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 Oxford-
shire 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.
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: \( \frac{1}{4} \)