LAUNCHING a new society and journal devoted to archaeological matters, especially a society and journal of national standing, is not to be undertaken lightly, and those who took part in the initiation of this present venture were fully seized of the difficulty of their project and the hard work it would entail. That they were prepared to undertake it at all is some measure of their profound belief in the need for such a society and in the existence of a sufficient measure of support for it, both in this country and abroad, to ensure that success would ultimately crown their efforts.

At the time of writing these words, when barely twelve months have elapsed since the Society was formally launched, the Society has already attained a membership of 387 (294 individuals, 93 libraries). This number is not yet sufficient to ensure the continuance, let alone the prosperity of the Society and of its journal, but it is, we believe, a promising start, and if those who are already members will help to make the Society’s existence known and bring in others, there need be no risk that the necessary support will not be forthcoming to enable future annual volumes of the journal to be even larger than this present one. It is the expressed hope of the Officers and Council, speaking for the Society, that an annual volume of at least 200 text pages can ultimately be maintained, perhaps appearing in two parts of 100 pages each.

The first moves towards founding the Society took place in 1956 and by the end of the year it was already clear to the principal sponsors that there existed an appreciable measure of support for such a venture. The Officers of the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Royal Archaeological Institute, the British Archaeological Association, the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and the Prehistoric Society were approached and they one and all expressed approval of the plan and a welcome for the venture. The President of the Society of Antiquaries, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, was particularly helpful and kindly disposed toward it, and readily agreed to take the chair at the first public meeting, which took place in his Society’s apartments in Burlington House, freely lent for the occasion, on 16 April, 1957. At that meeting, which was attended by upwards of 85 people, it was decided, with only one dissentient, to appoint a steering committee of six to prepare a draft constitution. That committee’s proposals were duly laid before a second public meeting, at which Sir Mortimer Wheeler again took the chair, on 13 June, 1957, and were approved without dissentient voice. This second meeting also appointed officers and a committee, and the Society was thereupon in being.

The Constitution then adopted is printed at the end of this volume, together with the names of the Society’s Officers and Committees for 1957-58. The Society’s financial year runs from 1 April-31 March and the initial subscriptions of founder
members cover the year 1 April, 1957-31 March, 1958, as does this volume of its journal. That the volume appears after the end of that twelvemonth period is greatly regretted by the Council, but it is intended that the second volume shall be produced within its appropriate financial year ending 31 March, 1959, and further volumes annually thereafter, provided the necessary financial support continues to exist.

At the two public meetings on 16 April and 13 June, 1957, much discussion took place about the aims which the Society should set itself to attain, and the decisions were ultimately embodied in paragraph 3 of the Constitution. But it is well to elaborate these aims here so that all can recognize their intent and implications. The Society's prime purpose is to encourage the study of the archaeology of the period of the growth of the English nation. Since 1936, when the Prehistoric Society was refounded as a national body based on the former Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, it has covered the archaeology of these islands (and beyond) up to the Roman conquest, and since 1911 the period of the Roman domination has been well covered by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, which has always paid special attention to Roman Britain. Agreement was therefore unanimous that any new Society should take as its sphere of influence the period following the official departure of the Roman armies from our shores and should cover the whole of the dark-age and medieval periods, as they are generally understood in these islands. That the term 'dark-age' is excluded from the Society's title is due in part to an attempt to attain brevity and in part also to an attempt to fit in with the generally-accepted terminology of historians in this country and on the continent.

Though this journal is essentially an archaeological one and will not as a rule include articles that are primarily historical or philological, it is hoped that it will attract the support of exponents of those allied studies by using such studies, where it is proper or desirable, to elucidate the archaeological evidence, and vice versa. The day is past when the historian, the philologist, the art-historian and the archaeologist could ignore each other—not, perhaps, with impunity (for that never was so)—but without attracting adverse criticism for such action. Today all four disciplines and many others too, including the more purely scientific ones, must work together even more closely if they are to make significant progress. This first volume of our journal includes an article on 'Beowulf and Archaeology' by a Lecturer in Anglo-Saxon studies and one on 'Tree-ring analysis as an aid to medieval studies', written jointly by a meteorologist and an archaeologist. Future volumes will continue this attempt to show the interaction of one discipline upon another, and to open out new avenues for coordinated research on medieval antiquities.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1957

The First Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries of London at Burlington House on 6 December, 1957. The appointment of the honorary vice-presidents was confirmed and the election of the vice-presidents was approved. Mr. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford delivered his
Presidential Address entitled ‘Some comments on the Miniatures and Ornaments of the Lindisfarne Gospels’.

THE SHEFFIELD CONFERENCE

The first Annual Spring Conference of the Society was held at Sheffield from Friday, 28, to Sunday, 30 March, 1958, its theme being ‘The Relationship of Archaeology and History in the Study of the Medieval Period’. The conference opened on the Friday evening with three short talks on aspects of medieval archaeology in the Peak district, Mr. J. Bartlett discussing the Anglian settlement, Mr. Forest Scott (the local Secretary) the pre-Norman Christian remains and Mr. L. H. Butcher, Cruck Barns. After these talks, which took place in the Museum, there was a reception given by the Lord Mayor of Sheffield and the Museum galleries were thrown open for inspection by the delegates. On Saturday the meetings took place in the lecture theatre of the new chemistry building of the University. After delegates had been welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Brian Hope-Taylor gave a talk on his excavations during 1953-1958 at the Anglo-Saxon Royal Palaces at Yeavering, Northumberland. He was followed by Mr. J. Hurst and Mr. M. Beresford, with a joint paper on the excavations at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy. After lunch Mr. W. A. Pantin in a paper entitled ‘Monuments or Muniments’, discussed the interrelation of material remains and documentary sources and this was followed by a symposium on the same theme in which Mr. C. E. Blunt, Mr. W. A. G. Doyle-Davidson, Mr. G. C. Dunning, Dr. H. P. R. Finberg, Dr. N. B. Lewis and Mr. A. J. Taylor took part. On the Sunday delegates visited Cartledge Hall, Holmesfield, and its cruck barn; the Tudor manor-house at Wingfield; the Anglian carvings at Wirksworth and Bakewell; and a Norman ring-motte at Camp Green, Hathersage.

More than a hundred and twenty people participated in this most successful conference, and great credit is due to Mr. Scott and his helpers who undertook the local organization.