



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1945

FELLOW MEMBERS

In submitting our report for 1945 we do not propose to make more than a passing reference to the last five months of the 'silent siege', nor shall we refer at length to our happy deliverance from the incubus under which, since 1940, we had suffered so many anxieties, discomforts and deprivations.

These are matters to be dealt with fully and exactly by our historians and chroniclers while they are still fresh in their minds.

We pass instead to a short record of the Society's activities, - curtailed though they were, - during the year which is now closing.

Our Annual General Meetings are usually held every January; but this year, owing mainly to the lack of transport, fuel, lighting and energy, it was obvious that no such meeting was possible during that month.

We were also influenced, of course, by the military situation which, as far as these islands were concerned, gave cause for some anxiety; for although victory in Europe was assured, it still seemed possible either that the local garrisons might hold out after hostilities on the continent had ceased, or that the Germans before surrendering might destroy public institutions and buildings, or indeed that our own forces might attempt to regain the islands by direct assault.

Thus it resulted that no general meeting of any kind was held until July the 31st. Nevertheless the Secretary's office continued to remain open daily for routine business, and the Executive Committee continued to meet from time to time.

At the Executive Committee's meeting on April the 17th it was decided to open the Museum for free to the public on the first Sunday and third Thursday of each month from May to September inclusive.

The first Sunday in May fell on the 6th, that is to say three days prior to the actual arrival of our troops. On this occasion we entertained a record crowd of four hundred persons, among whom we have selected two as worthy of a special mention.

These individuals were a tall French Algerian prisoner of war and his guard, a short fully-armed German soldier.

The Algerian stalked nonchalantly through the throng, stopping now and then to look at such exhibits as took his fancy, and on his heels followed the little German who must have known that in a few days' time a reversal of roles was more than likely.

From the ensuing free openings of the Museum it was found that the Sundays were more popular than the Thursdays. In fact, while our Sunday visitors averaged over a hundred, the Thursday visitors only averaged twenty-five, - and when the season closed on Thursday, September the 20th, the attendance was only six.

MEETINGS. Only two general meetings were held during the year, namely the Annual General Meeting on the 31st of July and a Quarterly Meeting on the 30th of October.

About one hundred members were present at the first of these and they, after the official business had been transacted, had the privilege of hearing two admirable lectures connected with the recent war.

In one, Miss V. G. Mylne described her experiences as a prisoner in France under the Nazis and in the other Major J. C. M. Manley, O.B.E., gave an account of the fortifications constructed in this island by the Germans. Major Manley concluded his remarks by emphasizing the risks run by persons who sought souvenirs amongst the explosive material which was then lying about unguarded in so many country districts.

The meeting held on October the 30th was attended by about fifty members who listened to an excellent lecture on the subject of which we, who had remained in Jersey, had had no personal experience, namely 'Fire-fighting'. Column Officer A. Le Sueur, who gave the lecture, described the frightfulness meted out to Bristol in 1941 and 1942 and the measures taken to combat it.

OUR COLLECTIONS. During June and July the objects which had been removed for security early in the Occupation were brought back to the Museum. They consisted of easily-packed articles of intrinsic value or special interest, such as the torque, gold and silver coins and medals, silver ware, miniatures, ancient manuscripts and other objects of historic or artistic importance.

With the exception of the torque, which had been walled-up in the Jersey Kitchen, they had all been deposited in a strong room under the New States' Buildings.

Our Bronze Age implements, polished stone axes and other prehistoric material, together with the collection of Armorican coins, had been stored in a cellar under the front courtyard of the Museum.

Owing to the impossibility of finding any suitable place of security for the rest of our possessions, they had to be left to take their chance where they were. The Executive Committee had early debated the matter and had come to the conclusion that a dispersal was impracticable and, if attempted, would only increase the risk of loss.

Nevertheless we contemplated the transference of our most valuable pictures to Saint Saviour's Parish Hall, where Mr. G. J. Mourant, the Chef de Police, had kindly consented to give them sanctuary in case of need.

THE HOUGUE BIE AND OTHER PREHISTORIC SITES. The Hougue Bie was used by the Germans as an observation post and centre of communications. They made a dug-out in the western flank of the mound itself, - in spite of our protest, - and another larger one in the level ground beyond. On the summit of the hougue machine-gun positions were prepared and a wooden observation tower was erected alongside the western end of the chapels. A liberal use of barbed wire completed the defences. The dolmen itself remained closed until the last days of the Occupation, when its entrance was used by the enemy as a store for spare electrical plant.

As soon as our Relieving Forces had demilitarized the place, it was handed back to us. We have retained the observation tower and souterrains intact.

Though all our other prehistoric monuments escaped structural damage, they are of course in need of a thorough 'spring cleaning'.

The Hon.Sec., who fortunately was able to undertake the task of inspection, used to report upon their condition periodically.

THE MUSEUM BUILDINGS also escaped damage, except that all the window-panes on its western front were smashed by concussion on the 28th of June, 1940.

In 1943, the Germans requisitioned the courtyard giving on to Caledonia Place and constructed a large reservoir in it, again in spite of protest. This reservoir has recently been demolished and filled-in by the Department of Labour, - to whom we owe our sincere thanks.

Shortly after the Relief of the island we sent a notice out to each of our absent members, as well as to each of the societies and institutions abroad with whom we correspond, to inform them of the Société's survival.

This notice brought so many encouraging and sympathetic replies, as well as many kind offers of assistance.

The recently-formed 'Council for British Archaeology' did us the honour of inviting us to nominate a representative on their Council and we gratefully accepted the invitation.

MEMBERSHIP. 19 new members have been admitted during the past year.

With the return of our refugees, the restoration of peace conditions and the arrival of new residents, we hope that the Société will soon be revitaminized and that its membership will rise to a level never before attained.

1945 was a bad year for our Junior members, for adverse events and conditions deprived them of their country excursions. Lack of bicycles made them immobile, mines debarred them from the coast and a drought spoiled their brooks and ponds. Nevertheless a number of them have retained their membership and their trust in their Leaders.

ANNUAL BULLETIN. A 'token' bulletin for 1943-4 would have been issued several weeks ago had not publishing difficulties intervened. Printing, however, has been completed and the Bulletin is now ready for distribution.

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY. We report, with much regret, the resignation of our Assistant Secretary, Miss E. M. Le Cocq. Miss Le Cocq, who will henceforth be known as Mrs. Gilbert, has been Assistant Secretary for ten years and throughout that time has performed her duties with a precision and good will which can only be described as admirable.

Fortunately this is not 'Goodbye', for Mrs. Gilbert is still a member of the Society.

PRIZES FOR ESSAYS. The usual offer of prizes for essays by young people not necessarily Junior Members, only attracted two entries. A prize has been awarded for the essay submitted by Raoul Robinson on Pond and Stream Life with a special reference to the life history of the gnat.

N. V. L. RYBOT, *President*

EMILE F. Guiton, *Honorary Secretary*

December 31st, 1945.