

**Report of the Curator of the
Somerset County Museum, from June 24, 1931,
to June 21 (Annual Meeting), 1932**

THE chief interests in the Museum and Library this year have centred round the construction of the building now known as the Wyndham Gallery, consisting of the Schools Museum, Workrooms and Loggias (one of which now contains the sheriff's coach and carved stonework, coffins and coffin-lids; and the other a collection of bygones of large size which would be difficult to exhibit in the museum proper).

The building replaces the jury and witnesses' rooms,—a structure which was apparently of no great age, and was badly built with old material. This building was found to be in a dangerous condition, and was not of sufficient interest to repair thoroughly at what would have been heavy cost (see *Report of Council*, 21 June 1932).

The new building, unfurnished, was finished by the end of the spring and was opened by Mr. William Wyndham on the first of June, on which occasion the chair was taken by Mr. A. F. Somerville, the chief speaker being Mr. J. J. R. Bridge, C.B.E., H.M. Divisional Inspector of Schools. (Plate I).

The contents of the former building have had to be, to a large extent, sorted and temporarily stored elsewhere, especially the stock of the publications of the Somerset Archæological and Natural History Society. During the building period much work in the preparation and labelling of objects for the new part of the museum has been in progress, in the hope of being able to make full use of the building in 1933. It had been decided to use the upper room firstly for an exhibition of Bygones of which the Society owns a representative collection, and afterwards for a museum suitable for school children. The large

room on the ground floor would be divided up and used, at any rate for some time to come, for workroom and store, not only for museum specimens, but for the Society's publications and surplus library books.

Most of the money required for this purpose was provided by Mr. Wyndham, and at the opening ceremony he was cordially thanked by the Society and the educational authorities for his further assistance in the cause of education, local archæology and history.

Mr. Wyndham has also presented, for the schools museum, a relief map model of Somerset, showing the most important ancient and modern places, etc.

As will be seen by the list of acquisitions in the department of Archæology, some interesting bronze implements have been presented, and the Curator has entirely re-arranged the fine series of implements of the Bronze Age.

The most important addition to the museum has been the James Kelway collection of club-brasses (chiefly Somerset), or rather such part of it as was required for the county collection. This was rendered possible by Mr. Wyndham's generosity, and the Curator has spent much time in classifying the collection and dividing it up, in accordance with the donor's wishes, so that other museums would benefit as well as Taunton Castle. The final distribution was as follows: Taunton 96 specimens, Wells 53, Yeovil 42 and Salisbury 33.

Other museum accessions by gift have been well up to the average during the period under review, and archæological remains have come in from the excavations at Battlegore, near Williton, and the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Camerton.

Remains of *Elephas primigenius* were discovered in large quantity it is understood, probably of one animal, in widening the railway track at Cogload, near Durston. The little that was saved found its way to the museum.

The Society assisted the exhibition known as 'Somerset Week at Bath' by loaning to the city authorities the best of the Monmouth and Sedgemoor relics; also a silver-gilt copy of the 'Alfred Jewel'.

In the Library department there has also been considerable activity, and the Somerset portion of the Sherwood collection

of manuscripts acquired by the Society has already been indexed and is available for genealogists.

The Charity Commissioners' Reports, Population Tables, etc., which had got into a somewhat ragged condition, have been put into special covers and properly labelled.

A good beginning has been made by a sub-Committee in the sorting out of the Surtees Library into three classes, (1) those books suitable for retention in the Society's library, (2) those unsuitable, but saleable, and (3) those fit only for destruction.

An arrangement has been made whereby the documents in the Exchequer at Taunton Castle can be used for research. Enquiries to be made to the Curator.

The Council has passed a resolution to the effect that members of the Society's branches will in future be allowed free admittance to Taunton Castle when coming with organized parties.

Picture post-cards are now sold at the Museum, not only of views of the Castle, but also of portraits of the Duke of Monmouth and Judge Jeffreys by arrangement with the National Portrait Gallery.

The Wyndham Hall continues to be used by those requiring a room of reasonable size for lecture purposes, and the fact that it has an electric lantern always in readiness adds to its attractiveness.

The past year has seen the formation of a branch of the Museums Association known as the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries, to cover the counties of Somerset, Gloucester, Wilts., Devon and Cornwall, with the city of Bristol. The meetings will take place at different centres from time to time, and the membership already comprises the great majority not only of the larger museums, but of the smaller ones also.

The Botanical Section held its autumn meeting at headquarters on 29 October 1931 (jointly with the Taunton Field Club) and its general meeting on 5 May. The Entomological Section held its annual meeting on February 12. The Ornithological Section had its autumn meeting on 9 October 1931, and the annual meeting took place on 17 March 1932. The Taunton Field Club also had meetings in the Wyndham Hall on 29 January and 14 April.

The Somerset Archæological and Natural History Society consisted of 1,001 members in June 1932, including twenty-one life members and five honorary life members.

The Museum and Library were visited by 8,650 persons in 1927, 8,866 in 1928, 8,524 in 1929, 9,108 in 1930, and 9,404 in 1931.

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