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Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

## **The Work of the Society. Address**

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## THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY—PAST AND FUTURE.

ADDRESS BY JOHN E. PRITCHARD, F.S.A., *President.*

IN his address at the first Annual Meeting of this Society, in 1876, the first President, Sir William Guise, referred to the fact that it was "only within the last forty years or so that archæology—the scientific study of antiquities—had been pursued in a systematic manner by large bodies of inquirers associated for a common purpose."

By a singular coincidence another period of forty years has passed; and taking into consideration the present position of the Society, which has naturally been affected by the great war, and the re-organisation of the Society's affairs, by which I mean:—

A change of the principal officers;

The transfer of our library to fresh head-quarters;

The altered and improved Rules (which have been finally confirmed to-day);

And the reduced membership since the war began, largely owing, I expect, to the cessation of the delightful spring and summer excursions, and many of its evening meetings;—

the present moment seems to me to present an exceptional opportunity for reviewing the WORK OF THE SOCIETY since its inception, and making some suggestions for the future.

The administration of our affairs, unlike Government officialdom, has been rarely disturbed; for over almost the entire period of our existence we have had associated with us, in one way or another, the delightful personality of Canon Bazeley, and I venture to assert that the successful life of the

Society has been greatly due to his energy, foresight and enthusiasm, and that we can never fully realise how much he has done for us, or forget his old-world courtesy.

Another event to which I must refer is the completion of forty volumes of the *Transactions*, the record of our work ; the last volume of the second series having recently been issued to members. This is to be followed at a very early date by a most important publication, which should be of the greatest value to us all, I mean the INDEX VOLUME to the last twenty volumes,—thus, with the earlier volume, completing the index of the entire series. A glorious record, I think you will admit, for a County Society !

May I just say that the compilation of this Index Volume has been the work of Mr. Roland Austin, in his spare time during the past four years : a very heavy task, for which I am sure you will wish me to offer him our best thanks.

Now as we make every effort, year after year, by the aid of excavations and other means, to ascertain fresh facts relating to the life of prehistoric man, and endeavour to learn from manuscript records still more of the Norman or mediæval builder of the stately castle or abbey, it may not be uninteresting to recall to one's memory some of those great leaders—who have “passed by”—to whom we owe so much for the time and energy they spent in furtherance of the work of the Society in its early days, and who by their exalted ideals upheld a high standard of original research, the “hall-mark” of our *Transactions*, which have always retained a great reputation in the archæological world.

May I therefore refer to a few of the early Presidents and some of the annual meeting-places ? In realising what has been done, we may possibly gain inspiration for fresh activities when circumstances change and we are able to proceed.

As less than thirty names remain on our roll, out of the five hundred original members, it may not be generally known that, though the Society was inaugurated in Bristol, the first centre to be visited was GLOUCESTER, with Sir William

Guise as leader; and of the long line of distinguished Presidents, he will ever be remembered for his extraordinary enthusiasm, and for his masterly introductory address, which encompassed nearly every branch of Archæology. He referred, of course, to the great County Histories of Atkyns, of Rudder, of Bigland and of Fosbrooke, which have helped us so much; to Sir Thomas Phillipps and his vast collection of valuable MSS.; and also to the work of Mr. S. H. Gael in publishing more of Bigland's work; but he appeared to think we badly wanted a new County History.

Something has been done in that direction since then, but does the *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire*, of which only one volume has appeared, fulfil that requirement? As your answer will doubtless be in the negative, I submit this will leave some definite work to be accomplished in the future; for there are, relating to the county, innumerable documents yet undeciphered, and endless sites in our midst yet unexplored. Following Sir William Guise we have had at our head a brilliant rôle of antiquaries, or those greatly interested in the history of the county, and principally resident within its borders, who from their individual standpoint and special study contributed so large a share in opening up the Society's work, to whom our thanks must ever be recorded.

In the second year the members met at CIRENCESTER, when Earl Bathurst presided, and a remarkably interesting meeting was held, largely reminiscent of Roman times. As evidence of the great interest that family has always taken in this important Roman town, let me simply remind you that the Museum there was built by the fourth Earl in the year 1849. It is still largely supported by the family, who have given the pavements and many of the Romano-British specimens to be seen there, all of which have been discovered on the estates.

In the following year the first official visit to BRISTOL took place, just forty years ago this month, and was held under the presidency of Mr. Christopher J. Thomas. The

*Transactions* record this important meeting, during which the city treasures were laid open for inspection, and many perambulations were made, for this ancient city is ever of immense attraction to the antiquary, though I regret some of the interesting examples inspected on that occasion have since been "decoyed" away by the wealthy, or otherwise removed from our midst. But until the new Art Gallery was established in the year 1905 there was no place to receive the larger type of antiquities; since then, however, some accommodation has been provided, and any antiquities offered can now be safely housed.

Great charm marked the presidential address of Mr. T. Gambier Parry at CHELTENHAM in 1879, when he fascinated his hearers with a delightful picture of that glorious district in the midst of a county of great historical importance, really three counties, as Leland described Gloucestershire—"the hills, the vale, and the forest."

Then Mr. J. E. (afterwards Sir John) Dorington, who was President at the first meeting on the Cotswolds, gave the Society a very diversified address at STROUD, descriptive of life on the hills from prehistoric times even to the present day, when much help was given, with many hints for our consideration.

Across the Severn Sea, at CHEPSTOW, in the following year members met Sir John Maclean, who then resided in the Forest, and they had the gratification of listening to his interpretation of "Archæology the Handmaid of History," which formed a veritable guide for members of the young Society. He pointed out on that occasion that the history of the Forest of Dean had yet to be written; but most of us will remember one of Canon Bazeley's daughters (Miss Margaret Bazeley) has since then contributed a most able paper on that subject. The presidential remarks on the "restoration of our churches" at that meeting have no doubt had good effect on many occasions since then. Sir John was acknowledged as a most careful antiquary, and we

owe him much, for he not only contributed a long list of papers of high rank, but he edited the three volumes of Smyth's Berkeley MSS., and for some twelve years acted as our Editor, ensuring the highest possible character to our publications.

When the Society was welcomed at EVESHAM in 1884, they were met by Canon Bourne, who in a notable address contributed a delightful review of early times and local history, referring particularly to the ancient Dover's Hill Games, at Weston-sub-Edge, which were stopped in the year 1851, largely through his action.

Lord Sherborne was President in 1887, when STRATFORD-ON-AVON was visited, and from him we had an interesting account of the Muniment Room at Sherborne.

After an absence of twelve years the members met again at BRISTOL, in the year 1890, when that eminent ethnologist, Dr. John Beddoe, presided, and in his inimitable style we were treated to a short address with a touch of his own special study. He shrewdly pointed out that though Bristol was a county of itself, this Society formed one of the links that still bind us to Gloucestershire, but protested against the frequent mistake of locating Bristol in Somerset. I cannot refrain from testifying to the enthusiasm of Dr. Beddoe, who was always ready at whatever inconvenience to himself to investigate the most unimportant discovery. It was a great pleasure to be associated with him on many occasions, and to have had the benefit of his profound knowledge. The crania discovered on the site of the Carmelites, in Colston Street, interested him immensely. It was an important find, and formed the subject of a special paper in the *Anthropological Institute's Journal*. It is the enthusiasm of such great men that makes the Society live.

The twenty-first meeting was held at STOW-ON-THE-WOLD, that bracing Cotswold town, when Mr. George B. Witts was President. A very practical address was given by him on prehistoric man and the Roman period; and he took the

opportunity of expressing regret that the Society did not undertake the excavation of definite sites of Roman villas, of which he knew a very large number. There is certainly much scientific work yet to be done in this direction. Mr. Witts published a large county map, with practically every ancient site marked, which has been helpful to many of us.

For a County Society to pay an organised visit to LONDON was an unusual departure from the ordinary routine, and seemed almost an impossibility; but under the presidency of Sir John Dorington, Bart., M.P., the programme of 1898, which had been prepared by Canon Bazeley, was a great success, and the members present at the Middle Temple during that record week were given a very important address on the "Connecting Links between London and Gloucester."

Mr. F. F. Fox was our President in 1900, and three years later became President of Council. He delighted us at BATH with his address on "Roods and Rood-lofts," which he generously illustrated in the *Transactions*. He was an original member of the Society, and took a great interest in Bristol. He published privately several important works, such as the *Fraternity of the Merchant Taylors* and the *Guild of Weavers*. He also generously secured the MSS. of *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*, which he had transcribed and printed. His few contributions to our *Transactions* were principally on the Old Guilds of the city, he being the possessor of many of their original documents.

Thus ends my list of a few of the early Presidents who have "crossed the borderland:" great men who were proud to belong to this Society, most of whom started with it and strove hard to make it what it is to-day.

Probably one of the most delightful summer meetings was that of 1901, when the centre of attraction was the old-world town of CHIPPING CAMPDEN, with the Earl of Gainsborough as President.

It is impossible to describe the glorious main street, which

is hardly surpassed in England, rich in houses of the wealthy wool merchants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; or to picture the Market House and Town Hall, where the President met the members and gave them a welcome to the home of the Noels; but you can turn up the account in our records. The whole meeting was teeming with interest, and before it came to an end members had the opportunity of surveying the hill where the "Dover's Games" were held in the days of James I., as well as visiting Middle Hill, Broadway, for some years the residence of Sir Thomas Phillipps.

The 1903 meeting was held at GLOUCESTER under the presidency of Mr. F. A. Hyett, who made the occasion notable by his valuable paper on "Incidents" in the early history of that "fair city," which have since then been dealt with in volume form under the title of *Gloucester in National History*. And in addition to a number of valuable contributions, have we not revelled in his paper on the *Annalia Dubrensis*, one of the rarest of the small books of Gloucestershire, which describes the Dover's Games just referred to with so much interest? But we owe Mr. Hyett thanks for far more than these, for he gave us another work of especial value, and although not perhaps under the auspices of the Society, that work, in conjunction with Canon Bazeley, is of almost daily use by members. I refer to *The Manual of Gloucestershire Literature*; and he has since issued the *Biographical Supplement* in conjunction with Mr. Austin.

The Rev. C. S. Taylor was our President at the BRISTOL meeting in 1906, and his notable address on that occasion upon "The Religious Houses of Bristol and their Dissolution" formed another of the historical "text-books" from his pen. We have had over twenty papers by him, as well as that masterly volume on the *Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire*, and we shall ever be in his debt for his great work as Editor of the *Transactions* during two periods of our history. His recent paper in the last volume on the "Norman Settlement

of Gloucestershire " is also a most valuable contribution to our series.

The following year, in 1907, we paid another visit to CIRENCESTER, on that occasion under the presidency of Mr. St. Clair Baddeley, who delivered a most stirring address. Those of us who had the good fortune to hear it must have often turned to it since as a model of archæological study, covering the great expanse from prehistoric remains to literary records, which the County of Gloucester boasts in such great variety. Mr. Baddeley has also enriched our *Transactions* by many other papers of a most varied character, his description of the excavations of the Roman Villas of Painswick, Witcombe and Hullasey being particularly helpful, as well as his earlier paper on Hayles, developed into that beautiful publication *A Cotteswold Shrine*.

Far away from the county the members journeyed to CARDIFF in 1908, when Canon Bazeley became President. His historic address turned on the early connection between Glamorgan and Gloucestershire, which was of profound interest in connection with our visit to Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff Castle, and Llantwit Major. His first paper in the second volume of the *Transactions* was on the records of his beloved Matson; and the entire series bears the impress of his constant work, not the least being that of the annotated programmes, almost entirely his own work, from 1897 to 1914. Then we must not forget his contributions to the *Gloucester Cathedral Records*, nor his share with Mr. Hyett in that monumental work *The Manual of Gloucestershire Literature*, the third volume of which exclusively relates to Bristol.

The second occasion of a summer visit to EVESHAM found us with Professor C. W. C. Oman as our President; and who of those present, having had the delight of meeting in the quaint hall of that Worcestershire town, will forget that occasion or the charm of the address, or the descriptive account of the battle from a spot close to the Abbey Manor,

whence a good view of the battlefield was obtained? Engaged as the nations are in deadly conflict at the present time, it may not be uninteresting to refer to that paper and note the style of warfare adopted in those days.

The suggestion of an OXFORD visit, made by Professor Oman, was carried out in 1910, when the President of Magdalen, an old Cliftonian, welcomed the Society in the Divinity School. As the occasion is so recent, and the very fascinating address of the Vice-Chancellor—now Sir T. Herbert Warren—is printed, it is only necessary to say that the meeting gave exceptional pleasure to the members.

The later out-door meetings need no comment, as they are within the memory of all; but I must refer to the past two years, when noteworthy addresses have been given by our able ex-President, Dr. Sidney Hartland, at Bristol in 1916 and at Gloucester in 1917. We thank him for retaining the presidency for the second year, and we still remain under a great obligation to him as Editor of our *Transactions*.

Now, I think we all must realise that much work for the Society has been done by many others besides those who have occupied the chair—by able men and women of Bristol and Gloucestershire, and others outside that area. It will be interesting that I should name a few of these, all being members of the Society, and having “passed the border” :—

John Taylor—Bristol’s Librarian, the originator of the Society and the erudite historian of the city, who contributed many papers on Bristol history.

John Latimer—the distinguished author of the *Annals of Bristol of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*—who made valuable contributions, and was for some years Local Secretary.

William George and J. F. Nicholls, both original members, who wrote on historic matters relating to Bristol.

John Bellows, the Quaker writer on Roman Gloucester.

The Hon. and Right Rev. Bishop Clifford, an enthusiast on the ancient roads of the county.

F. S. Waller, the architect to Gloucester Cathedral, who helped us in many ways.

The Rev. David Royce, of Nether Swell, who contributed several papers as well as the Winchcombe Cartulary. To his widow we owe the gift of his valuable library, a very great addition to our own books. This was catalogued by Canon Bazeley.

The Rev. E. A. Fuller, who actually contributed thirteen papers on Cirencester to our *Transactions*.

The Rev. T. P. Wadley, who compiled the *Book of Bristol Wills*, of rare value to students.

The Rev. B. H. Blacker, the founder of *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, which contains a mass of most valuable matter.

Mrs. Bagnall-Oakley, who charmed us by her personality, her enthusiasm, her very racy papers on Castles and Effigies, and even on Roman Coinage.

A. S. Ellis, two papers of exceptional value, "The Manorial History of Clifton," with plan, and "Landholders of Gloucestershire in Domesday."

And the special work of many of our members in the compilation of the Church Plate of Gloucestershire must not be overlooked.

Then we must not forget our friend Mr. Francis Were, so regular at our meetings in days gone by, but who has now been ill for a long time. To him we especially owe the "Index to the Heraldry in Bigland," a work that took him several years to accomplish.

Miss Roper for her series of papers on Effigies.

Dr. Fryer especially for his papers on Fonts.

There are, of course, many others as well, and our

present General Secretary, who has already contributed several valuable papers.

One of the objects of the Society, as laid down by the founders, is "to collect and classify original and existing information for an improved County History," and another "to promote by meetings and publications such an interest throughout the district in the monuments of its past history as shall tend to counteract their present liability to inconsiderate and needless destruction." I have already drawn your attention to some of the presidential addresses and papers contributed to our *Transactions*, fulfilling the first object named; and as to the second, I think I may say that the archæological discoveries which members have made during the period under review, or have been associated with, are principally described in detail over the forty volumes we have issued. The cities of Bristol and Gloucester naturally claim a good many—the prehistoric finds at the former, and the Roman remains at the latter, well known to most of you, have frequently created problems of much interest to the enthusiastic antiquary. The various barrows and camps of the hills; the Roman Villas of Corinium, of Tockington, of Witcombe, of Spoonley Wood, of Painswick and of Hucclecote; the glories of Deerhurst and the ruins of Hayles; as well as the protection of many an ecclesiastical fabric and domestic dwelling, have all constituted the work of the members of this Society. Then the watchful eye on excavations, revealing relics and coinage from prehistoric to mediæval times, has happily saved specimens of extraordinary interest.

But however careful and watchful one may be in centres such as ours, it is not always possible to arrest the hand of the "spoiler," who may be divided into two categories: the semi-ignorant individual who stealthily scours this land of ours to obtain gold, and the other individual who, possessing gold, destroys an ancient house, for example, in order to beautify his new ancestral home. I have in mind such a

case of quite recent date, when some fine old panelling was transferred in this manner, and another instance within recent times, when an assumed antiquary deemed it within his sovereign right to come into our territory and acquire a mediæval pavement of great historic value, for the enrichment of his own collection. Such acts are a scandal, and proportionately not less culpable than the destruction of the antiquities of France and Belgium by the Hun monsters. Of course, procedure such as I have described cannot always be prevented, and only by the continual enthusiasm of members can we hope to protect an ancient inheritance.

And what of the three alabaster figures forming part of an ancient retable, probably of the fifteenth century, which we saw at the Angel Inn, Marshfield, upon our visit there during the meeting in 1906, which have been since purchased by a wealthy Member of Parliament, possibly without any thought or inquiry as to the ancient church which owns the right to them?

As Mr. Baddeley so delightfully put it in his famous address at Cirencester in 1907: "The mere eagerness manifested for the possession of certain classes of objects is doubtless in proportion as the known amount of these in the world, like golf itself, is now realised to be limited. But it is not by any means due to a love of archæology. It is too often due to no higher motive than self-advertisement and love of display. It is the millionaire's chosen way of proclaiming his sudden but profound culture, his craving for recognition." This exactly expresses what we too often realise, and the effect must be to goad us on with greater energy to protect our treasures, and to retain them *in situ* whenever possible.

The third object to be arrived at as the fundamental work of the Society was the establishment of a Library and Museum. It is hardly necessary to remind you that we as a Society do possess an extremely valuable Archæological, Topographical and Historical Library, which is now housed

at the Public Library at Gloucester, by a very pleasant arrangement with the Corporation, under the able guardianship of Mr. Roland Austin; and this is being added to continually. A perusal of the early volumes of the *Transactions* will tell you how it came about that Gloucester got the books. It is, however, patent to everybody that they are now kept in perfect order and condition, and can be made use of at any time.

Regarding museums, it is always interesting to find collections of local antiquities established in small towns and villages, and delightful to trace unknown specimens in the cases; but it is a difficult matter to get them established, and when once started, properly protected. There is, however, very important work to be done in this direction, for this is the primary method of securing unexpected finds. Bristol naturally possesses a very fine collection of antiquities, which are well housed; and a still greater future lies ahead, as building extensions are certain to follow after the war, for more room is already required. As to Gloucester, it is expected that the collections there will soon be re-arranged and made more attractive, as one hears that Mr. Baddeley has been elected Chairman of the Committee. I dare say he will be glad to receive gifts from this end of the county.

These expressions of opinion lead one into the realms of the future, when we hope to have time and inclination, and possibly some funds remaining, to continue the work of this great Society. The objects laid down by the founders must be kept well in view as heretofore, but I venture to suggest they will have to be enlarged. In the first place the membership must be considerably increased, and that must be done by the personal influence of each one. That is the only way of attaining numbers. And when times are again normal, and the life of the Society has returned, a good deal of important work can be taken in hand, under special groups of workers or committees, such as:—

The scheduling of the camps of the county.

The scheduling of the prehistoric remains of districts and excavating when necessary.

The scheduling of all known Roman remains.

The systematic excavation of Roman sites.

There should be no difficulty in granting sums or raising special funds for specific purposes. Regular reports of such work, and of all archæological finds from the different districts from time to time should appear in our *Transactions*, as our Editor has suggested, and these would give a stimulus to every member. There must be many members capable of original research and the contribution of papers, if only they could be induced to take up the study in their spare hours. I feel sure there will be no lack of helpers when we are free to work, if we would only bring our influence to bear.

Then no one yet has made a systematic study of the architecture of the county, or prepared a properly classified schedule ; nor has any member written a good monograph of the castles in this part, in particular Bristol and Gloucester ; nor the history of the great wool industries of the Cotswolds, taking such towns, for example, as Chipping Campden and Northleach and Cirencester—centres of great wealth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—as suggested by Mr. Taylor when he was Editor.

In the early days of the Society a few evening meetings, for the reading of papers, were held, but they were not continued. A new movement, however, was started in Bristol in 1903, for short papers on local archæological or historical subjects and the exhibition of antiquities, and continued up to March, 1914, about sixty meetings for members only and their friends, very informal in character, being held altogether. With a very few exceptions the papers were all of local interest, about thirty being printed in the *Transactions*. As soon as the war is over no great effort will be required to re-start these meetings, as they are much appreciated. At Gloucester similar gatherings have been

held, and continued with success up to last winter, but the subjects have had a wider range and the general public have been admitted.

We have met to-day under excellent conditions as a Society, but from a national point of view weighted by grave anxieties. It has, therefore, been quite impossible to hold our usual out-door meetings, but it is undoubtedly our duty to keep the Society otherwise in full existence. As guardians of the antiquities of the Counties of Bristol and Gloucestershire, it may appear almost hopeless work now-a-days trying to protect what are assailed, but we can at least make our influence felt, even in the midst of war work.

In this short and imperfect summary I have endeavoured to remind you by whom, and in what way, the Society has been built up during the past forty years.

As members of this Society the duty devolves upon us to continue the work and uphold its traditions.