

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the year ending December 31st, 1910.

OWING to the extensive building operations and improvements which have been in progress during the year, especially in the southern part of the Castle, little permanent re-arrangement of the contents of the Museum has been carried out; but a large amount of ticketing has been done in preparation for the more systematic and proper exhibition of the Society's rapidly increasing possessions, and alterations in the position of some of them. The Curator's hands have been strengthened recently by the formation of a Museum and Library sub-Committee.

A large proportion of the Curator's time this year has been expended in duties connected with the building operations, and especially in raising the voluntary donations required for defraying the cost of the extension and re-arrangement of the Museum and Library—a task which has met with considerable success. Much time has also been absorbed in the business entailed by an unusual number of sub-Committee meetings held at Taunton Castle during the year, many of which had reference to the above mentioned alterations carried out to commemorate the Society's Diamond Jubilee in 1908.

These improvements, which are still in progress, are mentioned in detail in the Annual Report of the Committee, and it is only necessary to state here that over ninety per cent. of the required sum, *i.e.* £1,050, has at the present time been promised or paid. The task of raising the money was greatly advanced by the generous offer of the Rt. Hon. Henry Hobhouse to contribute £100 towards the fund, provided the

balance required was raised among the Society's members and friends.

The additional space on the south front of the Castle will provide a Reading-room and Library (measuring some 35 by 15 feet) for members, with a small ante-room adjoining, a room (measuring 34 by 14 feet) for Coins and Medals, and a Strong Room. The electric lighting throughout the Castle has already proved a great boon; and the building of a small room in the grounds provides a much needed workshop. Eleven years ago all the Society's collections were suffering from damp; but now the whole of the Castle and the two chambers containing the records of the Manor of Taunton Deane—known as "The Exchequer,"—are heated by systems entailing the use of three furnaces.

The buildings generally, including the Curator's house, are now in a good state of repair. Within the last few years the insurance of the Castle and contents has been considerably increased, and further precaution has been taken by laying a special water-main and the purchase of fire appliances. The steady growth of the Society has to a large extent brought about this satisfactory condition of things, and it is with pleasure that we report that the Society at this date consists of 855 members, *viz.*, 842 ordinary members, 10 life members, and 3 honorary members, as against 600 members ten years ago.

The largest collection added to the Museum during the year is the series of Late-Celtic relics discovered at the Meare Lake-village in May and June, the result of the researches conducted by Mr. Arthur Bulleid, F.S.A., and Mr. H. St. George Gray, on behalf of the Society. These antiquities have been kindly presented by three sisters who owned the field, *viz.*, Mrs. Owen Roberts and the Misses Counsell.

Of other acquisitions of local interest the Society has been enriched by a large number of antiquities, of the Late-Celtic and Roman periods, found during quarrying operations on

Ham Hill, and added to the Museum by Mr. Hensleigh Walter, M.B.; a series of relics from Ham Hill, deposited by Mr. A. V. Cornish; the Imperial Weights and Measures belonging to the Taunton Market Trustees (deposited on loan); a large cinerary urn dug up at Small Down Camp, Evercreech, 1827; a series of English silver coins, bringing Dr. Norris's collection up to date, presented by the Rev. E. H. Bates Harbin; a large silver medal commemorating the defeat of Monmouth and Argyll (purchased); coins and tokens presented by Mr. H. Symonds, including a penny of Henry III struck at Ilchester; and a large series of cores from the boring in search of coal at Puriton, presented by the Bridgwater Collieries Company.

Negotiations are in progress for acquiring the buckle and button worn by the Duke of Monmouth at Sedgmoor; these were exhibited for thirty-five years (up till 1902) in the Stradling collection in the Museum.

With regard to the study of Natural History the Society is now represented by three Sections, (1) the Entomological, inaugurated on Oct. 20, 1909; (2) the Ornithological, and (3) the Botanical,* both of which were formed in 1910. To the Ornithological Section the Rev. F. L. Blathwayt has presented an interleaved copy of his "Birds of Somerset" (*Vict. Co. Hist.*) with recent and additional notes. During the year Mr. H. Doidge, of Taunton, has completed the re-arrangement of all the Lepidoptera in the Society's possession. Mr. F. Milton has presented four cases of Diptera and Coleoptera arranged in cases provided by Mr. C. Tite, and Mr. H. J. Charbonnier is kindly arranging a series of Diptera for the Museum taken from his own collection.

No new handbooks have been published this year, but there are two in contemplation. A number of valuable additions

* The respective Hon. Secretaries of these Sections are: Mr. H. H. Slater, Stawell, Bridgwater; Mr. James Turner, Doversy Down, Porlock; and Mr. W. D. Miller, Cheddon, Taunton. They will be glad to give information about the Sections to those interested.

have been made to the Library, besides the ever-increasing *Proceedings* of kindred societies received in exchange. The eleventh edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* has been ordered and fourteen of the volumes are already on our shelves. The Society is subscribing for *The Complete Peerage*, edited by the Hon. Vicary Gibbs, of which the first volume has arrived. We are glad also to report that the Society now possesses a complete set of *Archæologia* and also of the *Dorset Field Club Proceedings*. Mr. C. Tite has kindly presented a large case for the storage of his recent additions to the Tite Collection of Somerset Books.

The affiliation of the Bridgwater Field Club brings the total number of the branch and affiliated societies up to nine. Lectures and conversaciones of the Taunton Field Club were held in the Museum on February 3rd, November 3rd, and December 15th.

Owing to the increased amount of work resulting from the growth of the Society and the extension of the Museum, the boy, formerly employed for cleaning, stoking, etc., has been replaced by a man, and the Curator is still assisted by M. S. Bevan, mentioned in the 1909 Report.

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. ...	112	388	July ...	107	758
Feb. ...	150	433	Aug. ...	92	1358
Mar. ...	124	566	Sept. ...	95	912
Apr. ...	106	705	Oct. ..	95	616
May ...	90	673	Nov. ...	111	403
June ...	128	537	Dec. ...	93	461
				1293	7810

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY,

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