

**MEMOIR OF JOHN AUBREY, F. R.  
S., EMBRACING HIS  
AUTO-BIOGRAPHICAL  
SKETCHES, WITH EXTRACT FROM  
HIS CORRESPONDENCE**

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Memoir of John Aubrey, F. R. S., Embracing His Auto-Biographical Sketches, with Extract from His Correspondence by John Britton

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**JOHN BRITTON**

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## WILTSHIRE TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

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### Rules and Regulations,

ADOPTED AT A GENERAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS, JUNE 13, 1860.

GEORGE POULETT SCROPE, Esq. M.P. IN THE CHAIR.

I. THAT an association of Gentlemen be established, and called "*The Wiltshire Topographical Society.*"

II. That the object of the Society be to collect materials for, and publish occasionally, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts*, either illustrated, or otherwise, of places and things in the County of Wilts, and the adjacent Districts, which have not hitherto been satisfactorily elucidated.

III. That the subjects of inquiry, description, and historical disquisition comprehend—the Boundaries, Civil Divisions, and Natural Scenery of the county; Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, Zoology, Agriculture, Manufactures, and Commerce; accounts of the Chief Towns, Boroughs, and Villages; Seats of the Nobility

and Gentry; Civil History and Antiquities; remains and memorials of the ancient British, Roman, Saxon, and Norman inhabitants; Manors, manorial privileges and customs, descent, and present state of manorial property; Genealogies of distinguished families, and Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Natives; Ecclesiastical History, Edifices, and Antiquities; Ecclesiastical Endowments and Charitable Foundations;—together with other matters usually comprised under the heads of Archaeology, Topography, Statistics, Parochial and County History.

IV. That the Society be limited to 500 Members.

V. That the qualification of Members be a *periodical Subscription of One Guinea*, to be paid in advance. The payment of *Ten Guineas* at one time to constitute a *Member for Life*.

VI. That every Member be entitled to receive one copy of the publications of the Society.

VII. That no Subscriber shall be entitled to vote at General Meetings, or receive a copy of the publications of the Society, whose Subscription remains in arrear two months after it has become due, and has been applied for by some person authorised to receive the same.

VIII. That the management of the Society be vested in a COUNCIL, consisting of a *President*, six *Vice-Presidents*, and eighteen other Members; of whom one shall be nominated *Treasurer*, and two *Honorary Secretaries*.

IX. That the *President*, *Treasurer*, and *Secretaries* be *Trustees* for the Society.

X. That three members of the Society be annually appointed *Auditors*.

XI. That a certain portion of the Council be changed periodically, viz.: the *President* every second year; and one of the *Vice-Presidents*, and four ordinary Members of the Council, annually; the retiring individuals to be named by the Council, but to be re-eligible to the same offices.

XII. That the funds of the Society be at the disposal of the Council, to pay the necessary expenses of managing its affairs, and of producing such literary and graphic works as may be selected and ordered by them.

XIII. That the Council shall manage and direct all the usual and necessary business of the Society; as to publications, meetings, correspondence, appointment of Provincial Secretaries, employment of assistants, and all other matters connected with the government and operations of the Society.

XIV. That the Council have power to make such *By-Laws* and *Regulations* as they may deem expedient for the good government of the Society, and conducive to its general interests; provided such *By-Laws* are in accordance with the *Laws* made at any General Meeting of the Members.

XV. That an *Annual General Meeting* be held in each year, on the first Saturday in June, when the Officers of the Society, in the place of those who retire from office, shall be elected; Auditors appointed for the ensuing year; Reports read from the Council and Auditors of the accounts and proceedings of the preceding year; and such other business transacted as may be necessary.

XVI. That the Council be authorised to commence, as soon as convenient, the formation of a *Topographical Library* of Books, Manuscripts, Drawings, Prints, &c. relating to Wiltshire and to the immediate vicinity; and also of such publications as relate to the General Topography and Archaeology of Great Britain. That this collection be open for reference to all the Members, and to strangers by their orders, under certain regulations to be prescribed by the Council; and that *Donations to the Library* be acknowledged at each annual meeting, also in the printed works of the Society, and by appropriate notices affixed to each article.

## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

TO THE

ANNUAL MEETING, 7TH JUNE, 1845.

IN submitting the FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT to the Members of the Society, the Council have the satisfaction of stating that the *second volume* of their publications will be distributed at the end of the present month, and from the interesting nature of the subject it embraces, and the labour and experience devoted to it by its author, they reasonably anticipate a work which will prove both creditable to that gentleman and to the Society. To all lovers of historical and archaeological literature, the name, and something of the merits, of JOHN AUBREY have long been familiar; but it has remained for the *Wiltshire Topographical Society* to bring him fully and critically before the public. Hence the Council entertain the hope and belief, that this portion of their works will be duly appreciated by the members, and by all critical readers. But for the establishment of this Society the *Memoir of Aubrey* might not have been published; and it will be found in the pages of the volume, that his life was laudably and zealously devoted to the collection and preservation of useful and valuable information, especially on matters relating to the topography of Wiltshire. Had his relatives and descendants been actuated by the same feelings,—the same love of “things rare, and interesting,”—we should not have had to deplore the loss of many of his writings; together with numerous objects of vertu and value. Even within the last few years, the original manuscript of one of his most valuable literary works has disappeared, and whether it be only mislaid, or entirely destroyed, remains in doubt. This, which extended to four folio volumes, was entitled *Monumenta Britannica*, and consisted of remarks on Celtic and other British antiquities. It is hoped, however, that the publicity produced by Mr. Britton's Memoir, and the extensive inquiries which he has instituted both in town and country, will be the means of rescuing this important manuscript from irremediable destruction.

In the last Report the Council announced the speedy publication of the *History of Kingston St. Michael*, with a *Life of John Aubrey*. In producing the latter independently of, and detached from, the former, they avail themselves of the following explanation by Mr. Britton. “In classing and arranging my manuscript materials on Kingston and Aubrey, I found those relating to the Provincial Topographer and Antiquary so copious and interesting, and so well calculated to make a separate and complete volume, that I determined to digest and arrange them for the press, in the first instance; leaving the History, &c. of my native parish, for subsequent consideration and more leisure moments. Towards the latter volume a very correct map, with engravings of the exterior and interior of the church, have been executed and printed; and ample materials are collected for the Topographical History. I do not anticipate any difficulty in having the whole printed in the ensuing winter, if required; but it would give me, as I know it would many other Members of the Society, much pleasure to see the *History of Castle Combe* first produced.” With reference to the work here referred to by Mr. Britton, the Council are authorised by Mr. Scrope to state that he calculates it will be ready for publication before the next Anniversary; and they look forward to it as likely to contain much interesting matter, and thereby to advance the objects of the Society. The Council have it in contemplation to follow up that work by the publication of the very interesting Manuscript by Aubrey on the *Natural History of Wiltshire*.

It cannot be irrelevant for the Council to remark that a taste or fashion for Antiquarian Literature has lately been popularised, by the establishment and influence of the Camden, Shakspeare, Percy, Parker, Surtees, and other Societies, in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter, and elsewhere; all calculated to promote laudable research, and a desire to preserve and disseminate that information which tends to elucidate the manners, customs, and characters of former generations. Still there is ample scope for provincial Associations, to

encourage Topographical and Architectural inquiry and publication. The Council of this Society are not a little anxious to show, to the natives of Wiltshire in particular, and to the reading public generally, what may be effected by union and co-operation. If the nobility and gentry of this opulent and extensive county could be prevailed on to view the subject in its proper light, and support the Society, by a small annual subscription, and also by occasional advocacy amongst their immediate connection, a considerable sum would thereby be raised, and a succession of useful and valuable works be speedily produced. The *Memoir of Aubrey* about to be distributed, furnishes curious and interesting facts and opinions on this subject, by showing what was done, or attempted to be done, more than a century and a half ago. Bishop Tanner speaks feelingly and sorrowfully of the apathy of the public towards such literary works as those by Aubrey, Dugdale, Plot, Spelman, Gale, Raleigh, and himself; and says, that "the *Decem Scriptores*, and the *Monasticon*, volumes now worth old gold, had never been printed, had not the former been carried on by a public fund; the other by the sole charges of the Editor. I hope to see the *Monumenta Britannica* in as good vogue as the best of them." (See *Memoir of Aubrey*, p. 66.) This sentence is full of matter for meditation, and suggestive of good council. Had *Aubrey's Monumenta Britannica*, here noticed by the learned prelate, been then printed, its utility and influence on the public would have produced important results; and the varied information it contained would have been perpetuated. There is, however, much reason to fear that it is now lost.

The Council have to regret the loss of some members by death, and others from secession; but they indulge a hope that their places will soon be supplied by new members, and that many more may voluntarily come forward to join and strengthen the Society. "Union is Strength;" and it requires but a very trifling amount of money and zeal, to make the *Wiltshire Topographical Society* effective, and eminently beneficial.

The Balance Sheet for the year shows that the Society has 111*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* in the Treasurer's possession, and in the Bank.

(Signed)

J. BRITTON,  
G. ALEXANDER,  
*Honorary Secretaries.*

7th June, 1845.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS received by the Bankers to the Society, Coutts and Co. 59, Strand; by the Honorary Secretaries, the Treasurer, and the other Members of the Council.



MEMOIR  
OF  
JOHN AUBREY, F. R. S.

EMBRACING HIS

AUTO-BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES,

A BRIEF REVIEW OF HIS PERSONAL AND LITERARY MERITS,  
AND AN ACCOUNT OF HIS WORKS;

WITH

*Extracts from his Correspondence,*

ANECDOTES OF SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,  
AND OF THE TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED.

BY

JOHN BRITTON, F.S.A., &c.



Lower Easton-Pierce, Wiltshire, the birth-place of John Aubrey.

Published by the *Wiltshire Topographical Society.*

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

1845.

TO THE MOST NOBLE,  
**HENRY, MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE,**  
&c. &c. &c.

AS PATRON OF THE WILTSHIRE TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY;

AS RESIDING IN THE VICINITY OF THE NATAL HOME OF JOHN AUBREY, AND OF THE  
AUTHOR OF THE PRESENT MEMOIR;

AS A LOVER OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND THE FINE ARTS;

AND AS A STATESMAN WHO HAS EVER ACTED WITH CONSISTENCY AND DEVOTED ATTENTION  
TO THE WELFARE AND HONOUR OF HIS COUNTRY,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF SINCERE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION,

BY THE AUTHOR.

*March, 1845.*

