

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

The High Cross at Gloucester

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1901, Vol. 24, 293-307

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THE HIGH CROSS AT GLOUCESTER.

By C. H. DANCEY.

THE early history of this lofty and beautiful structure is of a somewhat vague and uncertain date. The earliest drawing or sketch that we have of it is to be seen in the *Rental of Gloucester*, 1455, where there are four views shown. These, however, are very different to the one exhibited in the drawing of it, made in the year 1750, by Mr. Thomas Ricketts, a clever carver and a native of Gloucester. This was engraved by G. Vertue, for the Society of Antiquaries, which engraving shows eight canopied niches, occupied by as many full-length Royal figures.¹

Atkins, our local historian, 1712, says the niches are occupied by the statues of the following Kings and Queens:

“King John, because he was Earl of Gloucester, and afterwards, when he was King, made it a borough town.

“King Henry the Third, because he was crowned here, and by his charter made it a Corporation; and Eleanor, his Queen, because she founded St. Bartholomew’s Hospital.

“King Edward the Third, because of his great renown and success against France.

“King Richard the Second, because he resided for some time in this City, and held a Parliament therein.

“King Richard the Third, because he was Duke of Gloucester, and afterwards, when he was King, annexed the two hundreds of Dudston and Kings Barton to the jurisdiction of the Corporation.

“Queen Elizabeth, because she established the Protestant religion; and King Charles the First, to show their detestation of the former disloyalty acted in this place.”

¹ Pooley’s *Old Crosses of Gloucestershire*, p. 18.

The sketch by Robert Cole, Canon of Llanthony, as seen in the *Rental* and called *Alta Crux* (High Cross), would make it appear that it was used as a conduit.

There does not seem to be any certain date known when it was erected or by whom, but the following extracts from the *Corporation Records* will assist in the question of the use to which the said "High Cross" was applied:—

"A.D. 1438, August 10th. Agreement between Brother John Godewyn, Guardian of the Friars Minor of Gloucester (the Grey Friars), and the Convent of the same place, on the one part, and John Streynsham and Richard Dalby, Bailiffs of Gloucester, and the Community of the same town, on the other part, whereby the Friars, on account of their affection towards the Community of Gloucester, and with the assent of Father Richard Leeke, their Provincial Minister, grant to the said Bailiffs and Community, three-quarters of their water running in a leaden pipe in the ground from the hill called 'Mattesknoll' to the garden of the said Convent within the walls of the said town.

"To Have and to hold to the said Community from a certain place in the garden aforesaid where the water is divided into four parts to the high cross in the town aforesaid, and at other places where they will in the same town, by a leaden pipe in the ground to be put in at the cost of the said Community; reserving to the said Guardian and Convent their fourth part of the water aforesaid. The said Convent undertake to repair the aforesaid subterranean leaden pipe, all middle channels of stone or wood, and the houses, walls, receptacles, and other things, both in digging and in other necessities, from the heads of the springs of the water aforesaid to the said hill within reasonable time, provided that Plumbers and other necessary workmen for this work may be found in the County of Gloucester; or if the Bailiffs will provide such Plumbers and workmen, the Convent will receive and hire them.

"The Community are to find three-quarters of the cost of such repairs. Neither party is to do anything to lessen the supply of the other, and both are bound in sums of money to faithfully fulfil the provisions of this Agreement."—*Corporation Record*, 1112.

This would seem to have been the first mention of water being conveyed to the "High Cross." The date of this Agreement (1438) was only a few years previous to the time that the drawing of the *Alta Crux* was made by Canon Cole, —viz., 1455—which sketch distinctly shows taps or pipes, such as may be used for the supplying of water for the use of the citizens. The other places alluded to in the "Agreement" are not named, but we find one conduit was fixed against the "Tower of Grace Lane Church," and another was at "Trinitie Conduit," in the Westgate Street.

Now the water to supply these several places was part of a stream coming from a spring at "Breresclyft in the field of Mattesdone," and granted by one William Gerard, unto the Abbot of St. Peter at Gloucester, and the Guardian and Convent of the Friars Minor of the same town, about 1300.

In 1357 a dispute arose between the Friars and the Abbey, as to the quantity of water to each. This was referred to the King, Edward III., who sent his grandson, Edward the Black Prince, to Gloucester to settle the dispute. He granted the Friars should have one-third and the right to place a new pipe and repair it, and a third of the cost of maintaining and repairing the reservoir.

From this time forward the Bailiffs' and Chamberlains' account books will furnish an abundant record of "items of expenditure" in the "reparacons" of the leaden water pipes from "Robinhood's Hill" to the "High Cross Conduite."

"1551-2. Also in money paid for the newe castyng of the cocke of the Conduite at the High Cross, and for the caryng of the same to and from London and sett on the same by the tyme of this accompte xiiijs. ij*ʒ*."

"Item paid for mendyng of the conduite dore there j*ʒ*."

“Also in money paied to Ric^a Letheland for an hangyng locke to the cocke of the said conduite by the tyme of this p'sent accompte viij*d*.”

Leland, in his *Itinerary*, takes notice of the building and says:—

“The beauty of the town lies in two Crossing Streets, and at the place of the middle meeting is an Aqueduct incallated.”

After the surrender of the Grey Friars, in 1538, Sir John Jenyns, one of the Household of King Henry VIII., was granted a lease of the site, for twenty-one years, at an annual rent of 33*s. 0*d.**, dated April 2nd, 1542. This was alienated by grant in 1544 to Thomas Payne of this City, and from him it was held by Hugh Gethyn for a short time.

On March 25th, 1556, the said site was “demyssed” for 500 years from Thomas Payne, Alderman of Gloucester, to Thomas Purye, also Alderman of the same; after his and his wife Joan's death, it came to his brother Walter, whose son Thomas demised the property to the Maior and Burgesses in the following manner:—

1630. “It is agreed that Mr. Thomas Pury shall have 50*lb.* out of the Chamber to bee paid Thirtie ponde at Michaelmas next and Twentie ponde at Michaelmas come twelve Monthes, so as he passe over all rights titles and interest in the Friars house and garden and other things contained in that Patent. And likewise the interest of the pipe from Robinshood hill to the Priory garden; together with his interest of the fourth p^{te} of the water runyng through the said pipe to the Maior and Burgesses and their Sheriffs or to such ps^{on} as they shall appoint, by such conveyance in the law as by the said Maior and Burgesses and their Sheriffs shall be reasonable devised before the feast of Christmas next.

“August, 1630.”

Having acquired the Priory and with it the part of the water supply, it enabled the Maior and his Sheriffs to

continue and improve the arrangements for the supplying of water to the public conduits. The following extract will give an idea of the way in which this was done. 1622.

Minute Book:—

“It is also agreed that Moyses Beaton (“a Plomer”) shall have a grant of tenne pounds from Midsomer last by the yeare out of the Chamber of this Citty for his own life and his sonnes upon condicion that he shall keepe and mainteine the water pipes from Robinhoods hill to the High Crosse and other conduits of the Citty accordinge to certeine articles to be drawn betweene the Maior and Burgesses, and the said Moyses shall new cast the pipes w^{thn} three years.”

In cases where the lead was decayed, then the extra lead necessary to renew the same was allowed for, as was also the “Sowder” and the men’s time. This agreement was duly read and ordered to be engrossed under the Comon Seal.

1634. The fact that the structures at the High Cross and also at the Trinitie Well were very much out of repair, was happily the means to bring about a strong desire in the minds of some to improve matters in each case.

In July, 1634, the Corporation *Minute Book* records:—

“Whereas John Scrivens gen^l one of the members of this house out of his pious and Charitable dispoicion having regard and respect as well to the honor of this City also to the benefit of the Inhabitants heare is minded as voluntarily and of his free will to erect and build a Conduit at the South end of the wheat market at his own charge which good intention being now p^{re}ented and made known to this and very thankfully cecoded and equally accepted and applauded It is therefore at this house ordered and agreed that the said Mr. John Scrivens shall have free liberty to erect and build a Conduit at the South end of the wheat market and shall likewise have a pipe for bringing of the water thither out of the pipe leading to the Cross.”

This semi-Gothic building was erected in the middle of the Southgate Street, a little to the north of Travell Lane (Bell Lane), and was used and maintained at the cost of the City until 1784, when it was removed and refixed in a field which is now known as Clarence Street. From thence it was taken away from the City altogether, and is now to be seen standing in the grounds of Edgeworth Manor in this County.¹ Could not this interesting structure be recovered and fixed up again in the same parish in which it was first built? I do not think there would be much difficulty in obtaining it. Oh, that it may be so. At the same Council meeting, held in July, 1634,

“It is agreed at this house that the Chamber of this City shall lay out and expend about the repaying and beautifying of the Cross the some of 50*lb.*”

Although the sum of £50 was allowed to do the reparations, it will be seen that it required a much larger amount to finish the work; and in all probability there may have been some of the citizens who were of the opinion that they would like to see the proposed alterations carried out in a liberal spirit, so as to make the structure worthy of the many ecclesiastical buildings that were . . . within the walls of the city.

Up to this time the old structure was used as a conduit, and in all the Chamberlains' Accounts the repairs done to the Cross are included in the “Items of Reparacon done at the Conduits.”

In the Inventory of Goods belonging to the city at this period, and where they are to be found, there is the following entry:—

“Item in Mr. Edwardes Custodie, one locke and keye for the Crosse Conduite

“in Mr. Halfords Custodie, one locke and keye for Glaceland Conduite

“in Mr. Windows Custodie, one locke and keye for Trinitie Conduite.”

¹ *Transactions*, Vol. XIII, 243.

This offer of Mr. Scrivens, to build a new conduit in the Southgate Street, appears to have suggested the idea of doing away with the use of the one at the Cross, and of transforming the old structure into a more beautified state; and in considering this question it was found that the £50 granted by the chamber would not be sufficient, for on the 23rd September the following minute was passed:—

“1635 It is also agreed that the chamber of this Citty shall defray the whole charge of repayringe the Cross over and above the Twenty pounds given by the Lord Bishop and that it shall be inclosed wth Irons as Bristol and other Cittys are.”

There is unfortunately no record of the Bishop's offer to give the said sum, or we may have seen whether it was for any specific item, that he wished this amount to be applied; nor is there any other reference made to the above gift, either in the receipts or expenditure.

In the *Annals of Windsor*, Vol. ii., p. 101, there is a curious letter from Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester, to the Mayor of Windsor, dated August 5th, 1635, in which he says:

“Many Cities do this year either build or repayre and beautifie their Crosses; Bristow, hath erected one little inferior to the Cross in Cheapside, Gloucester by my persuasion hath done the like, and though I suffer them to beautifie some pictures, yet the Cross itself is wholly at my charge.”

Godfrey Goodman was Bishop of Gloucester, 1624—1655, and the meaning of the letter is hardly clear, for the work was done, and a distinct account of the various items was kept, as follows:—

“Charges layd out about the High Cross as by p^ticulars
and the noates thereof may appeare,

	£ s. d.
“Imprimis payd for halling ffoure Loades of free stone from Brockington Quarr to Glouc ^r , which was employed about the Crosse	2 4 0

	£	s.	d.
"Item John Loggins for his work done and about the Crosse in setting up the step ^s round about the foote and for altering the Cocke			
"Item payd him more xvj th May 1636, for his work doune aboute the Crosse and for placeing the Iron Bars there	1	12	0
"Item payd Alderman William Singleton for the Iron delivered to Thomas Woodward by Mr. Maior and the Justices appoynt- mente being xxvij ^{cwt} and fiteene pounds at 18s. 6d. p ^r centum iust... ..	26	0	6
"Item payd Thomas Woodward in parte of a greater some he demands for working the same Iron Barrs and for setting them up by Mr. Maior and the Justices like order	20	0	0
"Item payd him more by a further order ...	2	0	0
"Item payd Thomas Prichard, Paynter for paynteing the Barrs and Scucheheons aboute the Crosse by Mr. Maior and the Justices like order	1	12	0
"Item payd Thomas Woodward for mendinge the ould grate at the Cross before it was pulled downe from the cock	1	6	
"Item payd Mr. Anthony Edwards for lead used about the Barrs and cramps there as by noate and for rozom nayles and other things	4	7	11
"Item payd Richard Beatone the Plumber for a new pipe for the lesser cock at the Crosse as by his noate	8	8	
"More payd him for sowder and for a dayes worke and an halfe for himselfe and his man as by the same noate will appeare	9	6	
"Item payd him more the xvij th of ffebruary for another pipe of lead for the greater cocke without the masons worke for 8lbs. of sowder for coales cymond to sett on the cocke and for his owne worke and his mans as by noate	17	7	

	£	s.	d.
“payd for broken Bricks and stones to putt within their new work	3	4	
“Item payd Owen Eavens wife for 3 barrells of lyme	3	5	
“Item payd Augustin Loggins for halling stone to the Crosse from the Poultrye Market and for other work done by him about the Cross and for halling lyme and sand	5	5	
“More payd Goodwife Eavens for another barrell of lyme	1	1	
“Item payd Goodman Greene for mending a cowle used there			4
“Item payd Goodman Sparkes Carpenter for pulling downe boards and for the frame he torne downe after Michme ^s	6	0	
“Item payd for more bricks to fill in the newe worke	3	0	
“Item payd for charcoal wc ^b the Plumbers used to melt the lead... ..	6	8	
“Item payd more for lyme	1	1	
“Item payd Goodman Sparkes for his worke and nayles at the Cross	6	0	
“Item payd John Wellsteade for a hinge and nayles to a ladder... ..	2	0	
“Item payd for a shakell for the locke and mendinge a wheelbarrow	1	6	
“Item payd more to Thomas Woodward, Smyth the xvijth of November 1636 by order from the Maior and Justices in full paym ^t for all his worke at the Cross ...	5	10	5
“Item payd Alderman Webb for a stone used at the Cross	2	0	

£ s. d.
Suma total Lxxvij iij viij.”

{ Note, figured items = 67 5 11 }
{ John Loggun supposed 9. 17 9 }

£77 3 8

Since in the foregoing items of expenditure, which are all that are recorded in the Chamberlains' "Accompt Books" for this and the few following years, there is no mention made of the statues having been placed upon the Cross; and neither at this time nor at any previous period is there any allusion made to the figures, there seems to be a mystery as to how, when, or by whom were they erected. And the question arises whether the money given by Bishop Goodman was used in thus "beautifying" the Cross.

The Bishop was on very friendly terms with the Mayor and Burgesses at this time. He it was who gave to the Corporation of Gloucester the advowson of Kemerton in this Diocese on May 8th, 1658, "for the good of the Hospital of St. Bartholomew in this City." The Mayor and Burgesses presented the Bishop with a piece of plate of the value of £20 9s. 6d. in 1638. They had also in the year 1636 admitted Thomas Parrat, a servant of the Bishop, a burgesse of the City, at his Lordship's request, without paying any fine.

So far as the High Cross was concerned, events went on smoothly until 1643, when the city was besieged by King Charles I., who made Matson House his quarters. Now, in the fields near to this mansion is the head of the spring of water that supplied the ancient conduits of Gloucester. There is still to be seen on the premises near the reservoirs at Robinswood Hill the old stone covering of the well or head of the spring; this is covered with a massive horizontal cross, supposed to be the only one of this kind in the County of Gloucester. It is illustrated in Pooley's *Crosses of Gloucestershire*,¹ and its date is probably of the late thirteenth century.

It was a matter of course that the Royalists should, after receiving the refusal of the citizens to open their gates, seek to deprive them of their supply of water by cutting the leaden pipes that conveyed the stream to the city conduits. This was done as soon as the siege had commenced, compelling the inhabitants to depend upon the wells and the Severn for water.

After the Royal Army had abandoned their attempt the Stewards had the pipes repaired, to pay for which a collection was made, as is clear from the following entry:—

1643. "Rec^d of the Maior & Ald^m & Gentlemen of the Comon Counsell xxs. and of Mr. Walter Lane xijs. *vd.* being Money Collected towards the mending of the Conduit pipes that were cutt without the walls at the time of the Siege, £1 12s. 5*d.*"

(The money actually paid for these repairs was £2 14s. 3*d.*)

1646. About this time the Cathedral was in a very neglected and ruinous state, and the Mayor and Burgesses were petitioning the Parliament to "Grant the use of the Chapter house in or belonging to the Colledge of Glouc^r as a fitt & Convenient place to be employed as a Publique Libray." The ancient cross that stood in the Abbey churchyard was also in a very decayed and ruinous condition, for on the 11th day of February, 1646-7 the following minute was passed:—

1647. "It is also agreed that all such charges as the Stewards shalbe at Aboute the carryinge away the stones of the Crosse in the upper Churchyard of the Colledge for the Publique use of the Citty being already ordered to be taken downe shalbe borne by the chamber of this Citty."

Then the Chamberlains' Accounts say:—

1647. "Charges in takinge downe the Colledge
Crosse p^r Order.

	£	s.	d.
"Imprimis paid to William Powell for hawlinge Six draughts of the stone to the Kaye		3	0
"p ^d p ^r note to John Sparkes, Henry Williams, John Watkins, Giles Jones, John Pinocke, Henry Phillips and Richard Cugley for their weeks worke in pullinge downe the said Crosse	1	2	2

	£	s.	d.
" p ^d William Powell for hawlinge the stone to the Kaye beinge eighty load p ^r note at vjd. p ^r load	2	0	0
" p ^d John Harris and Giles Jones for two daies to take up the stone	2	0	
" p ^d William Woodward for two chissells for taking up the stone	1	0	
" p ^d William Powell for hawlinge 38 draughts of stone from the Crosse	19	0	
" p ^d fower Labourers to take up stone there	7	0	
" p ^d for an Iron barre used for taking uppe of stone	4	0	
" p ^d for making a hanbarrowe and for nayles	0	5	
" p ^d to Henry Holliday, Henry Phillips & Henry Foster for takinge downe the Crosse in the Colledge	12	0	
" p ^d More to Henry Wheeler for 3 daies worke	3	0	
Sumã toto	<u>£5</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>7.</u> "

In reading these "Items," the memory is inclined to consider the gift and letter of Bishop Goodman. In the passage where he speaks of the charges of beautifying the High Cross in the centre of the City, there is no mention made of the statues as depicted in the drawing by Thos. Ricketts; but in looking at this picture and the style of the architecture of the main centre of the shaft, there is every reason to conclude it belonged together with the statues to a much earlier date, this being of the Decorated period, fourteenth century, while the base, plinth, embattled top decorated with towers and vanes, and the centre spire surmounted with the ball, &c., is of a much later and debased style—that of the seventeenth century.

There is no known drawing or sketch of the Cross that was in the "Colledge Churchyard," or it would have been helpful in settling the question whether the statues and also the other Decorated work of that structure were removed from the College and used up in the rebuilding and "beautifying" of the High Cross in and about the years 1635-6.

This conjecture will remain doubtful unless it should happen that some document may be found that will satisfy the enquiry.

In this year of the restoration Toby Jordan, who was the Citizen Bookseller, selected in 1643 to carry the answer of the Mayor and Burgesses to King Charles I. when he demanded the City, served the Office of Mayor. Time and circumstances, however, had made a great change in the minds of the defenders of the town, and the citizens generally were anxious for the restoration of the Royal Family.

A statue of Charles I., therefore, had been carved and fixed on the High Cross in honour thereof, and a general Thanksgiving Day ordered, "when Mr. Mayor & Comon Councill in Scarlett & wth the company^s Streamers went to the Colledge Church with a guard."

The following items are among the charges:—

	£	s.	d.
"p ^d to Baldwyn for making & setting up of King Charles the first his picture	12	0	0
"p ^d to Thomas Kircombe, Smith for a crosse, sceptre, round globe, cramps and other works for the said Statue... ..	18	0	
¹ 1660. "p ^d Mr. Campion for painting & gilding the late King's picture at the Crosse	3	0	0
"p ^d Mr. John Campion for gilding the Crosse at the High Crosse	1	4	0."

Again, in 1675, the hand of time and decay had caused such ruin that,

"It was Ordered that Mr. Chamberlain doe speedily take care for the Repayinge & amendinge of the High Crosse in this City."

This would appear to have been a more serious and expensive task than that worthy cared to undertake, for in 1683,

¹ Mr. John Campion was the man who adorned the case of the Cathedral Organ.

“A Committee of the Maior and five Aldermen was appointed to View the decayes of the Crosse and to treat with workmen to reparaire the same at the charge of the Chamber.”

Still nothing done until we find the following entries:—

	£	s.	d.
1694. “pa ^d Mr. Wythenbury Stone Cutter of Worcester for his Journey in coming to Survey the High Crosse	13	0	0
“Worke done at the High Crosse in Repayinge and new gilding and Painting thereof, “pay ^d Mr. Giles Campion for gilding and painting thereof... ..	50	0	0
“pay ^d Mr. Francis Reeve for Repaying thereof... ..	16	10	0
“pay ^d Mr. James Hornage for new doing the Iron work as per Bill	17	0	0
“pay ^d Robert Davies for Brass work as by Bill	3	6	0
“pay ^d Geo ^r Gromett his note for Plumers worke as by Bill	3	0	0
“pay ^d Francis Reeve for worke done by his men at the Barrs	12	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£91		1 0.”
	<hr/>		

And again eighteen years afterwards:—

1712, July 11th. “Whereas the Cross in this City very much wanted repairing cleansing and beautifying. And whereas George Gregory of the City of London Painter hath proposed to reparaire cleane paint and gild the same for ffifty pounds and to be at the charge of scaffolding stone work and all materialls in doing the same. Whether the said George Gregory shall goe upon the Termes proposed?

(for it 17, ag^{ust} 8.)”

This work was done, and paid for as follows:—

	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1713. "paid Mr. George Gregory for painting the Crosse"	55	0	0."

And again in 1727 there was:—

"paid Giles Blake a note for repairing ye iron work at ye Crosse"	10	0	0."
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And now appears the last entry relating to the structure of the High Cross that is to be seen in the Corporation Books:—

1751, Sept. 26th. "Whether this Corporation will impower the Committee appointed to build the Tolsey, to pull down and take away the Cross in this City at such Time and Times as the said Committee shall think proper? (For it all, 24.)"

That it was taken away is very evident; but what became of it, or of the Statues, there is no record or mention made. Thus, whence these interesting figures of the several Royal benefactors to our city came, and whither they went, are as yet mysteries which await solution.
