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TRANSACTIONS OF THE  
 Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

AT A SPECIAL MEETING, HELD AT STROUD,

*On Thursday Evening, 14th February, 1889.*

THE arrangements were made under the directions of the members of the Local Council, and the meeting was well attended. The chair was taken by Sir JOHN DORINGTON, Bart., M.P., a Vice-President of the Society. Among the company present was The Very Rev. The DEAN OF GLOUCESTER, The Very Rev. The PRIOR OF WOODCHESTER, Genl. LITTLE, Col. PENNINGTON, a large number of local clergy and gentry, and many ladies; as also the Rev. WILLIAM BAZELEY, Hon. General Secretary, and Mr. C. A. WITCHELL, Hon. Local Secretary.

Sir JOHN DORINGTON having, in a few words, introduced the Dean of Gloucester, the Dean gave a graphic and interesting description of the successive stages in the history of the venerable building under his charge, which was very successfully illustrated by Mrs. Embrey, of Gloucester, by the exhibition with a magic lantern of a series of views taken more than a century ago. This address and exhibition gave great satisfaction to the meeting, which was largely of a popular character.

This was followed by a Paper by Mr. CHAS. WETHERED, Hon. Associate of the Royal Institution of British Architects, *On Lower Lypiatt Hall*, which was illustrated by drawings by the Misses Stanton, Mr. Roger Batchelor, and Mr. J. B. Lewis. After an introduction of considerable length, and no less literary ability, which could not with justice be abridged, and which our space will not permit us to print in full, Mr. Wethered proceeded to describe the building under notice in the following terms:—

“I have gone far afield in order to trace back the subject of this paper to its source, to show how an abrupt transition from long-established usage led astray by deviating from the normal path of progress. This was effected by exchanging our true vernacular in stone and brick for foreign terms of expression. The cardinal principle of our native style I may describe as unity in multiformity. Its basis is freedom and variety of arrangement, ruling the plan and deciding the elevations. A structural work laid down on these lines may be likened to the growth of a tree, which, rising from a central axis, springs up and inclines on either side to seek the air and light. On the other hand, when a rectangular block without breaks or projections includes the various services within four walls under one uniform roof, the designer is subjected to a formula which stifles all inventive energy, except in matters of minor detail. We may define its chief characteristic as the tyranny of uniformity.

We have a typical specimen of this squared, evenly-balanced plan, two miles to the east of Stroud, in Lower Lypiatt Hall, built within three years after the reign of Queen Anne. According to Sir Robert Atkyns, "This manor was an ancient seat of the family of the Freams, and was called Lypiatt Hall. It came by descent to Charles Cox, Esq., who married one of the heiresses of Fream." Rudder, writing later on, says: "He was deservedly appointed one of the judges of Wales, and served in several Parliaments for the borough of Cirencester. He was succeeded in this estate by his son, John Cox, Esq., who was also elected a representative for the borough of Cirencester in the year 1748, and is for the present proprietor of Lower Lypiatt, where he has a handsome house and a large estate."

"I may briefly describe it as consisting of a barrel-vaulted cellar, a basement floor, entered from the back and sides, two stories containing the principal rooms, with attics above under a single hipped roof. These attics were lit on every side by two dormers, all of which were destroyed some forty years ago when the house was almost roofed anew. Those on the main front have been replaced in the elevation I have had carefully drawn to scale by Mr. Roger Batchelor. And, before going further, I wish to express my best thanks to those who have so kindly placed at my disposal their several drawings that so well illustrate my subject. Whether you have been to Lower Lypiatt or not, you may see in the water-colour drawings by the Misses Stanton how thoroughly they have depicted, by the kinship of their beautiful art, not only the contours and local colour of this neighbouring landmark, but they have also reflected the sentiment of those old walls and windows that have witnessed the ebb and flow of successive waves of humanity.

The porch is composed of a segmental pediment, supported by fluted Ionic columns and pilasters, approached by a flight of steps. Through the porch we directly enter at a corner of what is said to have been the dining-room, and here we at once notice one of the most striking changes from the old ordering of things to the new in the disposition of the chambers, staircase, and passages, all of which are contrived so as not to interfere in any way with the equal size and spacing of the window openings. One of the awkward results of this restraint is that a partition wall sometimes cuts a window vertically in two. This may be tolerated within doors, but it is not to be endured outside, so a filling-in of ashlar or opaque material is needed to conceal the anomaly from the critical eye of the passer-by. This is an outcome of that compressed, hampered manner of planning I have ventured to term the tyranny of uniformity.

The stone was quarried from the oolitic beds of Bisley, and the masonry now toned by the touch of time and storm, is of the best. The lines of the cornice, string-course, and window mouldings, like all else inside and out, are noteworthy for excellence of workmanship. The wood panelling, and internal fittings generally are, rather strange to say, not of oak or walnut but of perishable elm and ash, now much decayed. Cast in relief on the lead work of a rain-water pipe are the date 1717 and the arms of the founder. The crest is a crowing cock. The gateway leading to the spacious forecourt is of wrought-iron work, supported by stone pillars, with moulded caps and urn-shaped terminals relieved by foliations. Interlaced with the scroll work

above the gates is the name of "Cox" in monogram. The hammer of the smith and the chisel of the mason seem to have striven here for mastery in the rendering of a feature that adds distinction to the physiognomy of Lower Lypiatt Hall.

Until within the last twenty years the withdrawing-room was hung with tapestry, and I am indebted to Mr. John Kemp, of Gloucester, for the following interesting account of these pictured hangings woven with dyed threads of wool:—"I have much pleasure in giving all the information I can respecting the tapestries from Lower Lypiatt Hall, which were presented by the late Miss Gordon, of Kemble, to the Gloucester School of Art. They consist of three pieces, two 14 ft. by 10 ft., with borders of floral ornament, and the other is 10 feet by 8 feet. The subjects have been identified by a learned antiquary, the late Mr. Niblett, of Haresfield Court, as being taken from the Book of Esther, and as representing the history of Mordecai. The smaller of these pieces shows King Ahasuerus calling forth Mordecai. One of the longer ones shows the bringing forth of the horse on which Mordecai is to ride through the city; and the last, Mordecai exalted on a throne with a crown of gold on his head. They are all treated in the large, broader manner of Raphael, and carried further by Rubens and his followers. The costumes abound in anachronisms, *e.g.* the soldiers are habited as Roman soldiers, and a Red Indian, whose head is decorated with feathers, appears in one of them. Mr. Niblett ascribed their execution to the latter part of the 17th century, to which period I am disposed to assign them. I consider it very probable that they are English work produced in the Royal manufactory at Mortlake, near Windsor, which was established by James I. and was continued by Charles I., who purchased the celebrated cartoons of Raphael with a view to their execution in tapestry. The civil war put a stop to the manufactory, but it was re-established by Charles II., and the looms continued in operation until the death of Francis Crane in 1703, who was the last superintendent. I cannot be quite sure of this conjecture, but it happens that an engraving of a piece known to have been produced about the time of Charles I. is in my possession, and the similarity of style to those in our school is very evident."

The only sign of fusion of the old with the new at Lower Lypiatt is the retention of mullions, transoms, and casements in the side windows; but a lingering regard for home-bred Gothic traditions is strongly marked in the barns and stables built at the same time. These out-buildings, in fact, would be quite in keeping with the belongings of a Tudor grange, and may be a reminiscence of the ancestral abode of the Freams that occupied the same site. No vestige of this remains except an ancient well and a few foundations hidden below the ground close by.

While thus far clinging to the past in his surroundings, our worthy judge could not resist the wave of change that swept in his day over many lands. Long ago deserted by his descendants, and stripped within and without of much that once made it, like the residence of Justice Shallow in this county, "a goodly dwelling and rich," it is none the less the best house of its class in this immediate neighbourhood as regards external appearance and finish. The influence of this local centre of innovation soon extended everywhere around—with this result, that a square or oblong facing of stone or of brick pierced with square openings, unrelieved by a single moulding or incising,

became the prevailing type and ultimate expression of the once so noble art of building.

Nevertheless, our chissellers and dressers of stone have never lost the skill of their craft handed down to them from generation to generation, and the late Sir Charles Barry was well advised when he employed freestone masons from these westward Cotteswold slopes to build the palace of Westminster. Swayed by the deviations and reactions so characteristic of our times, not a few among our leading architects have returned to the old paths wherein is the good way. In the later essays of many others we too often see borrowings and admixtures from all quarters; imitation of the forms rather than observance of the principles that originally dictated the adoption of those forms; but these compounds of diverse elements are, at any rate, a decided advance upon the dreary monotony of the Georgian age, so flat, stale, and unprofitable to the mind and eye alike.

A survey of the monumental remains of past ages compels the unwilling admission that the archæologist of the future will find in the achievements of the 19th century no phase of architecture, much less a style, veritably our own, and distinctive of our civilization. The present belongs not so much to the architect as to the engineer, whose railway viaducts and other works of the like bold character, rival in dominion over nature, if not in grandeur of effect, the out-lasting structures of the old Romans.

Mr. A. T. PLAYNE followed with a Paper on *The History and Architecture of Avening Church*. He said it was fortunate that up to that date the building had escaped the ruthless destruction which had befallen so many churches under the misused term "restoration," instancing as an example the neighbouring church of Minchinhampton, which had been subjected to the operation some fifty years ago. Giving a brief sketch of the history of the manor, Mr. Playne said that some remains of Norman work existed in the structure of the church, particulars of which he described, as also of the various changes which had taken place in the building down to modern times. Mr. Playne, in concluding his paper, acknowledged his indebtedness in its preparation to Mr. Frederick Waller, of Gloucester, and Mr. R. H. Carpenter, of London.

On the termination of Mr. Playne's paper, the Rev. F. de Paravicini, Rector of Avening, proposed to read a Paper on the same subject; but as he had omitted to give notice of his intention, it was not included in the Agenda for the evening, and the hour, moreover, having become late, the chairman ruled that it could not then be admitted, and suggested that it should be reserved for the next meeting of the Society; and it was so arranged.

Mr. ROBERT TAYLOR had undertaken to read a short Paper entitled *A Plea for Old Tools*, but was prevented from being present by illness; and though Mr. Hyett had kindly promised to read the Paper for Mr. Taylor, because of the lateness of the hour it was reserved by general consent.

Votes of thanks concluded the proceedings.