

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

Transactions at Micheldean

1881-82, Vol. 6, 261-268

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Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.

TRANSACTIONS

AT A SPECIAL MEETING FOR THE WEST GLOUCESTERSHIRE DIVISION.

Held at Micheldean, on Friday, 26th August, 1881.

THE popularity and usefulness of an Archæological Society is very greatly dependent upon the character of its meetings. The advantages to be derived from making these itinerant cannot be over-estimated, and especially is it desirable that they should be held in secluded districts. In such districts, though unknown, do antiquarian remains of all kinds more abundantly exist than elsewhere, and such meetings not only afford opportunities of searching them out and making them known for historical purposes, but they bring a knowledge of the principles and objects of the Society under the observation of every man, creating an interest in local antiquities which leads to an intelligent study of their character and purpose in periods long past, and developing a desire for the attainment of greater historical knowledge and a loving care of the evidences which remain to us. Moreover the interest thus aroused does not die out when the meeting is over. Many, whose understanding is aroused, become members of the Society and earnest workers in promoting its objects, and many others, who do not so far fraternize as to join the Society continue to take a lively interest in its pursuits. These feelings led the President, in some remarks made at the Meeting at Chepstow (ante p. 27) to express a desire that local Meetings should be held in the several Divisions of the Society, and, afterwards, in order to add example to precept, he consulted some of the leading members of the Society in the Forest District as to the desirableness of holding such a meeting. The encouragement he received was so strong that he determined to attempt the organization of such a meeting at Micheldean, on 26th August, for the Division of West Gloucestershire. The unfavourable character of the weather for some days previously, and especially the heavy continuous down-pour of rain on the preceding day, deterred many from coming who had signified their intention of being present; nevertheless, a large number of persons assembled at the place of rendezvous, the Church of Micheldean. Among those present in the church, and during the day, were SIR JOHN MACLEAN, the *President*, SIR DAVID WEDDERBURN, M.P., *Vice-President*, Mr. T. GAMBIER PARRY (Highnam), V.P., Mr. PERCIVAL, The Rev. H. H. HARDY, Rector of Micheldean, Mr. and Mrs. WEMYSS-COLCHESTER, COL. HARDY, Mr. WALTERS (Cheltenham), Mr. SEYS and party (Tutshill House), Rev. W. TAPRELL ALLEN, Vicar of St. Briavels, Mr. C. LORD DENTON, Rev. W. BARKER, Mr. W. B. BRAIN, Mr. BRAIN, jun., Mr. KEELING, Rev. W. BAGNALL-OAKELEY, Mrs. BAGNALL-OAKELEY and party, Mr. J. H. MIDDLETON, Mr. W. C. HEANE, Rev.

W. BAZELEY, *Hon. Gen. Secretary*, Mr. J. H. COOKE, *Divisional Hon. Secretary*, Mr. YEARSLEY, Mr. ROBINSON, Mr. BRADSTOCK, Rev. Dr. LYNES, Dr. HEANE, Mr. and Miss BLANDY (Birchamp), Rev. H. MILES, Mr. A. H. MAULE, Mr. GRANVILLE BAKER, Mr. PRITCHETT, Rev. T. M. HALL, Dr. WETHERED, Dr. WILLET, Mr. D. H. MARTIN, Mr. JONATHAN SMITH, Mr. CECIL DAVIS, etc., etc.

The programme included a visit to the Churches of Micheldean, Abenhall, and Little Dean; Flaxley Grange, the Roman Road, and Flaxley Abbey.

MICHELDEAN CHURCH.

Mr. MIDDLETON invited those assembled to the western end of the church, and commencing his interesting description, said the south aisle, nave, and north aisle belonged to about the 14th century, and the next alteration was in 1460, when the second north aisle was added; therefore up to the year 1461 the church had only one aisle on the north. The edifice was dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels. In the middle of the 15th century considerable alterations were made. In addition to the two north aisles, a clerestory was added. One of the chief points of interest about this time was the painted wooden panels which filled up the space between the rood loft and the roof. The rood screen itself, and the loft had both disappeared, having originally extended the whole width of the church, as was shown by the staircase to the loft and the doors through the walls of the nave. The painting on these panels was not earlier than the end of the 15th century, which was shown in several ways. First, the costumes of the figures; second, by the fact that the painting was executed on the bare oak, it being the custom, both in Italy and in England, until the middle of the 15th century, to prepare the surface of board for painting on by covering it with a mixture of lime and white of egg, or some such medium, thus forming a smooth surface to paint upon. The later painters, towards the end of the 15th century, deviated from this plan, and painted on the bare wood. In his opinion that was very injurious to the painting, as the grain of the wood and the knots showed through. The subjects of the paintings were in the upper part, a figure of Christ in majesty seated on a rainbow. On His right hand was the Virgin Mary looking downwards to a crowd of blessed souls who were moving in a procession towards the heavenly Jerusalem. Hell was represented by a large figure like a whale's mouth open, and corresponding to the same on the right of the spectator were the lost souls rising out of their graves. Below the great subject of the judgment on the last day, were eight pictures which represent incidents from the passion of Christ.

The most beautiful parts of the church were the 15th century roofs. The extreme east part was modern. The old chancel was destroyed, and a new one rebuilt. The gravestones were removed and the brasses taken into the vestry instead of being re-set in their original places, an incident which too often occurred in cases of "restoration." Mr. MIDDLETON having entered into particulars as to the successive enlargements, went on to state that a chantry, dedicated to the Trinity, was founded in the north aisle by Alice, wife of Thomas Baynham, who built the latter and founded the former. After some other remarks:—

The PRESIDENT said he thought it would be interesting if a tracing could be had of the paintings.

Mr. MIDDLETON feared it could not be successfully done. The paintings were, however, by no means bad work.

SIR JOHN MACLEAN, F.S.A., the president, said that Mr. MIDDLETON had alluded to the chantries and obitts, founded in the church in which they were assembled. One of these chantries was founded by a certain Robert Greyndour, as appears from the Chantry Certificates (see ante p. 166). A chantry for the same Robert Greyndour was founded, also, in the church of Newland under royal license, by Lady Joan Barre, his relict, and that although he (SIR JOHN) had traced the institution to the chantry of Newland of every chantry priest, from the date of its foundation to its suppression, he had not been able to discover one single institution to that of Micheldean, and he further remarked that though Lady Joan Barre, in her will, had confirmed the grants of lands, &c., made to the chantry at Newland, and had made bequests to the church of Abenhall and other churches, she does not once allude to the church of Micheldean. He next referred to two brasses, which in the "restoration" of the church, had been removed from the slab to which they had been affixed, in the north aisle, and were now in the vestry, though he hoped they would soon be restored, as nearly as possible, to their original position, as would be also, he hoped, the grave-stone of Rev. Rich. Stringer, rector of this church for 52 years, who died in 1674, which had been taken from underneath the altar, and was now loose in the south aisle. With regard to the brasses, he said it was stated, and he believed accurately, that they represented the two wives of Thomas Baynham, Lord of the Manor, though the authority, he believed, for this identification was a clergyman named Philpots, who, many years ago, was officiating at Huntley, and is now deceased. The ladies' costumes agree with those worn at the date of their respective deaths, about the middle of the 15th century. These brasses, he observed, were of special interest as relating to the manor and church, which had some centuries previously fallen into moieties—one moiety had descended to Thomas Baynham, in his own right, and the other had descended, together with the manor and advowson of Abenhall, from the before-mentioned Robert Greyndour, to Alice Walwyn, the second of the wives of Thomas Baynham; hence he enjoyed one moiety in his own right, and the other in the right of his wife. The two moieties, upon his death, were again separated, for the elder moiety descended to Sir Alexander Baynham, son and heir of Thomas by his first wife, and the second, together with Abenhall, devolved upon Sir Christopher Baynham as the heir of his mother, and the two moieties were not again united until the middle of the last century.¹

Mr. T. GAMBIER PARRY (Higham), said that after the description given by Mr. MIDDLETON of the paintings on the panels over the chancel, and in view of the general interest of Christian iconography, he begged to ask a question of his fellow archaeologists about the attitude given to our Lord's figure in early art. In this case the distance made all detail undistinguishable; but they had been informed that in that figure of our Lord, seated in judgment, the arms were so placed as to show the wounds in the hands. The figure to which he wished to refer was very different from this one. It was on the great central boss of the groining of the lantern of Ely Cathedral. The work was of the 14th century: the figure was carved in oak and was larger than life. It was clothed in a thin underdress, with the ample drapery

¹ See ante *Manors of Micheldean and Abenhall*.

of a cloak over it. The right hand was held up in the attitude of blessing ; but the left hand, stretched out across the body, was holding open a rent in the underdress to exhibit the wound in the side. There were no marks of the wounds in the hands. The carver had evidently left them for representation by the painter, who was to succeed him. The whole of the architecture and carvings had been richly coloured. He begged to ask gentlemen present whether they had ever seen this peculiar action of the figure elsewhere ?

Mr. MIDDLETON replied that the Fresco of the Doom, by Andrea Orcagna, in the Campo Santo of Pisa, has the figure of Christ in the attitude Mr. GAMBIER PARRY had described. He is seated on a rainbow, His left hand being raised in a menacing manner towards the lost Souls, and His right opens a slit in His dress to expose the wound in His side. This motive, he observed, is not uncommon in Italy and Spain. It occurs in a fresco by Spinella Aretino at Arozzo, and in one by Juan de Juanes, either in Segovia Cathedral or at Las Huelgas, he did not remember which.

The PRESIDENT said he was sure all of them would thank Mr. MIDDLETON for his description, and Mr. GAMBIER PARRY for the interesting remarks which he had made on the representation of our Lord.

On leaving the Church of Micheldean the party set out in a number of carriages for Littledean, but a halt was made at

ABENHALL CHURCH.

Mr. MIDDLETON said it was dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels, was Norman and of the 12th or 13th century, with tower, at the west end, containing three bells. The church had been completely "restored." He pointed to the roof which was of great interest, and directed attention to two effigies on brass in the Chancel, of Richard Pyrke of Michel Dean, and Joan his wife, daughter of John Ayleway, gent., which Richard died in 1609, aged 60 years, remarking that the costumes were good specimens of the period of James I. The font was also pointed out as an interesting one.

The PRESIDENT said the church had been so extensively "restored" that very little of interest was now left. He referred to the Jacobite brasses in the chancel which he said were remarkable from their lateness of date. He also alluded to the miners' arms on the font, and called attention to the hour-glass near the pulpit as an object of curiosity. He humourously touched upon the ancient utility of these instruments, viz., they were used in order that the minister might know when to stop his sermon, but he believed that in puritan times the preacher sometimes turned the glass the second time. He also called attention to two magnificent ancient yew trees in the churchyard, which he supposed might be as old as the church.

Mr. SEYS directed attention to a singular epitaph in the churchyard, as follows :—

“ As I was riding on the road,
Not knowing what was coming,
A bull that was loggered and pressed
After me come running.
He with his logger did me strike
He being sore offended,
And from my horse was forced to fall
And thus my days were ended.”

Sir JOHN said he could not leave the church without stating that a former venerable and venerated rector of this parish, was now lying at the point of death—the Rev. James Davics, aged 95 years; he had now partaken of nothing but cold water for ten days; and he hoped the company would bear him in remembrance in the church of which he had been rector for 35 years. See a Paper upon this Church by Mr. Middleton, (post page 277).

After leaving Abenhall Church the party proceeded by Guns Mills towards Little Dean. These mills were situated on a stream, derived from a spring which rises out of a rock in the forest and flows through a considerable portion of this parish into the Severn. The water near its source falls into a square basin made to receive it, about five feet deep, and having steps to lead down into it on one side. It is sufficiently large for a person to bathe in. The basin is known as St. Anthony's Well, and the water, which is extremely cold, is celebrated as a certain remedy for all diseases of the skin, and, it is said, has been known to cure leprosy. On this stream was, at one time, an iron-furnace, which was afterwards converted into a Paper Mill under the above name, and attained some eminence under the direction of the Messrs. Lloyd, "Gentlemen," Fosbroke says, "of very extensive commercial note." The highway led along the old Roman Road of which there is a very good specimen. The curb-stones on each side, 9 feet a part, extend for considerable distances, and in some places the old paving remains *in situ*. Several of the archæologists alighted and inspected the Roman stones. On the arrival of the party at Dean Hall, at 2.30, it was mentioned by Sir JOHN MACLEAN that Mr. GUISE, with his family, were from home, but that the Hall had been generously placed at the disposal of the archæologists for inspection.

DEAN HALL.

The PRESIDENT invited the archæologists into the dining room, and said the house possessed considerable historical interest. He stated that the room in which they were assembled was said to have been the scene of several tragical events; the first, which he would mention, was an incident in the civil war; Dean Hall was then the residence of Thomas Pyrke. It had previously been the seat of the Bridgemans until they removed to Prinknash Park. The particulars he was about to state were gathered from Webb's "Memoirs of the Civil War in Herefordshire and adjacent counties." He would mention *in limine*, that, in 1643, Littledean was the head quarters of Lord Grandison, a gallant and loyal young soldier, with a brigade of 2000 men, but he was obliged to retire before Waller. In 1644 Massey determined upon attempting something against Sir John Wintour, and marched with 900 foot and two regiments of horse, with two pieces of ordnance, towards Sir John Wintour's garrisons at Westbury, Littledean and Newnham—all carefully fortified, and well provided with men, arms, and ammunition. First they came to Westbury, where the Royalists were ready to receive them in the house of a wealthy proprietor, Mr. Colchester, and in the church adjoining. The acute eye of Massey presently detected a place not flanked, to which he ordered his forlorn hope, who standing safely on stools and ladders, cleared the church by casting in hand grenades, and forced the enemy to retire to the house; this having occasioned them the loss of 20 men, he gave them the quarter they demanded, and made the remainder prisoners.

In the meanwhile some of the horse had been sent on to Littledean, where they found a strong house carelessly guarded, and many of the garrison scattered about the town. On their approach a rush was made to the door of the house, both parties entered, and it was taken with upwards of 20 men. Lieut.-Col. Congreve, Governor of Newnham, and Capt. Wigmore, with a few private soldiers, occupied some houses near at hand; the whole of them had accepted quarter, when an unfortunate shot from one of them slew a trooper, and they were all put to the sword. The contrast in the dying moments of the two officers had been thought worthy of a record, as one of those incidents which furnish more than simple matter of fact, by suggesting deeper thought. Congreve's last utterance was a prayer, "Lord, receive my spirit." Wigmore, with the desperation of a passionate sufferer, and the recklessness of one who had been familiar with oaths, vented his latest breath in curses, and challenged those who were despatching him to a repetition of every thrust, with cries of "More! More!" Corbet and other earlier writers say "The troopers first ran into the house, near unto which the guard, Colonel Congreve and Captain Wigmore, with a few private soldiers, were surrounded in some houses by the residue and some horse, and one of their company from the house kills a trooper." The President added, there was nothing very definite in either of these narratives to identify Dean Hall as the scene of the brutal murder of these two officers. It was very probable, however, that being the largest and most substantial building in the place, and the residence of the loyal squire, it was—like the house of Mr. Colechester, at Westbury—selected for the garrison. When the Royalists surrendered, the two officers, with a few private soldiers, were not in this house, but occupied some houses near. Corbet writes: "One of the company from the house killed a trooper." The vengeance seems to have fallen on the officers and their party, and if that room was the scene of the tragic event, they must conclude that the two officers had been removed hither from the neighbouring houses, of which they had no evidence.

There was another legend that the dining room, in which they were assembled, was the scene of an unfortunate duel between two brothers, who quarrelled over their wine, drew upon each other, and both were slain. A third legend states that the interesting "darkie" with the silver collar, represented in the picture over the chimney-piece, was the servant of the smart young gentlemen in the scarlet coat. They had much affection for each other, but, unhappily, in after years they became rivals in love, and, stung by jealousy, the servant murdered his master, and the "black boy" is said to haunt the scene of his love and his hate, not visibly, but audibly. Mr. GULSE, who resides at the Hall, who would have been present to welcome them except for his absence on his holiday, had informed him (Sir JOHN) that among the county records of the time of Queen Anne, was a notice of a "nigger" with a silver collar being found straying, and unable to give a satisfactory account of himself, and he (Mr. GULSE) suggested whether this could have been the guilty black.

Mr. SEYS enquired if we were likely to hear the black man.

Sir JOHN said he would be glad to hear from the black man, or from any other person, any remarks they might be pleased to make.

After inspecting the room the archæologists were invited to examine any other parts of the old dwelling.

FLAXLEY GRANGE, LITTLEDEAN.

On quitting Dean Hall, the party was conducted by Mr. W. C. HEANE, to Flaxley Grange, through a private door almost immediately opposite an old road, leading to the Grange. Mr. HEANE had communicated a paper on this ancient and interesting mansion, to the meeting at Chepstow, but time would not admit of its being then read, so that gentleman read it on the present occasion, and it will be printed in this volume. In the garden are some fragments of the ancient Market Cross which was formerly in the village, but is now demolished. This was a handsome structure of Decorated date. The shaft was elevated upon five steps, and seems to have been plain at the bottom, and surrounded by a wooden penthouse, for the convenience of the market people. Above the penthouse roof the shaft was much enriched. This upper portion consisted of three divisions, the lower of which was octagonal, each side being occupied by a panel, or nich, with cinquefoil heads. The two upper divisions were more enriched. This portion of the shaft remains in the garden as above stated. It is 31 inches high, and square in plan, the angles being buttressed. The niches of the lower division are pierced through and contain mutilated portions of statuettes.

Mr. HEANE also conducted the party to the old Roman road near, which was inspected, after which Littledean Church was visited, where a brief halt was made. Mr. Middleton acted as *Cicerone*.

THE CHURCH AT LITTLEDEAN

Mr. Middleton remarked that the church is very ancient, and that it is dedicated to St. Ethelbert. It consists of nave, chancel, and north aisle, with tower surmounted by a spire, and containing six bells. The foundation of the church is supposed to be Saxon, but there are Norman pillars dividing the nave from the chancel. The chantry formerly belonged to the Monks of Llanthony Abbey. Many of the tombs date back nearly 300 years (See Mr. Middleton's further remarks post p. 278).

FLAXLEY ABBEY.

At 3.30 the party set out for Flaxley Abbey, whither they had been invited by Sir THOMAS and LADY CRAWLEY-BOEVEY to partake of afternoon tea. Sir THOMAS kindly conducted the party over the house, and, with his permission, Mr. J. H. MIDDLETON explained such portions of the remains as existed, and pointed out and exhibited a plan shewing its probable form. The substance of his remarks will appear in this volume (see post p. 284.)

The building was examined, together with the tapestry, and portraits of the philanthropic Mrs. Bovey (the perverse widow of the Spectator).

Before leaving, the President proposed a vote of thanks of the members to Sir THOMAS and LADY CRAWLEY-BOEVEY for the kind and cordial welcome they had given the party at Flaxley Abbey.

At seven o'clock a good muster dined together at the George Hotel, Micheldean, Sir JOHN MACLEAN presiding.

After dinner, in proposing the usual toast of Success to the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, the President expressed his gratification that, notwithstanding the unsettled state of the weather, so many had attended the meeting, and, alluding to his remarks at Chepstow as to the desirableness of forming a Special Division of the Society for the Forest District, said he was desirous of ascertaining now, after the experience of the day, what was the feeling of those present upon the subject. He, therefore, put it to the meeting whether it was thought desirable that such a division should be formed, and it was adopted unanimously in the affirmative.

The health of Sir JOHN was cordially proposed and received. Votes of thanks were likewise given to Mr. W. C. HEANE, as conductor of the Excursion, and to the readers of papers, after which a pleasant and successful archæological meeting terminated.
