

## Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum for the year ending December 31st, 1907.

KEEN interest has been taken this year in all departments of the Society's work, and its members, with their varied tastes, have all, we think, been provided with something of special attraction to them. According to a south-western magazine great energy has been put into the Society's researches during the year.

Those interested in the Library (and the number of borrowers increases) will be glad to hear that the Rev. E. H. Bates has completed the MS. Catalogue of the Books and Pamphlets, and that a card catalogue of the "Tite Collection of Somerset Books" now exists (prepared, at Mr. Tite's expense, by the borough librarian of Taunton). More books have been purchased during 1907 than for some years previously; the binding for the year has exceeded the average; *Notes and Queries* (London) has now been completed with the exception of the Index vol. to the 3rd series; whilst of *Archæologia* only Vols. 3 to 10 inclusive are required. Mr. Bates hopes to begin the compilation of a catalogue of the MSS. in the Society's possession in due course.

Those interested in church architecture, and fonts in particular, will be delighted to know that the Society has acquired over 400 pen-and-ink drawings of Somerset Baptismal Fonts, finely executed by Mr. Harvey Pridham and mounted in eight albums. When purchased last summer Mr. Pridham had not nearly completed these drawings, but we are now in a position to report that he has not only finished them, but has indexed

each volume; so that the whole series is now available for reference.

There are now many collectors of "Pole-heads," or "Club-brasses," in the county and elsewhere; and it has been found that the representative collection now owned by the Society and well mounted in two large cases (provided by the Brereton fund) is the fountain-head to which collectors, large and small, come for the purpose of verifying and identifying the "brasses" which from time to time come into their possession. Thanks are due to Dr. T. Hopkins for offering his collection of "brasses" to the Society at a very moderate price; and the subscribers to this special fund are cordially thanked, their contributions being acknowledged on p. 101, pt. i. (See also pp. 74-5, pt. i).

Four plate-glass ebonized show-cases have now been acquired by the sale of the Brereton collotypes of Somerset Church Towers. About seven-eighths of these prints have been sold to date, the remainder being advertised on the wrapper of the *Proceedings*. The price will shortly be raised to 10s. per set of 60.

The loan collection of Pewter, the property of Mr. T. Charbonnier, has been added to this year and re-arranged. It is hoped that an illustrated Guide Book relating to this series will be published in February. (Price 4d; by post, 5d). During the year 500 copies of the Rev. D. P. Alford's "Short Guide to Taunton Castle" have been sold.

Another interesting case, at present in the Great Hall, which has been arranged this year, is that containing Somersetshire and Bristol pottery chiefly of the XVII and XVIII Centuries.

Capt. B. A. Warry, of Shapwick, has very kindly presented to the Museum (and subscribed 30s. towards its removal) the prehistoric dug-out oak boat, approximate length  $20\frac{1}{2}$  feet, found near Shapwick Station in the autumn of 1906. It is at present in a large elm tank in a shed, and is undergoing a slow process of drying, etc., before being exhibited in the Museum.

The Marshall Collection of Albino Birds and of North American Indian trophies, presented by Mrs. Hartley Maud, and the Woodhouse Collection of antiquities, etc., lately received on loan for a minimum period of 15 years, will shortly be exhibited and reported upon in the next volume of *Proceedings*.

There has been an increasing interest during the last few years in archaeological excavations in the county. This year the Glastonbury Lake Village excavations, conducted jointly by Mr. Arthur Bulleid and Mr. H. St. George Gray, were completed in May and part of June. A large volume on the subject is in preparation, but its publication, for various reasons, will not be hastily carried out. The excavations at Lansdown, near Bath, conducted during May and September last, produced interesting results and some moulds of an unique character.

The highest interest was taken by members of the Society and others in the excavations conducted at Wick Barrow, near Stogursey, in May and September under the auspices of the Somersetshire Archaeological Society and the Viking Club. The operations were witnessed by sometimes as many as sixty people at a time. The Museum will be enriched by the "finds" discovered, which will be formally "presented" next year, after the illustrated report has been issued to subscribers to the Excavation Fund,—probably in March 1908. A paper on the subject will also appear in Vol. LIV of the *Proceedings*. (See also pp. 7-8 *ante*). As a result of these excavations Sir Alexander Acland Hood has deposited in the Museum the hoard of bronze implements found at Wick Park, Stogursey, in 1870. (See p. 72, pt. i).

At odd times during the year Mr. Hensleigh Walter, of Stoke-under-Ham, has excavated at Ham Hill. The antiquities derived from this work, and the frequent discoveries made during quarrying operations, have added very considerably to the archaeological series in the "Walter Collection." (See *Proc.*, pt. i, pp. 85-90, and pt. ii, pp. 179-182).

For many years the records of the Court Leet of Taunton and the Courts of the Manor of Taunton Deane have laid in dust and confusion in the Exchequer of Taunton Castle. Mr. A. J. Hook, a member of the Committee of the Archæological Society, has collected and cleaned these documents, which are of great archæological value, and arranged them in chronological order from about the year 1400.

For the Somerset Record Society, Mr. A. J. Monday, of Taunton, has been transcribing the most interesting parts of the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Quarter Sessions of Elizabeth and James I, in the Shire Hall, Taunton.

Vol. LII of the *Proceedings* was copiously illustrated, owing to the generosity of a few members and others, and Vol. LIII will contain an equal number of plates. The stock of sewn copies of Vol. I of the *Proceedings* having become exhausted, and the Society still having some copies in sheets, some of the plates have been reprinted and 20 copies bound to meet any demand there may be for this volume. Members finding plates missing in their earlier vols. of *Proceedings* should communicate with the Curator, as most of the plates can still be supplied.

The usual lectures and conversaciones of the Taunton Field Club have taken place in the Museum, and two lectures have been given under the auspices of the Archæological Society, viz., the Curator's second lecture on "The Glastonbury Lake Village" on Jan. 3rd., and Mr. E. Hartley Coleridge's lecture on "The Poet Coleridge at Nether Stowey" on Oct. 1st, in aid of the fund for the purchase of the Coleridge Cottage. The former lecture was very well attended; the attendance at the latter was affected by bad weather.

The tenant of Castle House has now left and the house is at present undergoing considerable repair, prior to its being converted into the Curator's residence. Later on the present apartments of the Curator in the Castle will be converted by gradual stages into rooms for the extension of the Museum and Library. Until then no proper scheme of arrangement

can be devised for the housing of the Society's ever increasing possessions.

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. ...	163	602	July ...	101	609
Feb. ...	126	331	Aug. ...	109	1390
Mar. ...	91	369	Sept. ...	114	765
Apr. ...	142	760	Oct. ...	130	598
May ...	142	728	Nov. ...	115	417
June ...	120	595	Dec. ...	107	560
				1460	7724

On comparing these figures with previous years it is seen that the attendance during 1907 has been the largest on record, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. greater than in 1905, and 12 per cent. more than in 1906.

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Curator of Taunton Castle Museum.*