

THE OXFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,
1853-1953

By G. D. PARKES

On 6 December 1853 there took place at Banbury the first meeting of the North Oxfordshire Archaeological Society, and so the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society (the prefix North was dropped in 1887) has this year celebrated its centenary.

The Society was founded, according to the first list of rules, for 'the study and preservation of the Antiquities, Ecclesiastical, Civil and Military, of North Oxfordshire and portions of the adjoining counties'. The same rules provided that 'in furtherance of the objects of the Society quarterly meetings shall be held in Banbury or at such other town as the committee shall from time to time appoint'. They also provided that 'whenever practicable excursions be arranged to places of interest in the neighbourhood'.

The holding of quarterly meetings later fell into desuetude, but the excursions have continued until now, save for interruption during war. The principal excursion (in many years the only one) has always taken place near the end of June or the beginning of July, and the annual general meeting has been combined with it, so that the excursion which took place on Tuesday, 23 June 1953, was made the occasion for the celebration of the centenary of the Society. Although the first meeting did not take place until December there was, no doubt, an informal meeting earlier in the year at which the formation of a society was decided upon: two learned papers were read at the December meeting, so that it is clear that some sort of organization was already in being before that time.

The first excursion took place on 18 July 1854, and was to Rollright, the Rollright Stones, Little Compton and Chipping Norton. This year's excursion likewise included Rollright and the Rollright Stones and the general meeting was held at Banbury, the venue of the first meeting.

In furtherance of its objects the Society published transactions and reports.¹ The early numbers were mainly reprints of papers read at its meetings, but later volumes included substantial works of historical and archaeological scholarship: a notable contributor of these in more recent times was the late Rev. H. E. Salter, president of the Society for many years, and an Oxford man renowned in this field.

The Society has mainly financed these publications, which have been widely welcomed by archaeologists and historians, out of the subscriptions of the members. The annual subscription was fixed, in 1853, at half-a-guinea, and at this figure it still stands, although for a considerable intervening period it stood at five shillings. But at the present time, like all other learned societies, this Society is finding it impossible to continue publication on anything like the former scale, although there is ample suitable material available. The Society hesitates to raise the subscription, since it is probable that many of its members would find it necessary to resign if that were done. The scheme of affiliation with the Oxford Architectural and Historical

¹ For a full list of these see *Oxfordshire Archaeological Society, Report no. 87* (1949), pp. 28 ff.

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Society (p. 257), which was recently approved by both Societies, has as one of its objects the continuance of the publication of archaeological material under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Society.

Apart from this difficulty—a commonplace among learned bodies today—the Society is flourishing: several excursions are arranged each year and are well attended, and much is done to promote the objects of the Society as named in the original rules.

A notable feature of its first 100 years is that succeeding generations of some families have been included among its members since its early days. A remarkable instance is that of the Marshall family. The Rev. E. H. Marshall and his cousin, the Rev. Jenner Marshall, joined the Society in 1858 (the former holding office from 1861 to 1874), and there then began the long association with this family which subsists until the present day. The most remarkable instance is that of Mr. F. E. Marshall who became a member in 1899, was treasurer for 37 years from 1904 and maintained his membership to the end of his life.

At the threshold of its second century the Society looks forward to a future in which 'the study and preservation of the antiquities of Oxfordshire and its neighbourhood' will continue to be objects worthy of pursuit.

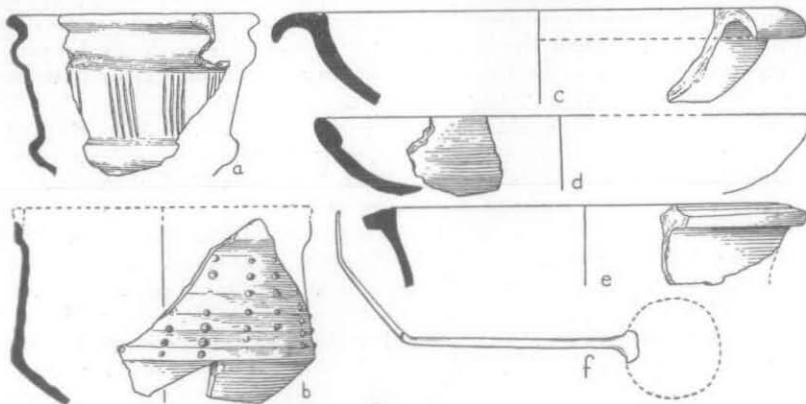


FIG. 51
DORCHESTER, OXON.

Romano-British pottery and a bronze spoon from the garden of no. 10, Tenpenny (p. 261).
Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$