

Obituary

Mr. H. E. BALCH

In Mr. Balch we have lost one of the pioneers of cave exploration in the Mendip Hills. For many years he was the mainstay of such work, and there are many who started their caving under his guidance. His knowledge of all that pertained not only to the Mendip Caves but also to the Mendip Hills as a whole was profound. His books on the subjects are well known. In them he enshrined part of his vast knowledge for present and future generations.

But Mr. Balch was not only a cave explorer. He was also an archæologist. He spent much of his spare time digging in caves, particularly in the Great Cave of Wookey Hole and in several smaller caves and shelters in Ebbor Gorge, and latterly in the Badger Hole at Wookey. In 1926 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and at a later date the University of Bristol conferred upon him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in recognition of his devoted services and distinction in these fields. In 1955 he was elected an honorary member of this Society.

The Wells Museum owes its inception and development to Mr. Balch. In it he amassed a really astounding wealth of material, and he remained the honorary curator until forced to retire, a few years ago, by reason of infirmity and old age. It was with great regret that the Society heard of his death. We shall remember him for his enthusiasm, his lore and his kindness to all interested in caves. Archæology and the world are poorer for his passing.