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## **Scrivens' Conduit**

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TRANSACTIONS OF THE  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society,  
IN 1888-9,  
PART II.

SCRIVEN'S CONDUIT.

By HENRY MEDLAND.

*Read at Gloucester, 16th July, 1888.*

THIS Conduit stood in the middle of Southgate Street in the City of Gloucester, nearly opposite Bell Lane, and at the south end of the Wheat Market.

It was erected in 1636 by John Scriven, an ironmonger, who carried on business on the west side of Southgate Street and near the Cross. Scriven was a "citizen of credit and renown;" he was Sheriff in 1622; an Alderman of the City and Mayor in 1642. According to Fosbrooke<sup>1</sup> he lies on the north side of the chancel of St. Mary de Crypt Church. The inscription on the gravestone runs thus: "John Scriven once Mayor and Alderman of this City and Jane his wife. He died 23rd June, 1645, she 10th Sept. 1615. Also Margaret the daughter of John Scriven the younger who died Feb. the 2nd 1630."<sup>2</sup>

The Conduit was supplied with water from Mattes-Knoll (now Robin Wood's Hill) by a leaden pipe. The following extracts from a deed in the possession of the Corporation, dated 1438, will give a good idea of the water supply of Gloucester at that period, and probably for three succeeding centuries:—

"A deed of gift from John Godwyn the Warden of the Friars Minors and the convent thereof with the consent of Father

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of Gloucester, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> The grave stone is not now to be seen, being covered by modern wood flooring.

Richard Leek their chief minister to John Streynesham and Richard Dalby Bailiffs of Gloucester and the Commonalty thereof and their successors of three parts of the water divided into four equal shares running in a Leaden pipe under ground from Mattesknoll to the Friary garden within the walls of Gloucester, they to receive the said three parts from a certain place in the garden and to convey the water thereto in a leaden pipe under ground to be made at the cost of the Bailiffs and Commonalty to the High Cross and what other places they shall think proper. The Friars to repair the pipe and all things belonging to the water course from Matson to their garden as soon as conveniently may be after notice of such want of repair given them, provided that Plumers and other necessary workmen can be got in Gloucester or the Bailiffs can provide them. The Bailiffs and Commonalty to pay three parts of the charges thereof and the Friars the fourth. The Bailiffs and Commonalty to pay the whole charges of the repair of the pipe from the Friary garden to the High Cross or what other places they shall think fit to convey the water. Neither parties to do anything detrimental to the other herein. Both parties oblige themselves and their successors under the penalty of Forty pounds to stand to the covenants. Date 1438." <sup>1</sup>

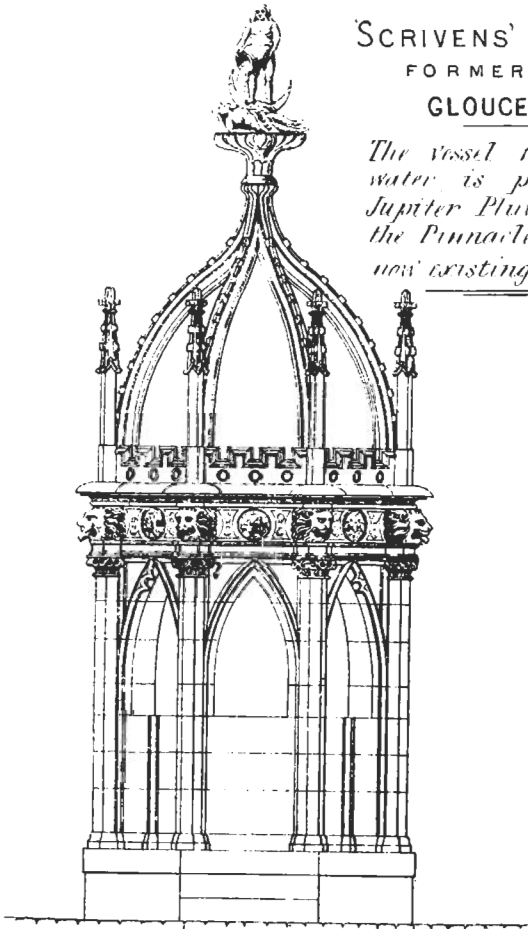
The fact of this Conduit having stood in a line almost between the Grey Friars and the High Cross makes it extremely probable that it was supplied by the pipe just mentioned.

An Act of Parliament for removing obstructions was passed in 1749. The "obstructions" were not all removed immediately, for this Conduit was not removed till 1784 or 5. Possibly it survived during these 36 years in consequence of its comparatively small size and its great utility. It was removed to a garden, approached from Dog Lane, which belonged to a Mr. Griffiths, and stood there till the formation of Clarence Street about 1830, when it was removed to Edgeworth Manor near Cirencester, which then belonged to Mr. E. Hopkinson. The removal was superintended by Mr. G. Armstrong Howitt who is still living, and who has a lively recollection of circumstances which took place at the

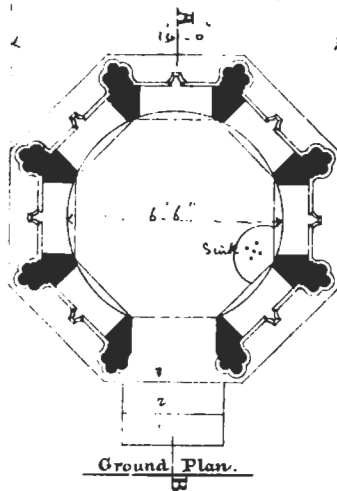
<sup>1</sup> See *Ante*, p. 178; see also p. 187 with reference to the leaden pipe. — Ed.

SCRIVENS' CONDUIT  
FORMERLY IN  
GLOUCESTER.

*The vessel from which  
water is poured by  
Jupiter Pluvius and  
the Pinnacles are not  
now existing.*



Entrance Elevation.



Ground Plan.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0  
SCALE OF FEET.

time. The exact spot where it stood is now occupied by the residence of Mr. Plant, No. 24, Clarence Street.

The structure which is elegant in form and of good proportions (*see Plate XV.*) may be architecturally defined as of bastard gothic with a dash of classic architecture, which was being introduced into this country at the period when the Conduit was erected.

The general idea may have been taken from some building of an earlier period, and the mouldings, &c., copied, without knowledge or feeling, from various sources. There can be no reason to suppose that any portion is anterior to the time of Alderman Scriven. As proof of this assertion I may point out:—

- 1st. The impure caps and bases of the pseudo—13th century clustered angle shafts. The caps are almost wanting in abacus, having merely one small fillet and incongruous leaves introduced below the conventional foliage. The base mouldings are altogether out of character with the style adopted for the shafts.
- 2nd. The mouldings and cusps to the arches have no counterpart in pure Gothic architecture.
- 3rd. The mouldings to the ogee ribs, of 15th century type, are altogether wanting in the character of that period, whilst the crockets worked on them are pimping, ineffective and wanting in style.

As evidence of the classic feeling before referred to, I may point out the pseudo—entablature consisting of architrave, frieze and cornice. This entablature is, architecturally, very crude. The mixture of impure Gothic mouldings with classic medallions (bearing delicately carved subjects), and the contrast between these medallions and the comparatively coarsely-carved lions' head is very odd.

The building is octagonal in plan externally, of an extreme diameter of 10 feet, with clustered shafts at the angles, and pannelled sides. It stands on a substantial plain octagonal base, and measures 8 ft. 9 ins. from the base to the underside of the entablature. The entablature, which is 2 ft. 3 ins. deep, is surmounted

by a battlemented coping, with large stone at each angle, from which rise the moulded and crocketted ribs of an ogee-shaped open canopy. The canopy is terminated by a large carved finial, 2 ft. 8 ins. across, on which rests a group of figures allegorical of the river Severn. The group consists of two nude female figures in recumbent attitude lying back to back, and bearing scrolls. The word SABRINA is distinctly legible on the scroll borne by the larger figure. If any inscription ever existed on the other scroll it is now entirely obliterated. The upper arm of each female figure encircles a crescent moon. On the twin crescent stands a nude male figure, with long hair, which, originally, bore a large jar or vase of the shape of an amphora. The two crescents unite above the feet of the recumbent figures, which is significant. It is conjectured that the two recumbent female figures represent the Severn and her tributary the Avon, and that the male figure represents Jupiter Pluvius, who, in conjunction with the Moon, supplies and regulates their waters.

The total height of the structure from the floor to the top of allegorical group is 25 ft. 3 ins.

At the springing of each rib of the canopy there is evidence of the previous existence of a pinnacle or some such ornament, which, no doubt, gave piquancy and finish to the building.

The eight circular panels in the entablature were carved in low relief with subjects representing, probably, the Resources or Industries of the Vale of the Severn. Of these, five retain sufficient evidence to enable them to be described. They stand in the following order, commencing with that over the door and continuing round to the left hand :—

1. Obliterated.
2. Amongst other small objects (nearly obliterated) is a clock with pendulum and weights. Had Alderman Scriven any interest in the manufacture of clocks, or was it a special industry in Gloucester ?
3. A well-carved seated figure of Ceres, crowned with wheat ears, with a sickle in the right hand and a wheat sheaf under the left arm, slightly clothed with graceful drapery flying in the

- wind. Effectively grouped wheat sheaves and standing corn complete the subject.
4. A marine subject—probably the Bristol channel or mouth of the Severn—represented by rippling water, on which are two ships and two large fish.
  5. A wine manufacturer or merchant represented by a sparsely-clad man, his dress consisting of loose corded trunks, a light scarf over the shoulders, and loose top boots. He is seated on a wine barrel, and pours wine from a large jug into a flat-shaped cup. Wine barrels, a branch of vine with grapes thereon, and a basket of fruit, fill up the medallion.
  6. Obliterated.
  7. A very spiritedly-carved landscape, probably representing a view of Gloucester from the S.W., with the road leading to the city, on which are a horseman and either a pedestrian or a gate-keeper, both full of life and activity. On each side of the road, and filling up the medallion, are hills, towers, trees, cattle and sheep. I think the subject represents the south gate of Gloucester with St. Mary de Crypt Church inside, St. Owen outside, the Castle, Mattes Knoll or Robin Wood's Hill with beacon on the top, and Chosen Hill with church on the top. The horseman may represent Alderman Scriven returning from a country ride and being welcomed by the gate-keeper.
  8. Obliterated.

On either side of each circular medallion there are, or were, double concave panels to fit the spaces between the circular panels, and lions' heads, with two scallop shells reversed, carved on each.

The interior is circular on plan, 6 ft. 6 ins. in diameter—masonry very rough. It was originally covered by a lead flat, supported on corbels at the level of the entablature, and the rain-water was conveyed therefrom through the lions' heads which served as gargoyles.

There are no evidences of any groining below the lead flat.

The ogee ribs are chased and plugged with lead in places, shewing that it was covered at one time; this may have been at

the time it stood in Griffiths' garden in Dog lane, but this was certainly not the original treatment.

The original sink-stone is still *in situ*, and is formed of Painswick stone, dished and perforated with five holes.

A hole, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ins. in diameter, is drilled through the second pier to the right from the doorway. Whether this may have had any connection with the water supply appliances or not is a matter of uncertainty. It was evidently drilled there for some useful purpose.

The whole of the Conduit is constructed of Painswick stone of various qualities, much of which has perished, and it sadly needs partial renovation and repair.

I cannot conclude without an expression of deep regret that the High Cross, Scriven's Conduit and the King's Board were removed from Gloucester.

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