

ARCHAEOLOGY IN HAMPSHIRE, 1955

The President's Address at the Annual General Meeting.

1. General.

It is now ten years since the War in Europe ended and we could continue our activities in Archaeology and kindred subjects.

During this period professional curators have been appointed in practically every area in the County, and a good start has been made in establishing Record Offices under the Clerk of the various Councils.

Many Museums have changed to a policy of regional specialisation and show only objects of local history.

2. County Council.

In 1947 the County Council set up the Hampshire Record Office under a single Archivist, who now has two assistants, to deal with Quarter Sessions Records and such documents as might accrue from private families and public bodies. It is housed in the basement of the Castle Avenue buildings with office, reading room, storeroom and strong rooms fitted with heaters and the necessary ventilation to prevent excessive humidity. Since the foundation of this office there has been a steady flow of several thousand documents every year, which are available for the use of students, besides which enquiries by post have been numerous. A catalogue, card indices and facilities for the repair of documents have also been provided.

The County Council has also made provision for being notified of objects or sites of archaeological interest from the District Councils in the administrative County.

In addition the County Council has made a grant for a survey of the Celtic fields in Hampshire—while they still exist. It is most urgent owing to their widespread destruction by bull-dozers and other modern machines in the drive for intensive agriculture.

The County Council has lately taken over the Alton and Basingstoke Museums.

3. Aldershot.

In 1952 the "Aldershot Society" was founded to encourage research into the history of the Borough and the collection and preservation of documents of historical interest. Several old prints, etc., have already been received and arrangements are being made to house them properly. The Society holds periodical meetings and lectures are given.

Messrs. Gale & Polden have recently published the *Story of Aldershot*, which includes the early history of the Borough.

It is hoped to make arrangements for archaeological excavations in the vicinity of Caesar's Camp.

4. **Alton.**

The Curtis Museum is this year celebrating its Centenary, and is at present in the middle of a complete re-organisation. Assisted by a grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust they are improving their show cases and in other ways bringing the Museum up to date. The exhibits include collections of agricultural material and by-gones. Mr. W. Hugh Curtis has written a History of the Museum, which is to be published shortly. Also in the district are Jane Austen's House (now Museum) at Chawton, and Gilbert White's house, "The Wakes", at Selborne.

5. **Andover.**

The Museum at Andover, which is attached to the Public Library contains exhibits of local interest.* There is also a muniment room at the Library for the borough records, which have been put in order and listed.

6. **Basingstoke.**

The Museum holds periodical exhibitions and includes those on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, and it lends material to students for study. The borough records have been properly dealt with.

Archaeological and historical lectures are given to visiting Schools, and to outside bodies on local pre-history.

On the natural history side a wild flower exhibition is held throughout the summer.

The Camera Club shows photographs taken at local events during the last fifty years.

7. **Christchurch.**

In the Red House are the Museum and Art Gallery, to which is attached the "Friends of the Red House". Great interest is taken in Botany with a view to studying the vegetation of the area in prehistoric times. The museum includes local prehistoric and Roman material. There are records of the period when Christchurch was a great centre of smuggling, and displays are being set up to show the past use of the River Avon.

* The Museum has recently been closed.—*Editor's note.*

8. Isle of Wight.

In the Isle of Wight the Museum at Carisbrooke Castle was in 1951 re-arranged and limited to Island archaeology and history. One gallery contains collections of archaeology, pre-historic to Jutish, the other is devoted to medieval history and later. There is also a room of local prints. At the moment historical displays are being prepared, dealing with shipwrecks and smuggling, and with transport.

A fine example of a grooved bronze dagger of Wessex period found in a barrow on Arretton Down is on loan to the Museum.

There is a well preserved mammoth tooth recently found at Ryde in the Museum of Isle of Wight geology at Sandown.

9. Portsmouth.

Unfortunately this great naval port was one of the enemy's chief targets, and the Museum in the High Street was destroyed by bombs in 1940. Until adequate buildings in the City become available the aim has been to develop Cumberland House to serve in the capacity of temporary City Museum and Art Gallery.

In the meantime the Portsmouth Museums Society was formed in November 1953 under the Presidency of the Bishop of Portsmouth, whom we lately had the pleasure of hearing in Winchester in his lecture on glaciology. Its purpose is to stimulate interest in local history and prehistory, and the development of local museums and local archives. Its membership is growing rapidly and it is already doing most successful work. It is quite independent of both the Museum and the local authority. The Society functions in two parts, an Archaeological Section working on a Romano-Belgic village site on Chalton Down, and the Local History Section undertaking documentary research. The latter has held very successful lecture meetings in the Wren room at Buckingham House, kindly placed at its disposal by the owner.

The Chalton Down Site has unearthed Roman and Celtic brooches, needles, etc., and those wishing to assist in the excavations would be most welcome.

The Society during the year has assisted the Horndean Community Section in forming a very active History group, and a similar group on Hayling Island is contemplated.

10. Romsey.

At the suggestion in 1951 of the late Sir Richard Luce, who it will be remembered was a President of this Field Club, King John's Hunting Box at Romsey has been fitted up as a Museum and already very interesting objects have been collected from the Romsey District, including Broadlands and Embley Park. There are also some Roman and Early English pottery, tiles, etc.

11. Southampton.

This great mercantile port was also the target for enemy bombing and a considerable area in the Borough was razed. In January 1946 a professional curator was appointed and a full-time Archivist in 1952. The Southampton Saxon Excavation Committee and the Friends of Old Southampton soon got to work to explore the devastated parts of the town. These two Societies have now combined and are working on sites in the area of the Saxon Town of Hamwih and also within the walled area of Medieval Southampton. This Field Club has from time to time assisted with grants, and it is very desirable that the work should proceed as quickly as possible as many of the sites will soon be covered by new roads and buildings.

In 1951 the Bar Gate was opened as a Civic Museum. Besides the permanent collections of local historical interest, it has housed many temporary exhibitions.

Tudor House Museum is being converted as a period museum of the 16th and 17th centuries, with its Georgian Wing refurbished in Regency Style. These two Museums have attracted over 100,000 visitors a year between them.

Now the South Castle (God's House Tower) is being restored for use as a museum of local archaeology, and the 14th Century Wool House used as a flour store will become the Maritime Museum.

In effect the use of these four ancient and interesting buildings as museums will mean that the public will have ready access to them.

The Photographic record section of the Hampshire Field Club has been turned over by Dr. and Mrs. Green, after years of devoted work, to Tudor House and continues to receive material.

12. Winchester.

In 1947 a professional Curator was appointed in charge of the City Museums, and a thorough re-organisation in accordance with a policy of regional specialisation was commenced. This superseded the Museum in which exhibits from all parts were shown, and for which there was not sufficient accommodation.

Grants for specific items in connection with re-organisation, such as display cases and storage accommodation were gratefully received from the Joint Committee of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Museums Association. In the City Museum an office for the Curator and storage are provided in the top floor, and it is hoped that a small lecture room can in time be added. The first floor is devoted to the archaeology and natural science of Hampshire, while the ground floor contains specimens found in or otherwise associated with the City of Winchester.

The Museum has received by gift, purchase and loan a great deal of local material, including finds from excavations conducted by the Hampshire Field Club on sites in the County, and from excavations carried out by the Winchester City Council in the City.

It has been part of the new museum policy to take advantage of opportunities presented by re-development schemes for applying modern methods of archaeological research to the many problems of Winchester's early history.

As can be seen from the excavations reports published in our *Proceedings*, this aspect of the Museum's work has already produced impressive results.

The Westgate Museum contains specimens illustrating the Civic history of Winchester, such as the Moot Horn and the City's unrivalled collection of weights and measures from Edward III onwards.

Suitable specimens from the natural history collection formerly in the top floor of the City Museum have been given to the Department of Zoology of Southampton University.

A new building has been provided for the Winchester City Record Office, and includes a store for documents and a repairer's room. The records are in process of being moved from the City Library, the Guildhall and other sources in the City.

They are open to all *bona fide* students and may be consulted by arrangement. The staff consists of an Hon. Archivist, an experienced repairer and a student-trainee from the School of Art.

Like other authorities, the City Council have accepted the principle that documents foreign to the Winchester archives should be returned where possible to their natural home.

An exhibition will be held in July next on the occasion of the visit of Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

As the result of the Roman finds in the City a number of very keen excavators formed the Winchester Archaeological Society in September 1954, and from the 1st January last decided to take over from the City Council the responsibility of continuing as many excavations as possible while they are made available by the planning activities of the Council. The Society is now making arrangements for large scale excavations to be conducted by a qualified archaeologist as soon as more sites become available. Volunteers of all ages are most welcome and there is plenty of careful light work for those who feel digging a little beyond them.

All finds go to the City Museum.

13. Ministry of Works.

In addition to the excavations and other work sponsored by local authorities and organisations the Ministry of Works has undertaken excavations during the last four years on the Roman Site at Bitterne near Southampton, the large Bronze Age barrow at Bishop's Waltham and a site at Warsash. This will be very much appreciated as we have such excellent examples of their efficiency in Old Sarum, Stonehenge and Portchester Castle.

14. Hampshire Field Club.

Excavations on the site of the Saxon Cemetery at Worthy Park, near Winchester, which was sponsored by the Club are still in abeyance as the site is occupied.

15. Cave Library.

A most valuable library of over 700 books and pamphlets bequeathed to the Field Club by Mr. C. J. P. Cave is at present housed in the Curator's office in the City Museum, Winchester. It is hoped that in time the Hampshire Field Club will very seriously consider providing a library and reading room like many of its neighbours. In the meantime the books may be seen on application to the Curator.