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Brewers' Hall

by E. H. Martineau
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BREWERS' HALL.

By E. H. MARTINEAU, F.R.I.B.A.

ADDLE STREET, from which this Hall is approached, is evidently of great antiquity. According to Mr. Augustus Hare, who has a short notice of it in his *Walks in London*, the name is derived from the Saxon word *adel*, which means noble—the street of the nobles. What it may have been like before the Fire of London in 1666 we have no account of, nor pictorial illustrations that I am aware of; nor can I find among the records of the Brewers' Company any description of their Hall as it was previous to the Fire. We only know it was destroyed on that occasion, and that the present building was erected in 1670 from the designs of Mr. Whiting, the then Surveyor to the Company, at a cost of something under £6,000, a certain Captain Cain being the contractor.

I believe the Brewers' Company never was a rich one, and it appears from the minutes of the Court meetings of the time that they had to sell their plate to raise part of the money for rebuilding.

COURTYARD.

Anyone passing along the street and peeping through the gateway cannot but be struck by the quaint appearance of the courtyard and the façade of the Hall. I don't know anything at all like it elsewhere, either in England or abroad. The gateway in the street, with its flanking Corinthian columns and entablature over, finished at top by a curved pediment, is in good proportions, and the carving of the shield with coat of arms of the Company, and swags of flowers and fruit depending from same, is a good specimen

of the carving of that period. The whole being constructed in wood, it is wonderful how it has lasted.

The lower portion of the façade of the Hall towards the courtyard has rusticated Portland stone piers, and attached stone columns of the Roman Doric order in the middle of each. Stone elliptic arches spring from the tops of the capitals, the spandrils between being of brick. At the level of the caps there are horizontal oak beams, which bear on the stone piers across each opening and are moulded, being also carved in the middle with scrolls, between which, in each bay, there is a lion's head. The spaces between top of beams and the stone archivolt are filled in and covered with stucco ornamental shields, surrounded by scrolls and swag work. The upper part of the building is of red brick, with two tiers of windows, the lower ones rectangular in form and those above oval; all having stone dressings. The brick parapet above the small stone top cornice, or rather moulded string, is evidently of a later date, as the bricks are thicker. I have no doubt there was originally an open stone balustrading at the top, and that when this fell into decay the Master and Wardens of the time, probably with a view to economy, renewed it by substituting a plain brick parapet.

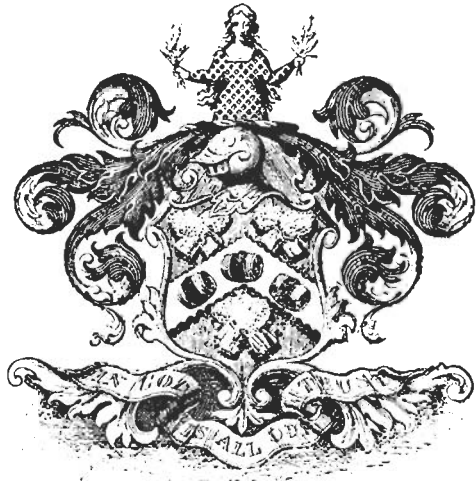
As originally designed, too, the spaces between the stone piers were all open to the courtyard, so that the ground floor under the hall was a sort of cloister to walk about in, from which, at the east end, access could be got to the upper storey by the old wooden balustraded stairs that start from near the kitchen door. The old kitchen is on the north side, under the Court Room. It has a large fireplace, some old tables, and a chopping block. There is also a cast lead cistern, with the Brewers' Company arms and date of 1671.

HALL.

The Hall itself, in which the Society is now holding its meeting, is directly approached from the courtyard by a flight of stone steps, flanked on the outer side by stone balustrading, and is entered at the east end through the

Corinthian columned and panelled oak screen. I have no doubt the original ceiling was divided into panelled compartments with plaster enrichments, or had moulded timbers exposed, as is found to be the case in the halls of other City Companies of the same period; but that when at some later time the roof was renewed (perhaps when the supposed external stone balustraded parapet to which I have alluded was done away with), the same motive for economy led to the ceiling being made the wretched flat one now seen.

The oak screen and panelled wainscoting round the walls was put up in 1673, a Mr. Woodroffe having executed the carving. The Court passed a resolution, that "the Coates of Armes of 12 good Benefactors towards building the Hall be carved in the 12 shields." The ones referred to are those in the curved pediments, six on each of the side walls, with the names in gilt letters under. They also directed that "the present Master and Wardens' Armes be fixed over entrance to Court Parlour." Above this doorway is a carved shield of the Royal Arms, Charles II. On the top of the screen, at the east end, are the arms of the



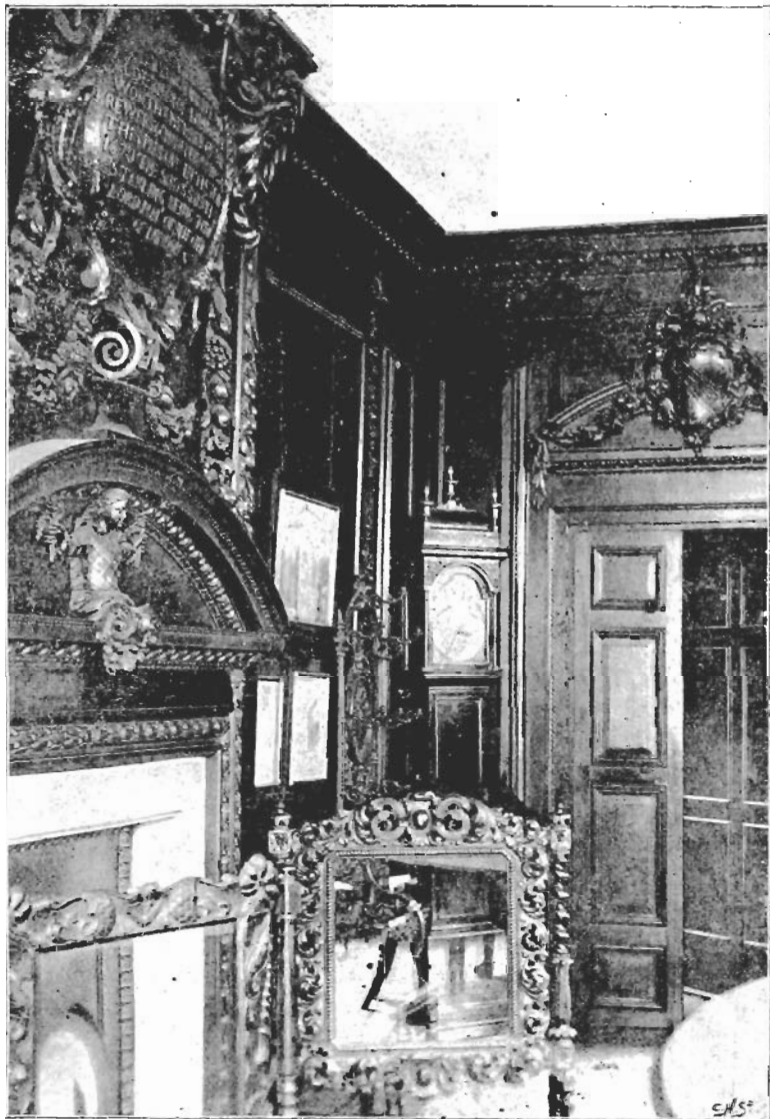
THE ARMS OF THE BREWERS' COMPANY.

Brewers' Company, which are: Gules on a chevron engrailed argent, three kilderkins sable, hooped or, between three pairs of barley sheaves in saltire of the same. Crest: A demi Moorish woman in her proper colour, vested azure,

fretted argent, her hair dishevelled or, holding in either hand three barley ears of the same. Motto: "In God is all our trust." The carved figures on the top of the wainscoting at west end—two river gods; two female figures, one reclining against a lion and the other against a bird; and two sea horses—belonged to the Brewers' Company's barge, and I believe were placed in the positions they now are when the barge ceased to be used on the river. In the angles of the Hall at same end are the two banners belonging to the barge, which have also been preserved.

Another object of interest is a beautifully embroidered coffin pall, used on the occasion of funerals of members of the Court. I should put it down as work of the early part of the sixteenth century. The coats of arms worked and repeated on it are those of the Brewers' Company impaled with the arms of the Founder (dexter), said to be Thomas à Becket. The stained-glass window at west end of Hall is a modern one (1884); it replaced one which bore the date 1774, destroyed in the Wood Street fire in 1883, which fire, if it had not been for a sudden change in the wind, would most certainly have entirely burnt Brewers' Hall to the ground. The carved Master's chair under this window is of the date 1720. The pictures hung in the Hall are: Portrait of Richard Platt, 1600, who founded school and almshouses at Aldenham, Herts; Dame Alice Owen, 1613, who also founded school and almshouses at Islington; Alderman James Hickson; Charles I.; Charles II.; Samuel Whitbread, 1720-1769, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; John Baker, 1737-1808; and Harry Charrington, 1813.

The Court Room, which opens out of this Hall, is also lined with panelled oak. There is an inscription over the chimney-piece on a carved shield as follows: "The Right Worth. Sr. Samuel Starling Knight and Alderman of London, a worthy member of the Brewers' Company did wainscott this Parlour in the yeare 1670. The said Sr. Samuel Starling being then Lord Mair of the cittie of London." Over the cornice of the doorway is a shield, on which the



CHIMNEY-PIECE IN COURT ROOM.

W. Wonnacott, Photo.

arms of Sir Samuel Starling are carved—arg. on a bend az., three square buckles or. In the window at the east end there are stained-glass squares, executed in 1673, with coats of arms, viz.: “The Royal Arms,” “The Founders’ Arms” (Thomas à Becket), “The City Arms,” and “The Brewers’ Company Arms.” Hanging up around the walls are framed the Charter of Henry VI. and two grants of arms of Edward IV. and Henry VIII. respectively. There is also in this room a very beautiful oak table, date about 1660.

On the table in Court Room will be found the only pieces of old plate, I believe, the Company possess—a knife and fork of Queen Anne’s time, kept in the original case covered with skin; and one of the badges worn by the barge watermen, which has been set in the lid of a snuff-box. There are also placed on the table a few relics, which I discovered when the foundations were dug out in 1876 for the buildings erected on the south side of the courtyard facing Addle Street, with which front was incorporated the old gateway entrance of 1671.
