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A Glass House at Nailsworth (16th and 17th Century)

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A GLASS HOUSE AT NAILSWORTH.

(16th and 17th century).

By W. ST. CLAIR BADDELEY.

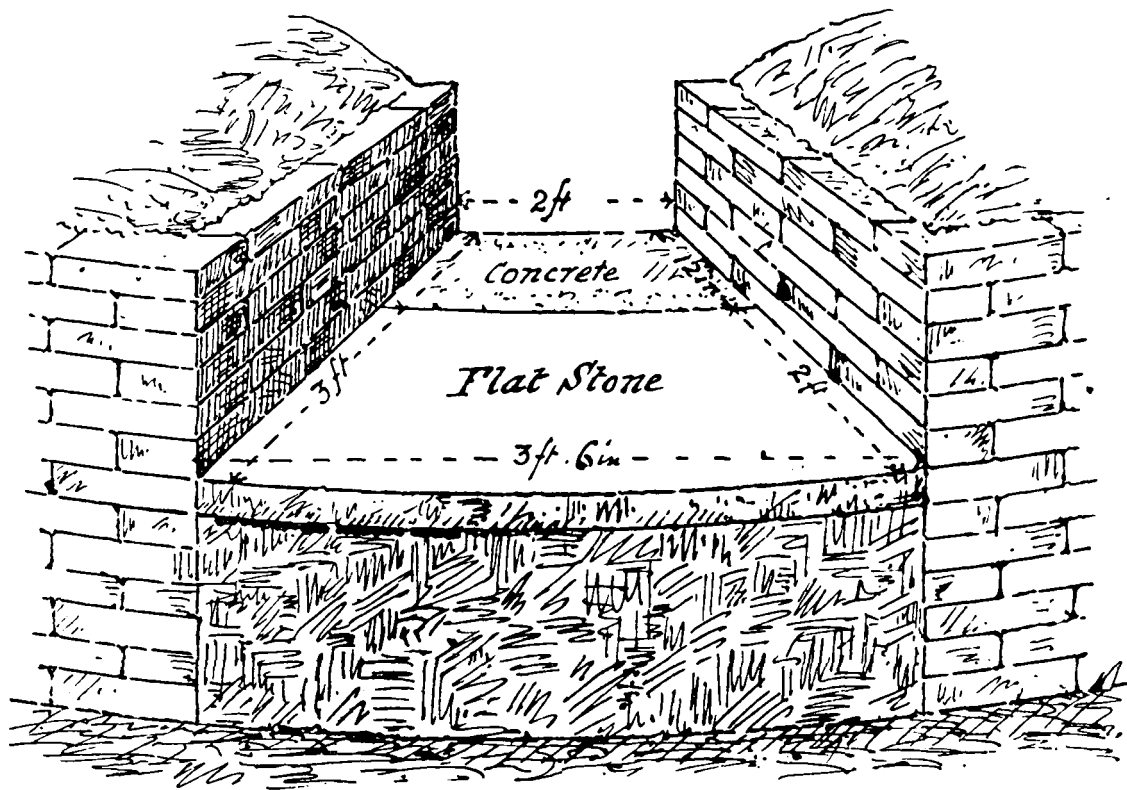
UNTIL the second decade of the 17th century there existed in various country-districts of England many small, sometimes unlicensed, Glass-Houses, which occasionally drove a thriving business, at least, in drinking-glasses and bottles of many sizes. It will be recalled that in those days drinking was for the most part done not out of glass but from very coarse pottery mugs or from leather ones, only the richer folk used silver or imported glass, and of these two the silver was reckoned the more economic to buy because of not breaking. This was the case throughout from Shakespeare's lifetime. Perhaps, owing to its fragility, and the wretched conditions of country-roads at that period, the manufacture of window-glass remained for the most part with the town Glass-Houses, which also made the stained glass for churches. As the result of a protective enactment of James I. in 1615, directed against the alleged wholesale destruction of woodlands by the glass-manufacturers on account of the Navy, it is certain that these Glass-Houses working away from the towns were obliged suddenly to close down altogether, or to be removed to the towns. Further, the makers henceforth were forced to use pit-coal instead of timber. They were often Flemings, or protestant Frenchmen, and in some cases they can be readily traced. Certain of their names are well-known; though in the example which is the subject of this notice, research has not quite finally

thrown the desired light upon this point,¹ so as to strengthen the evidence as to nationality. But we shall come to this presently.

In 1904, while staying at Avening, together with my lamented friend, Mr. Albert Hartshorne (in connection with the then projected restoration of Avening Church, our opinion having been asked regarding the state of that church), we were made acquainted with the site of a supposed Glass-House, in Colliers' Wood, Inchbrook, Nailsworth. This information came to us through our kind host, Mr. Arthur Playne (of Longfords); and we were enabled within two days to visit and very thoroughly examine the site. As whatever remains were extant lay naturally at the leafy surface of the ground, we soon recognised certain customary and simple features. With personal permission from the late Mr. Lee, the genial owner of Woodchester Park, we were enabled to return thither a little later and take all required measurements of the platform. Before referring more particularly to another and local student of old glass, living near there at Windsor Edge, with whom we soon made acquaintance, and to whose previous knowledge of the site we now became additionally indebted—I will give the practical results of our own examination.

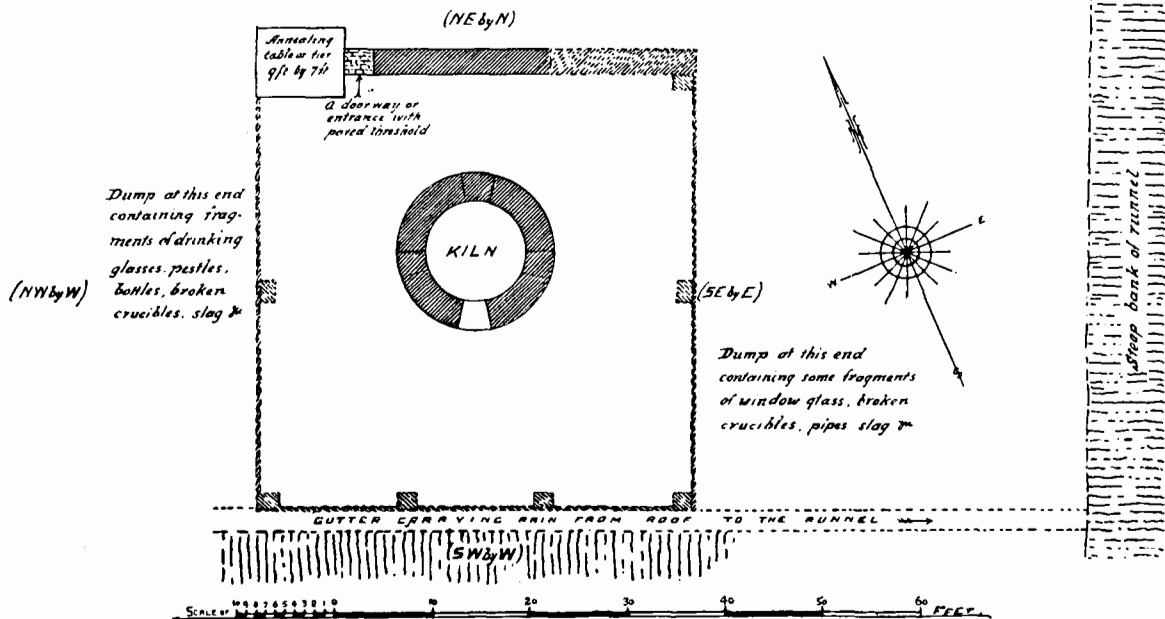
Having made out a platform measuring 15 by 30 yards (S.W. by N.E.), over which some small beech trees were growing, though covered with masses of burned stones, we opened a shallow trench two feet wide along the south-west side of it. We similarly followed out a curved structural base found to be contained within it, and belonging no doubt to the kiln. This continued for about twenty feet, and to a depth of two feet, right on to the oolite. We met, while digging, with quantities of

¹ Cf., *De Re Metallica*, G. Agricola Basle; and Antonio Neri, *Ars Vitraryia*, vol. VII., with Commentary by Chris. Merrett, 1686. *Old English Glasses*: A. Hartshorne (pp. 29)



GLASS HOUSE REMAINS AT COLLIERS' WOOD, WOODCHESTER.

PLAN OF GLASS FACTORY
 INCHBROOK GLOS



GLASS HOUSE GROUND PLAN, COLLIERS' WOOD, WOODCHESTER.

charcoal, fragments obviously belonging to stone crucibles, bits of dingy green and brown glass, full of blebs (bubbles), clay-pipes and bowls, and pestles (for powders) and also with part of a ladle and a good deal of slag. Along the outer edge of the north-west side of the platform we found an ancient pitched path, which, however, gave out after nine feet of it had been exposed, and we did not pick this up again. The foundations proved to have been partly torn up. This had the effect of revealing that the little ridge upon which we then stood was formed by remains of a buttress wall two feet in height, marking the limit of the former platform. Things thus were becoming quite clear.

The eastern side of the platform ended in a dry natural runnel or fosse, having a high further bank topped by a hedge. Following this up for about 40 feet, we reached an upper bank or limit, still attaining some 3 feet in height.

Having thus traced out the lines of this oblong platform, we were free to get at the remains of the obviously circular kiln declaring itself towards the centre thereof. It proved to have a diameter of 16 feet, or 48 feet circumference. Near it lay a large pool of clay. What remained of the broken down kiln-wall disclosed two of its original splayed entrances, each having an external width of about 3 feet 6 inches, and internal 2 feet. (See Plate XI).

The diameter of the platform upon which it stood, from the gutter along its south side to the low stone wall along the north one, next to the pitched path, was 44 feet; but although the kiln stood but 10 feet from the north wall, it was 18 feet from the south one. So that it did not occupy the actual centre of the site (Plate XII).

At the north-east end of the north wall we now recognized quite clearly the annealing-table, measuring 9 feet by 7 feet, and next it occurred a three-foot doorway in the wall.

The occurrence of a small buttress-base near the centre of two sides of the main oblong inclosure, and four of these bases along the south-west side, pointed probably to a wooden roof which once may have covered the whole work, with exception of its having an aperture for the chimney. The external gutters bore this out. As the north side alone seems to have had a stone wall, three sides of the structure were also probably of timber, and the total elevation perhaps was under 20 feet. These data, it will be understood, were sufficient to give us the fairly accurate proportions of a small working glass-factory, which evidently had occupied this rather peculiar position—no doubt upon Common land.

Meanwhile Mr. Hartshorne and the writer paid a visit to Mr. Basil Marmont at Windsor Edge, whom we understood to be the only local resident familiar with the site ; and we found him not only very willing to afford us any information he possessed, but he told us that he had been familiar with it since he was a boy of fifteen years ; although, it being situated within the Woodchester Park Estate, he had looked upon it as very reserved territory. However, in his riper years he tells me that the late Mr. Lee granted him leave to delve and make what notes he might there. The main results are to some extent incorporated with the record of my own operations in this paper. The evidences as to what Mr. Marmont had found were happily apparent. Among these he then showed us two pewter spoons ; one with acorn-knop handle, having the mark of I.G. within the bowl, belonging to c. 1532. The other was of the slipped-stalk pattern, bearing no maker's mark. The Guildhall Museum possesses a duplicate of the former, which was found at Wapping in 1869. These early Tudor spoons, however, we agreed, can scarcely have had any real connection with the Glass-House ; so we need not speculate about them.

More interesting, and to our purposes, was a small ($5\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diam.) hexagonal bottle showing no distant relationship to Venetian types of that period. There were also two small freak-glasses representing boots. These usually belong to the following century. They have occurred at other sites; and again the excellent Museum in London, above mentioned, contains an almost exact replica of the hexagonal bottle. The writer possesses one and has met with several more in German collections and in Florence.

The rest of Mr. Marmont's collection of fragments consisted of the domed greenish bases of wine and other drinking-glasses, invariably showing the folded foot; and they were of four or five various diameters. There was no window-glass; neither did Mr. Hartshorne or myself, in the 2 foot trenches we opened, discover any other than these feet and bottle-bottoms and necks, and fragments of melting-pots of stone having white vitreous coatings, although we made thorough searches.

These deep-domed bases measured $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches diam.

$2\frac{1}{2}$	„
$1\frac{1}{2}$	„
$1\frac{1}{6}$	„
$1\frac{1}{3}$	„

Practically representing five different sizes of drinking-glass.

Another point of interest was the presence of numbers of little glass rosettes or "prunts," that were made for decorating the stems and bowls of the larger glasses. Some of these had ten points and measure an inch and more in diameter. They were largely used by the Dutch and often occur in their fruit and wine pictures.

Since these days Mr. Marmont has wisely consulted our mutual acquaintances the Powells, late of Whitefriars, with the result that they have reconstructed (under the eye of Mr. Harry Powell) from the fragments

three or four types of glasses which may serve very well for demonstrating the precise style and character of these Jacobean glasses, examples of which he has kindly given to the writer.

In conclusion, with regard to the site, it is of importance to mention that the Park at Woodchester, formerly known as "The Springs," was not made by Sir George Huntley, its original owner, until c. 1617-20; consequently not until after the Glass-Houses here had been suppressed but a year or two. In making the park, Sir George is believed to have appropriated some acres of common land up at the Nymphsfield, or opposite end of the park. Possibly the same enclosuring took place at this Inchbrook-Nailsworth end likewise. Documentary evidences, however, so far have not been forthcoming to throw any further light upon this or other small points. The evidences to hand do not suggest that the Glass-House had been long established there; nor its having developed into a very flourishing business. It was doubtless built upon open land; and must have been quite well-known in its day.

As to the builders and glassmakers, we only know that though many of them, in those days, were men of foreign—French and Dutch—origin, such as the Vaillants, Potiers, Hentzners, Hennezels, and Tyzackes, Voydys and others, we have not been able to trace any of these names in local deeds or registers. On the other hand, there is a queerish foreign marriage in Nov., 1610, at Horsley, between Dominique Metrevis and Mary Parslowe. In 1598 Hentzner refers to many little glass-houses being at work all over the country; and it is not needful to take for granted that these were all of them worked and owned by foreigners. In the present instance, however, the products betray Dutch origin. But if we have to suspect from the nature of the glass that it was a Dutch and not a French concern, we shall do well to remem-

ber that this was the more likely, because there would have been no chance then for Catholic foreigners in England, but only for Lutherans. Here, then apparently we have such a man ; one who could speak English and was able to marry in an English country church, where he was doubtless familiar. Whoever they were, the owners probably moved away to Gloucester, or to the Newnham Glassworks when the Inchbrook House had to shut down ; or perhaps they went to that at Newent, and were no more known hereabouts.