

THE SOCIETY'S CENTENARY

The London and Middlesex Archæological Society was founded on 14th December, 1855, on the flood tide of Victorian enthusiasm for British antiquity and archæology. The hundredth anniversary of this event evidently called for fitting celebration, and a centenary programme was accordingly drawn up covering the last three months of 1955 (apart from special visits to the two places first visited by the Society, Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London, to take place in March and April, 1956).

It began—appropriately, in view of the especially close connection our Society has always maintained with the civic authorities of the City of London—when the Lord Mayor, Sir Seymour Howard, opened an exhibition of London and Middlesex Antiquities in the Guildhall Museum (which had shortly before become established in the Royal Exchange) on Tuesday, 4th October. Lord Nathan, immediate past president, in the absence of the President, welcomed the Lord Mayor, who spoke with appreciation of the Society's activities and with some speculative doubt about the conclusions of a hypothetical antiquary of the future on finding the razor-blades and similar detritus of our own age. Among the exhibits were the celebrated sculptures from the Mithraic temple site at Walbrook, finds from excavations at Sulloniacæ (Brockley Hill) and from the pre-Roman temple at Heathrow airport, together with historical and archæological material from the Guildhall Museum, collections in the county of Middlesex, and the Society's own archives. The arrangements were under the direction of Mr. Norman Cook, F.S.A., Keeper of the Guildhall Museum. The exhibition, which was open until 29th October, was seen by a large number of visitors, and many inquiries for membership of the Society were received as a result.

The centenary dinner was held in the historic and spacious Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, by courtesy of the Lord Mayor, on Monday evening, 24th October. The President, Mr. W. F. Grimes, C.B.E., V-P.S.A., was in the chair, supported by as illustrious a top table as any county archæological society can ever have mustered: the Minister of Works, Mr. Nigel Birch, for the Government; the Bishop of London, Dr. J. W. C. Wand, and the Bishop of Kensington for the Church; the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, the Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex, and the Chairmen of the London and Middlesex County Councils for civic life; and representatives of the national archæological societies and those of the neighbouring counties, together with Leicestershire, whose society was formed in the same year as our own. Altogether very nearly two hundred persons sat down to the dinner. The toasts were

proposed and responded to with the grace, wit, and sincerity to be expected from the distinguished speakers; and it is not out of place to record here the satisfaction with which we heard Mr. Birch's frank and generous recognition of the valuable work done by the county societies in enabling the staff of his Ministry's Ancient Monuments department to keep in touch with developments that they might otherwise have missed.

On Friday, 4th November, members and their friends, together with a sprinkling of the general public, met at the Bishopsgate Institute, the Society's regular home and headquarters since 1911, to see three films of archaeological interest—on Hadrian's Wall, medieval French manuscript illustration (this one in colour; it was voted a great success), and "The Beginning of History," a general educational film on prehistory. The President expressed the company's thanks to Dr. F. W. M. Draper, F.S.A., who undertook the provision of the films, and to Mr. A. J. Gritten, A.L.A., who made the arrangements at the Institute.

London having had the principal attention in the programme up to this point, it was the turn of Middlesex on Friday, 25th November, when the Society met, for the first time in its history, in the handsome Council Chamber of the Middlesex Guildhall. The Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex, Lord Latham, presided; the Chairman of the Middlesex Council Council, Mr. S. Graham Rowlandson, M.B.E., entertained the officers and members of Council before the meeting; and the Bishop of London was also present to hear what the Society's survey of Middlesex parish churches had managed to find out about the fabrics, furniture, and documents of the churches situated in a substantial part of his diocese—or so much of the answer as could conveniently be given in an hour's lecture. At the end he expressed his satisfaction with the work done by the Society in the Middlesex church survey, and the President said how important it was that original work of this character should be kept up.

The actual centenary date fell on Wednesday, 14th December, and the celebrations culminated on that day with a short mid-day service at St. Botolph's church, Bishopsgate, and a *conversazione* in the evening at Crosby Hall, Chelsea. There was a pleasing felicity in the selection of these two places, for the church is linked with the memory of the Rev. Thomas Hugo, curate there at the time of the Society's foundation, in which he was the moving spirit; and Crosby Hall then standing in Bishopsgate, was the scene of the inaugural meeting. In his address during the service, the Rector, Prebendary H. H. Treacher, made special reference to the historical links between our Society and the church and parish of St. Botolph.

The evening party, which was attended by upwards of 150 members and their friends, was in effect our own domestic celebration, in distinction from the rather more formal or public character of the previous events. The ancient walls and roof of Sir John Crosby's hall ("restored," of course, as the expression is, when they were removed and re-erected in 1910) formed a dignified, yet not unduly stately, setting for our hundredth birthday party. After refreshments and conversation, the Chairman of the Council asked the Hon. Secretary to read the principal part of the minutes of the inaugural meeting from the "very accurate short-hand report" then prepared. This done, Mr. Michael Robbins gave a short sketch of some of the personalities among the original membership of the Society.

The President then presented the Society's silver medal to Mr. T. A. N. Henderson, F.S.A., Hon. Treasurer since 1930. Mr. Grimes spoke of the invaluable services rendered by Mr. Henderson throughout the period and of the soundness of his financial administration. The presentation was very warmly applauded, and it was then repeated, so that another photograph might be taken, for the benefit of posterity. Mr. Henderson, acknowledging the gift of the medal, spoke in generous terms about his fellow-officers, present and past; and he took the occasion to commend the practice of paying the subscription punctually.

The President then addressed the Society on its present state and future prospects, as he saw them, and those of similar learned societies in other parts of the country. The difficulties, especially financial, facing them were obvious; but he thought that so long as they maintained their encouragement and publication of original work, their function became ever more important to the science of archæology as time went on. He referred to the responsibilities arising from increased specialisation (which he did not equate with professionalisation) in archæology; and something of his thought about popular interest in the subject could be deduced from his reference to "that wretched Mithras business." In brief, he was *emphasising that regular investigation and publication of unexciting "background" information was of the first importance in the advancement of knowledge.* He also stressed how important it was, in this age of rapid changes and developments on the surface of our small island, that the claims to recognition of the value of surviving evidences of the past should be spoken up for by an organised public opinion.

The President's address, though not long, rose in places to eloquence; and it gave members, as they went out into the rain-swept Chelsea Embankment, a good deal to think about as the London and Middlesex Archæological Society moved forward into its second century.

R. M. R.