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Presidential Address

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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Read at Chipping Campden, 11th September, 1923.

IT is now fourteen years since I last had the honour and privilege of addressing you in the capacity of President. That after such a long space you should again have been good enough to place me in your chair, I take to be the highest of compliments to an old and loyal member of your Association. For though my attendance may have been somewhat irregular—one's time is not always one's own—my spiritual attachment to your association is very real and deep. I owe to it much increase of knowledge, and many pleasant memories. Wherefore, when your secretary announced to me that my name had been proposed for a second term of presidential office, I had no hesitation in accepting the offer: anything that I could do for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society must be done. So I placed myself at your disposal, though July was a busy parliamentary month, and there were many engagements in the way. The chance that the meeting was postponed, owing to certain objections taken to the presence of our friends from Gloucester City, was (I fear) inconvenient to many of you. For me, I must confess in selfishness, it was a lucky turn of fate: for I am enabled to spend with you all the three days of the meeting in September, which would certainly not have been the case in July. Perhaps there may be other members to whom the "Gloucester scare" was a blessing in disguise; but I am sorry to think that there are others who would have been present with you in Campden if the month had not been thus changed. That the annual

gathering should have been postponed altogether would have been disastrous: I am quite sure that the Council did right in making the shift, which I fear has entailed much trouble for our excellent secretaries. May their toils be counted unto them for righteousness.

The last time that I sat in the presidential chair was in 1909, when our summer outing took us to a region not very remote from our present sphere of activity—Evesham being the selected centre. To many of you 1909 must seem a long way off—all our perspective of time has been altered by the five years of the Great War,—which in some aspects seemed at its end to have passed with extraordinary quickness—but in other aspects to have been almost interminable. But I remember very well all the details of that Evesham meeting—it was a time before the motor-coach had come in, and we trusted ourselves to horse-power, which restricted the limits of our daily wanderings to what seems now a very small circumference. If I remember rightly, it was only in 1914 that the charabanc appeared, to take us round the Warwickshire country in the last summer before the war. Of those who sat on our Council then, or guided our excursions, how many pleasant and familiar faces are missing? Fortunately there are still some with us—I remember well how Mr. Barnard took us round the battlefield of Evesham, and Mr. Pritchard read us a paper. Most of all do I remember the one most ludicrous incident that ever happened to the Society. The survivors will recall how we turned aside to look at some newly discovered mediæval frescoes in a very small church, and how when we reached it the vicar was aghast to find that his sexton, having been directed to see that everything was bright and clean for the Society's visit, had been smitten with the unhappy inspiration of white-washing over the frescoes—"because they made the wall look so dirty and patchy." I omit, of design, the name of that unlucky place of worship.

This year we are called to a region somewhat south of Evesham, in the midst of that curious prong or appendix which Gloucestershire thrusts up between Worcestershire and Warwickshire—to the occasional discomfort of those who have to go long journeys to our shire town on Sessional or County Council business. Most of all, I think, does this eccentric boundary harass my good friend Mr. Davies, the member for the Cirencester division, whose spheres of activity at election time are extensive in the extreme—he looks on Wiltshire one day, and on Stratford, just across the Avon, on the next. I suspect that there are other members of the Society beside myself who know too little of extreme north-eastern Gloucestershire, and have much to learn of its antiquities. I am ashamed that I must confess that I never visited Campden before this day, and that all our projected excursions will be through country hitherto unknown—save indeed the Broadway-Stanway district, with which I am well acquainted.

May I implore any of you who are struck by the strange position of the county boundaries in this direction, to look up the valuable paper¹ which Mr. Taylor wrote for *the Transactions* in 1909, to explain how Gloucester and Worcester came to have these casual *enclaves* and projections upon their meeting place. It was certainly not owing to any natural physical division of the terrain, but to local, personal, and political conveniences being consulted to the entire neglect of geography. It was from Mr. Taylor's paper that I first learnt of the curious fact that there had been in the 10th century a "Winchcombeshire," and that one of the offences attributed to the notorious Edric Streona, the unworthy favourite of Ethelred the Unready, was that he had abolished Winchcombeshire and cut it away in bits. Apparently then there is a lost Cotswold county, on whose boundaries we can only speculate: but undoubtedly its abolition must have had something to do

¹ The Northern Boundary of Gloucestershire, *Transactions*, xxxii, 109-39.

with our present abnormal frontiers—the strange Worcestershire *enclave* of Blockley Jurisdiction, and our own queer northern extension to Welford and Clifford Chambers. Perhaps we may be lucky enough to get some further light on these county boundaries in the next few days, from those whose lot is permanently cast among them.

As often happens, the most interesting item of our tour is to be a trespass beyond our own limits, to see the remotely placed but wonderfully beautiful house of Compton Winyates—which is pictured in every book of English Architecture, but is so comparatively seldom visited. Not that I wish to undervalue the interest of Campden itself, which would alone justify our excursion to these regions. But there remains only the fragments of Sir Baptist Hicks' great manor, which was so cruelly devastated only a generation after it had been built, while Compton Winyates escaped all the storms of the Civil War. If the great house of Campden had survived intact, it might well have merited the name of the "Campden Wonder,"—a phrase unhappily reserved (as most of you know) for that strange miscarriage of justice in the reign of Charles II which has served as the excuse for many pamphlets and at least one stage-play.

A president whose activities are about equally divided between Oxford and Westminster has, naturally, not such a close knowledge of what is going on in the way of local antiquarian research in Gloucestershire as might be desired. Your treasurer's and secretary's reports will give you a far better account of the archæological history of our county during the last twelve months, than I can hope to supply. I presume, therefore, that when you elected me to hold this chair for the second time, you were expecting rather that I should speak on more general topics. There are, I need hardly say, plenty of them forthcoming.

The first and perhaps the most important of them is the attitude of the State towards historical monuments. of

which we have been hearing somewhat in Parliament of late. I was one of those who raised the question of the danger to our great megalithic monument at Avebury, this summer. As some of you know, the negotiations for "broadcasting" between the Postmaster-General and the Marconi Company, ended in the selection of Avebury as one of the chief central stations of England. There is so much land in Wiltshire—and elsewhere in Wessex—that it seemed irrational that the neighbourhood of this prehistoric monument should be selected, rather than any other place, for the establishment of what is evidently to be a large and busy settlement of electricians. I do not suppose that they actually intended to put their biggest pole in the middle of the Avebury stones, but it was very likely that they would encroach quite near with their new buildings, and spoil the general effect of the stone circles. That this is no vain fear is shown by what happened at Stonehenge, where the lonely majesty of the bare downs used to give a proper setting to our oldest and plainest monument. But now Stonehenge, wired in for the protection of the actual megaliths, has quite close to it all manner of unsightly new erections. This vandalism was perpetrated during the war, and at that time military necessity, very properly, overrode all other considerations. But now that we are back in what ought to be normal times, no excuse can be made for spoiling natural monuments by inappropriate surroundings. It turns out on enquiry that when a government department wants to seize on a site for some new enterprise, it is not compelled to enquire first of the Committee for the Protection of Ancient Monuments whether there is any objection from historical and archæological points of view. We raised in Parliament the plea that some such consultation ought to take place before anything is started, and I think that we are likely to carry our point. As to Avebury, I had last week a reply from the Postmaster-General that the

proposed Marconi station there was probably to be dropped altogether. This is satisfactory for the one instance, but does not provide for general protection. It is still a sad thing that although many important archæological sites have been scheduled, other are entirely at the mercy of Vandals, whether government departments or private persons. Some of you will have noted with sorrow the gradual disappearance under blasting operation of all the prehistoric camps on Penmaenmawr, which promises to end in their complete destruction before this generation is extinct—the quarry owners are ruthless. But Vandalism on a smaller scale is still going on in almost every English town. We at Oxford are supposed to be rather more enlightened than the citizens of certain Northern centres of population as regards archæology. But we have just permitted the destruction of one of the last three surviving Elizabethan three-gabled houses in our second most important street. I know not whether the rococo building that is rising on its foundation is to serve as additional premises for the grocer on one side or for the hotel on the other. I suspect that Bristol could quote us several modern parallel instances, for whenever I visit that city I look in vain for certain 16th century houses that I well remember in my youth.

The remedy is hard to find, when the house is not one of paramount historical interest—but even that did not save Crosby Hall in late Victorian days. There is, I fear, no doubt that the tall modern structure which replaces the old gabled house commands a higher rent. And can the private owner be requested to forego the profit which he makes by the substitution? If he is asked to do so, who is to pay the compensation which he will, not unreasonably, demand? Certainly not our Corporations, whose rates are already so heavy that they would scout any proposal to spend money for the purely negative aid of keeping an ancient building in its place. And equally certain is it that

Archæological Societies can not find the money, for we are an impecunious race. There remains the State, or the benevolent millionaire. But no Chancellor of the Exchequer with the unemployed (and unemployable!) and the interest on the American loan weighing upon his mind, will dream of finding any appreciable sum for the preservation of local, not national, antiquities. And the millionaire—not such a common phenomenon as is generally supposed,—does not seem to turn his mind to antiquities. When he does disgorge, it will most probably be for some brand-new hospital, library or institution which will perpetuate his own name. When he does get hold of an old building, it is generally to disfigure it, as witness Hever Castle. But in this he is no more guilty than the legitimate heirs of many an old castle and manor, who continue to pull them about, even as their Georgian ancestors did with Tudor mansions, and their Tudor ancestors with mediæval strongholds. We must confess that a Gothic chamber does not usually serve very well either for a study, a sleeping apartment, or a billiard room. And the modern man seeks comfort and convenience—even as did his 18th century or 16th century predecessors according to their lights.

In fairness to the Government I ought to add that where an ancient site *has* been scheduled, and handed over to the care of the Committee for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, and where the Board of Works has set its people to deal with the ruins, the results have been satisfactory. Dilapidation has been stopped, necessary repairs have been carried out, without any dangerous attempt at reconstruction of what has absolutely disappeared, and judicious excavation has occasionally revealed lost features which were unknown when the structure was in private (and often neglectful) hands. This I have seen for myself at the Abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, and a similar report is given to me by those

who have recently been at Rievaulx and Dundrennan. Wherefore credit must be given where it is due. But I am sadly afraid that the recent falling of the "Geddes Axe" on all expenses save those that can be proved absolutely necessary, may lead to the cutting down of recent activities in this protective effort.

And where it is a matter of acquiring non-scheduled sites, or buildings that stand on ground which has a high commercial value, I fear that Archæology fights a losing game alike against the ideal of comfort and the idea of monetary profit of this 20th century. All the more reason is there, then, that we of the learned societies should protect all that we can, and not surrender without resistance to the Vandals. Let it be our pride to see that we at least save something for our successors.

There is another point on which I wish to lay some stress when setting forth the disadvantages of the 20th century archæologist. I allude to the excessive, and I will boldly add the extortionate, prices both of printing and of illustration in these times. They are injurious to all forms of literature, but most of all to learned literature, written by and intended for the specialists in any line of enquiry, whether it be historical, archæological, philological, or scientific. At the present moment only works intended for the larger reading public, or for school use, can be produced in such bulk as to pay for themselves. You have only to look on your shelf for the series of any learned society's publications in which you are interested, to see what present printing prices imply in the way of making the diffusion of recondite knowledge difficult or even impossible.

Our own *Transactions* are normally far less bulky than in the golden days before 1914. I bind up two yearly volumes in one now-a-days. Yet, fortunately for us, the *Transactions* of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society have not shrunk nearly so much in size as

those of some other learned bodies. "Archæologia"—the great quarto publication of the Society of Antiquaries—has grown dreadfully intermittent, and, when it does appear, is a very thin and modest object. It is the same with the Journals of the Numismatic Society, and with several other specialized series to which I subscribe. This means that much first-rate material, profitable to the reader, which would have been published before the war can not be published now. Only the most select articles struggle into print. And the illustrations to these have to be cut down to the lowest minimum, because the price of process-blocks has gone up on a scale even steeper than that of mere printed matter.

The cause of this diminution of learned publications is that the Societies can not cope with the price now charged for printing. They are almost entirely composed of members who do not belong to the profiteer class, and from whom no serious increase of subscriptions can be levied. And if the societies can not provide money to print on the old scale, the books or articles can not appear. This ban on the dissemination of specialized knowledge we seem to owe mainly to the Trades Union of the Compositors, a body of men which seems to think that it can keep up to the level of war-wages, when almost every other trade has come down to earnings that correspond to the fallen prices of commodities that now prevail. I have gone into the question in detail with three or four leading publishers, and I can not see that they are sharing to any perceptible extent in the extortionate profits of the compositors; nor is any very heavy proportion of the enhanced book-prices going into the pockets of the master printers, though the publisher thinks that they are having a much better time than himself. Now that the price of paper and other material has fallen, it is really the wages of the compositor that are preventing the production of the full proceedings of learned societies, and of the

works on recondite subjects of interest. Unfortunately we are defeated in our endeavours to press for cheap production, because the daily newspapers, which employ such a very large proportion of the compositors, will submit to anything, rather than find themselves involved in a strike. Their jealousy of each other prevents them from joining the publishers and the societies in any attempt to reduce the costs of printing, which remain about two and a half times what they were before the war. The only way out of the difficulty for the societies seems to be the desperate remedy of getting their *Transactions* printed abroad; some of them have already begun to do so. All one's national sympathies are against this: but if our Trade Unions persist in their resolve to make the production of learned periodicals almost impossible, that amounts to an attack on knowledge and research which I strongly resent. The necessity to make a practical protest grows yearly more urgent, and I foresee the time when we shall reach the end of our patience. Why should one trade perpetuate its war-profiteering gains in a time of generally falling prices?

I can imagine the objection being made that all this depression of learning and research is but one of the innumerable consequences of the Great War—that every branch of the national energies is being enfeebled by the oppressive taxation, which is the necessary consequence of our determination to pay our debts in an honourable fashion. Why should archæologists hope to escape their share of the inconveniences that fall upon nearly every other class of citizens? The answer that I should make to this plea is that we recognize that the national finances are terribly strained, and that we allow that the State can not support research with the subsidies that we should like to see granted. *But* it is not from the State that we are asking for consideration, but from a section of its members who are trying to retain for themselves in post-war days

abnormal advantages which they obtained under war conditions. Other bodies of people who enjoyed exceptional wages or privileges during the war have been obliged to surrender part of them, as normal conditions supervened. The civil servants are gradually losing their exaggerated bonuses and increments for example. And I fail to see why printers should be exempt from the reductions that have had to be conceded by miners, or civil servants, or any other class of citizens. We are protesting not against a general tendency, but against a particular monopoly, because we consider that that monopoly is doing harm to the whole nation. For the prosecution of research and the encouragement of learning are ends which must be kept in mind by any nation that does not wish to sink into materialism and stagnation. And no class or trade has the right to stand in the way of national culture.

I have, perhaps, enlarged overmuch on this grievance of the intellectual classes. But when I think of the many books that are unpublished, and the monographs that are unprinted, of which I have personal knowledge, all because nothing will now "pay" save novels, or school-books, or exciting personal reminiscences, I am moved to no small indignation.

It is of course a specially vexatious thing that when the opportunities for research, and for the advancement of learning, are specially promising, we have not the power to take advantage of them, for mere financial reasons. The result of the World-War has been to open many countries for archæological research which were previously almost inaccessible—such as Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and great parts of the Balkan peninsula. But little can be done in them, because no nation, and still more no learned society, has any appreciable money to spend on such an "unpractical" end as mere historical exploration. This must be granted, exasperating though the conclusion

may be. We must be thankful, I suppose, for some few results that are uncovenanted mercies, discoveries that were made as direct results of the war. A good deal of interesting stuff was turned up in Macedonia while we were trench-making there. By a particularly vexatious chance the very valuable relics that were dug up at Amphipolis, when we held it as an outpost, were all lost—sunk in the Aegean when the ship that carried them was torpedoed by a German submarine. But other finds have survived—for example the great hoard of ancient silver coins found in a cellar that was uncovered, after two thousand years, by the great fire of Salonica. They would never have turned up if that ancient city had not been burned to the ground.

The long protracted operations in the desert in front of Gaza and Beersheba in 1917 led also to some interesting discoveries, the whole north fringe of the land of Edom, now a waste, had been thickly peopled before the Moslem arrived. And a number of sites were uncovered, which would be worth going into with energy if only funds were forthcoming. The one which provoked most curiosity was a very large Byzantine church dedicated to St. George, with handsome Mosaic pavement, which some unlearned enthusiasts—Australians I believe—identified with the spot of St. George's martyrdom—quite wrongly for he was put to death at Nicomedia. In Mesopotamia numerous prominent mounds were identified as ancient Babylonian cities, and at least one of them, "Ur of the Chaldees," the birthplace of Abraham, has been dug up since the war ended by an expedition from the British Museum, with profitable results.

The operations on the main western front in Flanders and Northern France led to such an unconscionable amount of trench-digging that it was to be expected that many hoards would turn up. But I have heard of nothing very exciting—though there was a find of old English silver

pennies in the Ypres direction, and another of 16th century dollars and fractions at Verdun. The one really important find in this direction has only just cropped up, in rebuilding the ruined central streets of Arras, in the year 1918, an immense *trouvaille* of Roman 4th century gold medallions was discovered. One of them, as I learn, for I have not seen it, was a large gold medallion of a type hitherto unknown, showing the Cæsar Constantius Chlorus entering London, with a view of the Thames and a bridge over which the emperor is riding. The inscription LOND above the town fixes the fact that it is London which is intended to be figured. It is a thousand pities that this large and beautiful piece cannot be secured for the British Museum. It is of ten times more historic value to us than to the French. But I fear that such a happy chance is impossible. There were many other large gold pieces of the early 4th Century in this Arras hoard, all valuable and interesting, but not to compare in historical importance with the coin which I have mentioned. For it is absolutely the first coin or record of any kind which has come to hand to illustrate the fact that London was in the days of the Roman empire not merely a large provincial town, but the official head of one of the great "dioceses" of the 4th century empire, in a parallel line hierarchically with Treves, Carthage, Alexandria or Antioch. While coins were known which illustrated all these cities, none such celebrating London had ever been discovered till now.

All additions to archæological knowledge caused by the war, were as I said before, "uncovenanted mercies," reached by chance and not of set purpose by research. Scientific exploration of sites in which so many of the English county Societies (our own included) were busy before 1914 is another matter. With the best wish to set to work again when war-conditions ceased, we have (like the State at large) been met by a difficulty often unsur-

mountable, viz. the combination of restricted means in our finances and terribly increased expenses owing to the rise in the price of labour. The ingenious suggestion that if the unemployed must have their dole, and if work of practical utility for them is in many places unfindable, they might be given spades to serve the archæologist, has not been found very successful. For town or county councils and other employers of 'unemployed' suspect archæology at large—there is "no money in it." While the unemployed are for the most part not resident in the regions where archæological excavation is required, and if they are, can not be trusted in the delicate work of dealing with ancient ruins, or digging where substructures underground are believed to exist. The societies have to rely on their own resources, and these are in most cases so moderate that little can be done. Still, a certain amount of important work can be reported.

Far the most interesting item of very recent archæological discovery is the great find of Roman silver plate at Traprain Law, on the Lothian estate of Earl Balfour. This was found by the diggings of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, who taking in hand what was supposed to be the comparatively modest task of uncovering a prehistoric hill-fort, ran against something wholly unexpected, the largest treasure-hoard of Roman silver plate that has ever been found in Britain, though, of course, it can not be compared for beauty or importance with the great Hildesheim or Bosco Reale treasures. But the many hundred ounces of silver-ware recovered from the ground contained articles of high artistic merit, and their juxtaposition raised problems of the greatest historical interest. The vast majority of the pieces were fragmentary; some barbarian victors had torn salvers and vases in sunder, in the most ruthless fashion, during the process of dividing the spoil. The jug with the story of Pan and Syrinx, the great platter with the head and bust of Hercules were each

half-pieces of a shattered whole. Only small articles, such as spoons, salt-cellars, and very small cups, had escaped mutilation. Yet one of these was a thing of unique importance, the first known Christian chalice, with high-relief groups representing Biblical scenes, like those which are to be seen in the Catacombs of Rome or on 4th century sarcophagi.

How did such a hoard come to be buried, and never dug up again till yesterday? Obviously a band of plunderers who had been devastating some Roman province, about the year 400 A.D. (for several coins of Honorius were found among the plate) had been pursued, and—before standing to bay—had hurriedly put their spoil under ground—it was only a foot or two below the surface. They must then have been exterminated by their pursuers, not one of them surviving to return for the treasure. But who were the plunderers, where did they get their silver, and who slew them off?

Some of the plate is decidedly of Gallo-Roman work, and from this some archæologists have guessed that the raiders must have been Saxon sea-pirates, who had been devastating Aquitaine or Armorica. But if so, why should they have buried their treasure several miles inland, on the site of a British camp? The fact that some of the silver is of Gallic make proves nothing, for Roman officials or merchants were always on the move, and a salver made at Bordeaux or Rouen might well be on the sideboard of a magistrate or burgess of York or Lincoln. And why should Saxon pirates, who had been ravaging Gaul, bury their hoard, not on the sea shore, but inland, if their flight from a pursuing fleet took them to the Firth of Forth? I should be inclined myself to suspect that the silver, whatever its original *provenance*, represented the sack by the Picts of some large British-Roman city. For a Pictish band would fly by land, and if pursued by Roman cavalry from some of the garrisons of the Roman

North, would be much more likely than Saxons to know of, and utilize for defence, the ramparts of a disused Celtic hill-fort. But this is only my private opinion; others may make different deductions.

It remains clear that excavation may be rewarded by the most important and the most unexpected prizes. Let us resume it as soon as our resources enable us to do so—even on the most modest scale. Let us remember the Bishops Cleeve find of a century ago—still the largest Roman gold find recorded in Britain, though unhappily discovered in days before learned societies existed and accurate investigation and cataloguing was possible—and let us hope that some afternoon our spades may turn up a second Traprain Law hoard. It shall be treated with the loving care that the archæologist of to-day can bestow upon it—not melted or fumbled away privately like that Cleeve treasure, of which we have only a tantalizing and casual record. Gloucestershire was perhaps the wealthiest corner of Roman Britain. Who can tell what its soil may not still cover in the way of antiquities? “I can not dig—to beg I am ashamed” said the unjust steward in the parable; unlike that worthless person, let us dig, and equally unlike him let us not be ashamed to beg—if begging means the solicitation of subscriptions for that most laudable end the use of the spade.