

REPORT
OF
The Society of Antiquaries
OF
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

M.DCCC.LXXXIV.

IN presenting their report to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the Council are glad that they can congratulate the Society upon its flourishing condition. Eighty new members have been added to its list during the past year, and our number now amounts to one hundred and ninety.

Partly, no doubt, in consequence of this large accession to our ranks, there has been an active demand for the back numbers of the Transactions of the Society. It should be stated, in connection with this subject, that we have now no copies remaining of our most important work, the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*. The fact that this volume, when its name occurs in the booksellers' catalogues, is generally quoted at a price above that at which it was published by our Society, shows that its value continues to be recognised by the public.

The excellent custom of holding "country meetings" has this year been revived with considerable success. Four such meetings have been held—the first at Haydon Bridge and Langley Castle, the second at Bamborough and Holy Island, the third at Sedgefield and Redmarshall, and the fourth, on the hospitable invitation of our vice-president, Sir C. E. Trevelyan, at Wallington. In the first three

excursions our Society joined its forces with those of the Durham Archæological Society, an arrangement which we trust may be repeated, to the common advantage of both bodies.

The chief events in the history of the Society during the past year have been the acquisition of the Black Gate for the purposes of a Museum of Antiquities, and the acceptance by the Royal Archæological Institute of our invitation to hold their next meeting at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The two events are not entirely independent of each other, since it is natural for us to desire that our archæological treasures should be exhibited in the most satisfactory manner to the numerous visitors from all parts of the island whom we may expect to see gathered here next summer under the presidency of Earl Percy. Our fine collection of Roman altars, in particular, will show to better advantage in the spacious and well-lighted room which is being prepared for them in the new Museum, than when dispersed about the dark passages and chambers of the old Castle. The fund for the restoration of the Black Gate, a statement of which is presented below, is now sufficiently large to meet the payments to the contractor; but, in order to enable us to complete the internal fittings in a satisfactory manner, we ought to raise a further sum of £400. We trust that the liberality of our members and our fellow-citizens may be safely reckoned upon to supply this amount.

The greatest antiquarian interest of the past year has been the discovery of three turrets on the line of the Roman Wall between Aesica and Magna. These interesting little guard-houses, of which so many were visible in Horsley's day, were looked for in vain by antiquaries of the last generation. Within the last thirty years no fewer than five have been discovered, some in a very satisfactory state of preservation.

Two noble altars to Mars have also been very lately unearthed at Housesteads, bearing inscriptions which, in addition to the name of the god of war, contain other words that leave us as much in the dark as to the deities associated with him as if they had been inscribed "To the Unknown God." We cherish the hope that before many months are over the united ingenuity of epigraphists, English and German, may have found the clue to these mysterious dedications.

Of the Anglo-Saxon period there have been discovered in the

church of Chester-le-Street several base stones and fragments of the shafts of crosses, carved with the interlacings which are usually found on these monuments. One of the fragments is inscribed EADMVND, partly in Runes and partly in Roman letters. This has been described by our honorary member, Professor Stephens, of Copenhagen, in a paper which appears in this volume of the "Archæologia Æliana."

The impending destruction of the few remains of Roman occupation at Wallsend, where the site of the camp will shortly be covered with workmen's dwellings, has been brought under the notice of the Society, and a Committee, appointed for the purpose, is engaged in watching the operations of the builders, in order to register such information as may yet be obtained regarding the outer walls of the station, the connection of the camp with the wall, and the situation of the buildings within its enclosure. It is hoped that a full report on this subject may be presented in the course of the present year.

In conclusion, we venture to express to our new members our hope that they will find themselves repaid for their attendance at the Society's meetings by an increased interest in the history of our country in general, and our two counties in particular. Although, for the sake of thoroughness it is well to concentrate our studies on some one particular period, in the choice of that period there is no need for exclusiveness; the whole kingdom of the past is open to the archæologist. The remains of the Roman occupation of Britain have always attracted a large share of the attention of the Society, and it is right that this should be so, seeing that we are the natural guardians of the finest monument of Roman power in Britain, perhaps in the world. But there is abundance of good archæological work to be done upon other lines than "*per lineam Valli*." The mediæval history of Newcastle, upon which our fellow-citizen, Mr. Welford, is usefully engaged; the social life of the gentry of Northumberland during the last two centuries, of which the lamented Dr. Charlton gave so characteristic a sketch; the miniature portraits of departed worthies of Tyneside, which are painted for us by the careful hand of Mr. Clephan, have all a legitimate claim on our attention, and the Society will owe a debt of gratitude to any of its members who will share with it the fruits of their labours in these and similar fields of archæological enquiry.

STATEMENT OF BLACK GATE FUND.

Subscriptions in aid of the Black Gate Fund have been promised to the amount of £627 8s.; the proceeds of the sum invested in Consols amount to £1,006 6s. 7d.; total, £1,633 14s. 7d. The amount of the contract with the builder amounts to £1,440; extras already sanctioned raise this sum to £1,513, and it may be advisable to reckon upon a further sum of £144 (10 per cent. on the contract) to cover further contingencies. This makes the total sum that we may expect to spend upon the building alone £1,657, or a few pounds in excess of our present funds. It will, therefore, be seen that the whole of the furniture has yet to be provided for by further subscriptions.

January 30th, 1884.

Examined with the Vouchers and found correct,

JOHN PHILIPSON,
SHERITON HOLMES.

