been sorted and re-arranged in cases devoted to them in the Great Hall. These cases have been divided by means of vertical divisions and otherwise rendered more suitable for the systematic storage of these local records. At the time of writing the Society's collection includes local newspapers for every year, except 1801, from 1795 to the present time.

All the books in the Library that were published without lettering on the back of the volumes have been ticketed in oil-paint. The assistant has been engaged on this work for at least two months.

Mr. C. Tite has again added several more volumes to his collection of Somerset books, and the cataloguing of them has been continued for him by Mr. A. E. Baker.

The Entomological Section held its annual meeting at the Castle on February 17th, the Botanical Section on February 22nd, and the Ornithological Section on March 9th. Mr. H. Doidge has re-arranged portions of the type collection of Somerset lepidoptera, and Mr. F. Milton has added to the cabinet of insects bearing his name. Mr. T. W. Cowan has been actively engaged upon the arrangement of the Herbarium and the classification and mounting of fresh specimens of Somerset plants presented by the Rev. E. S. Marshall, Mr. H. S. Thompson, Miss Livett and others.

The Taunton Field Club held conversaziones for lectures in the Museum on January 13th, March 2nd, and November 30th; and on July 18th entertained the Somersetshire Arch. and Nat. Hist. Society to tea on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Society.

My assistant, Mademoiselle L. Bastiaensen, who commenced her duties on December 15th, 1915, has rendered useful service during the year.

The Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society consisted of 888 members on December 31st, 1916, including eleven life members and two honorary members.

The following is a list of the monthly attendances of visitors to the Museum and Library for the year just completed:—

	No. of Members.	Total Visitors.		No. of Members.	Total Visitors.
Jan. ..	109	440	July ..	251	596
Feb. ..	114	400	Aug. ..	106	920
Mar. ..	106	438	Sept. ..	112	709
Apr. ..	119	533	Oct. ..	110	509
May ..	120	404	Nov. ..	120	388
June ..	143	499	Dec. ..	75	274
				1485	6110

The number of visitors during 1915 was 5,496, including 1,169 visits from members of the Society. It is satisfactory to note that the persons who paid for admission in 1916 exceeded those in 1915 by 298. Military and naval men have been admitted to the Museum during the War on payment of a fee of 2d. on any day in the week.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

*Assist.-Secretary and Librarian, Som. Arch. & Nat. Hist. Society,
Curator of Taunton Castle Museum.*