

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

**Proceedings at the Spring Meeting at Ashchurch, Woollas  
Hall, Pershore and Elmley Castle, 21 May 1928**

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# Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

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## PROCEEDINGS

AT THE SPRING MEETING AT ASHCHURCH, WOOLLAS HALL,  
PERSHORE AND ELMLEY CASTLE

*Monday, 21 May 1928*

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A very large number of Members attended this meeting, the arrangements for which had been made by Mr Thomas Overbury, F.R.I.B.A., who was appointed Secretary for Meetings on 16 January 1928.

### ASHCHURCH

Ashchurch is one of the few places in Gloucestershire which has not hitherto been included in the itineraries of the Society.

The late Canon C. S. Taylor, in his *Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire* (p. 145) says 'it is remarkable that the name of Ashchurch is not found in Domesday'. The hamlets which still comprise the parish are, however, all entered in the Survey<sup>1</sup> viz. :—Pamington (*Pamintonie*), Aston on Carrant (*Estone, Essetone*), Fiddington (*Fiten-tone*), Natton (*Natone*). The Carrant brook, which flows into the Avon at Tewkesbury, forms in places the boundary of the parish.

<sup>1</sup> Ed. by Sir Henry Ellis (1783-1816), I, 163, 164; W. Bawdwen, *Dom Boc* (1812), 13, 14.

The earliest reference to a church occurs in a confirmation by Simon, bishop of Worcester, which, from the names of the witnesses, can be dated 1138-1152.<sup>2</sup> Various grants were made to Tewkesbury abbey and among them is the 'capellam de Estchirche'. The suggestion made by Rudder (*History of Gloucestershire*, 1779) that the name was corrupted to 'Ashchurch' is not improbable. In 1299, Richard de Aston upon Carent, priest, had the care and custody of Simon de Leycester, vicar of Beckford, committed to him.<sup>3</sup>

A description of the effigy of William Ferrers by Miss Ida M. Roper is printed in *Transactions*, XXIX, 230-2 and there are notes on the heraldry by the late Francis Were in volume XXV, 187-8. The brasses of Roger Ferrers (1583) and his wife Anne (1605), another Roger (1579) and his son Thomas (1636), are noted in Stephenson's *Monumental Brasses* (1926). The font is illustrated in *Transactions*, XXXIX, 80 (pl. 5).

Mr W. H. KNOWLES, F.S.A., described the architectural features of the church of St. Nicholas and has embodied his remarks in an extended paper printed in this volume.

THE PRESIDENT\* called attention to relics of the original early 14th century glazing in the two western windows of the north aisle of the church, and also to the mural monument (south wall of nave) of William Ferrers (d. 1625), younger son of Roger Ferrers, a Wiltshire man who married Margaret, daughter of Giles Badger of Fiddington in the parish of Ashchurch. William Ferrers is represented by a half-length portrait with his hand resting on a skull, while below is an inscription showing that he became a prosperous London merchant, left money for the benefit of Ashchurch, endowed Tewkesbury grammar

<sup>2</sup> Printed in *Jour. British Arch. Assoc.* (1875) XXXI, 289.

<sup>3</sup> Giffard register (Worcs. Hist. Soc.), II, 512.

\* The Editor is much indebted to THE PRESIDENT for the notes he prepared for the use of this report.

school, and was buried in Allhallows, Lombard street.<sup>4</sup> His canting arms, like those of the great family of the name, include the horse-shoe of a 'ferrer' or farrier (*argent on a bend gules cotised azure 3 horse-shoes or*).

In the floor of the nave is the small inscribed brass of his father Roger (d. 1579)

#### WOOLLAS HALL

Woollas Hall, which was visited by kind permission of Miss Hanford-Flood, is situated 3½ miles sw of Pershore, high up on the northern slopes of Bredon Hill. The descent of the manor of Woolashull is given very fully in the *Victoria History of Worcestershire*, IV, 72-4.

The house is of three dates. The chief—the middle period—embraces the fine hall with a screened passage and music gallery over, entered by a boldly projecting porch three stories in height. The hall, lighted by tall mullioned windows, is not open to the roof but has a flat ceiling; the screen is panelled between fluted pilasters with a balustraded front to the gallery. There is a floor above the hall, and in the centre of the high pitched roof was contrived a chapel approached by a narrow staircase. It was placed there for concealment in the days of the penal laws (the Hanfords were Roman Catholics) but remodelled and embellished after the Catholic Relief Act of 1791. The chapel is 13 ft. 3 ins. wide; the chancel is about 10 ft. long and the nave 25 ft. 6 ins., both being ceiled with a plaster barrel vault and lighted with three windows on each side groined into the vault. The chapel is disused but the communion rails and reredos remain, and behind the chancel is the sacristy.

The hall was added in 1611 by John Hanford (whose tomb is in the chancel of Eckington church) to an earlier house of three stories now the south front, which has

<sup>4</sup> *Visitation of the County of Gloucester*, 1623 (Harleian Soc. XXI), 59 and note, where the epitaph is printed in full. See also Bennett's *History of Tewkesbury*, 222.

mullioned windows and gables of typical Cotswold character. On the ground floor at the west end of this earlier portion, and occupying the width of the gable, is a big arched open fire-place 10 ft. 6 ins. wide with the old spits.

THE PRESIDENT gave a general account of the place, the old name of which is Woolashull or Wollashull, and which has descended from the Muchgros or Wollashull family (13th century onwards. See 'The Family of Muchgros', by F. T. S. Houghton in *Transactions Birmingham and Midland Institute* (1921), XLVII, 29) to the present owners. In the 15th century the heiress of the Wollashulls married Sir John Vampage. The granddaughter of the last male Vampage married Thomas Hanford in 1536, and in this family the estate remained till the death of Mr C. E. Hanford in 1864, when he was succeeded by his sister who had married William Flood, of a well-known Irish family. The present owner, Miss Hanford-Flood, succeeded on the death of her brother in 1921. The side of the house facing the hill evidently belongs to the 16th century, but the main front with its porch and hall windows was built in the early years of the 17th. Over the porch is the date 1611 and 'Memorare novissima' (Remember the last things). This part was left unfinished, and the drawing-room is a comparatively modern addition. The great hall contains some interesting portraits, including full-lengths of Sir George and Lady Winter, the last of the Winters of Huddington, and a head of Thomas Winter, one of the leaders in the Gunpowder Plot. A sideboard has been made out of a Jacobean bedstead, the panels of which are painted with allegorical devices. The coats of arms on the cornice show that it belonged to the Hanfords, but it passed out of their possession and was only recovered in the last century.<sup>5</sup> Among the pictures in the drawing-

<sup>5</sup> The devices and mottoes are described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1811), LXXXI, pt. 2, 209, when the bed was at Hinckley (Leics.).

PLATE I



WOOLLAS HALL

*facing p. 4*

PLATE II



CHAPEL, WOOLLAS HALL



ELMLEY CASTLE  
*ph.* J. Glover, Pershore

room is a beautiful portrait of Henrietta Maria by Lely, and a landscape by Richard Wilson.

#### PERSHORE

Leaving Woollas the Members travelled on to PERSHORE, where they took lunch at the Royal Three Tuns Hotel, and afterwards assembled in the abbey church, being welcomed by the vicar, Rev. H. P. Statham. Pershore abbey has been visited on several occasions but its peculiar interest and beauty repay repeated examination. Earlier accounts are printed in *Transactions*, XXVII, 10-14 and XXXII, 44-7. Those who wish to study its history and architecture more fully should consult the memoir (1901) by Mr F. B. Andrews.

THE PRESIDENT said that they were fortunate in having Mr HAROLD BRAKSPEAR, F.S.A., to describe the church, which they must regard as a great privilege.

Mr BRAKSPEAR expressed his pleasure in meeting the Society once again and being able to say something of the church of which he had been architect in charge for many years. He proposed to confine his remarks to the principal architectural features of the building as its history had been so fully dealt with by others. The original Norman church was virtually the same build as that at Tewkesbury. The south transept presented a peculiar example of stone barrel vaulting and compared with the work at Tewkesbury. The church was enlarged in the 13th century, after the fire which destroyed the Norman choir and the Lady chapel. The north and south side chapels date from this period. The magnificent lantern tower was almost identical in design with the tower at Salisbury and there was little doubt that the same builder was employed.

Mr Brakspear accompanied some of the Members to the church of Saint Andrew (just outside the eastern wall of the abbey churchyard), of which he said he could not conceive one of more interest. How early it might be he

would leave others to decide but he had a suspicion that it was much earlier than it looked. Probably there was no vestige of Saxon work remaining but there was certainly the influence of Saxon building. A chancel must have existed at some time. The church was built for the tenants of Westminster on account of bitterness of feeling between them and the monks of Pershore, for Westminster had been given or had appropriated large parts of Pershore's property at various times. It was originally in the gift of the prior and monks of Malvern, but in 1241 it was granted to the monastery, and this grant was confirmed in 1327.

#### ELMLEY CASTLE

Unlike the picturesque villages of Gloucestershire with their gabled stone-built houses, the village of Elmley Castle is an example of the Worcestershire type with delightful half-timbered cottages much above the average both in number and quality. It has an old world charm of peace and quiet, replete with objects of interest, including a parish hall, an inn with a good hanging sign, and details such as the village cross. The church and Elizabethan mansion are at the south end and, beyond, the deer park and remains of a medieval castle. Of the Norman castle there is some masonry, probably of the keep, and evidence of ditches and the site of the barbican. It is supposed to have been erected by Robert le Despenser, whose brother Urso d'Abitot was sheriff of the county. Urso's daughter and heiress, Emmeline, married Walter de Beauchamp. In a survey of 1086 the area of the possessions is stated as 59 hides, and in surveys of 1108 and 1118 these had increased to 121 hides. Until the attainder of Thomas Beauchamp in 1396 Elmley was the chief seat of the Beauchamps. Records indicate that during the thirteenth century the castle was frequently

in need of repair. It seems to have been habitable until 1528, but in 1544 was roofless and in a state of decay.

A full account of the descent and history of the manor is given, with illustrations, in the *Victoria History of Worcestershire*, III, 338-46.

The church was described by Mr W. H. KNOWLES, F.S.A., who read the following notes.

#### THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY, ELMLEY

Although it possesses no architectural features of real merit, the church provides an interesting study of its development from the 12th to the 16th century.

There is no evidence that the site was occupied in pre-Norman times and its earliest details indicate that it did not precede the great castle which crowned a spur of the neighbouring Bredon.

The presence in the chancel of 'herring-bone' masonry does not necessarily suggest a pre-Norman date, as walling of the sort is to be found elsewhere in much later buildings, and though the 'herring-bone' work is confined to the chancel and does not occur in the spandrils of the nave arcade it is not conclusive evidence that nave and chancel are of different periods.

The carved fragments preserved in the porch are of the middle of the 12th century and provide the only certain evidence as to the date of the earliest church, which comprised a nave and chancel only.

The chancel has been several times altered, including the destruction of the arch dividing it from the nave. Its original shape and extent we cannot determine but the nave was of the area of the present one. At the south-east angle are portions of the Norman buttresses and angle quoins.

The final addition to the nave and chancel fabric was a west tower the full width of the nave early in the 13th century. The two lower stages are of the period, and include in the lower a small pointed contemporary window

with widely splayed jambs and arch to the interior, and in the stage above indications of two-light windows now built up.

During the 14th century the church was considerably enlarged by the addition of the south aisle, and a small chapel or transept on the north side. The south nave wall was pierced for an arcade of four bays, the piers being formed by leaving portions of the masonry and dressing it square with angle quoins, instead of underpinning and providing piers with caps and bases. The eastern octagonal pier with moulded cap and base is of later date, when also the square east respond was removed. One only of the contemporary windows—a pointed opening with ogee tracery—remains, and a piscina in the south wall. Of the same construction was the opening into the north transept, the arch and the square respond from which it springs being of identical details with the west bays of the south arcade. The length of the 14th century transept is not evident but its width is indicated by the easternmost pier and the walling to the rear of it supported by the 15th century arch. The chancel was increased in length and a pointed door provided at the north end suggesting that the added area served the purpose of a vestry, and at the same time two windows, one on either side of the chancel, were inserted near the chancel arch.

In the 15th century followed another enlargement of the church by the erection of the north aisle of four bays of two chamfered orders springing from octagonal shafts with moulded caps and bases. The square-headed windows, two in the north and one in the west wall are contemporary. The 14th century arch and respond at the east end of the arcade was left, but the west wall of the transept was removed and spanned by an arch springing from the eastern pier. A corresponding pier was substituted for a square one in the south arcade and new windows inserted at the east end of the south aisle and adjoining

it in the south wall. On either side of the chancel windows of the same date were inserted. The tower also received an added stage relieved by pointed double traceried openings on each face, when also a superior door and window over it was broken through the west wall of the tower.

Following on the addition of aisles it was the common practice to increase the height of the nave walls and to provide a clerestory, but such did not occur at Elmley where the present roof represents the outline of the original Norman one.

The enlargement of the north transept and the provision of a north porch succeeded in Tudor times, but the north door is of earlier date reused.

THE PRESIDENT said that besides a little heraldic glass (15th or 16th century) the church contained three objects of unusual interest.

(1) The font is of two dates. The very remarkable base is surrounded by dragons (powers of Evil) in full relief, and belongs to the 12th or 13th century. The octagonal bowl seems to belong to the early 16th century, and its origin has given rise to discussion.<sup>6</sup> The clue to its date is the rebus on the south side of a briar spray with a barrel or tun, probably for John Brereton, vicar about the end of the reign of Henry VII. It is flanked by the ragged staff of the Earls of Warwick, the old owners of Elmley, but here, perhaps, recalling Earl Guy, the founder of the chantry or collegiate church in the castle, the master of which was rector of the parish; and by the old Savage arms (*a pale fusily*), probably for Sir John Savage or his son, who were keepers of the park under Henry VII. On the north side are the royal Tudor badges of the rose and portcullis, and two feathers for Henry, Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry VIII. The

<sup>6</sup> See Worcester Architectural Society's Report for 1899, in *Associated Architectural Societies Reports*, vol. XXIV, part ii, p. lxxix.

devices on the east and west faces are religious: the Five Wounds, and the lily for the Virgin, to whom the church is dedicated.

In the north transept is a fine alabaster tomb with admirable effigies of William Savage (d. 1616) grandson of Christopher who obtained the estate in 1544, of his son Giles (d. 1631), and of Katherine (Daston) wife of Giles (d. 1674), who put up the monument on her husband's death. William's wife, Anne, heiress of John Knottesford of Great Malvern priory, died and was buried at Great Malvern, where she is commemorated by the kneeling portrait effigy of herself which she set up beside her father's tomb in the church there.

The east wall of the transept is covered by the imposing classical monument of Thomas, 1st Earl of Coventry (d. 1699), made in London by order of his second wife, Elizabeth, described in the Latin epitaph as the daughter of Richard Graham Esq. 'a nobili Grahamorum familia' (the Graham arms are also impaled with those of the Earl), but really the daughter of Richard Grimes, 'a mean person', and one of his domestic servants. The Earl's son (by his first wife) and successor refused to allow the monument to be put up in Croome d'Abitot church, the family burial place, and it was set up at Elmley because the dowager countess in the year after her husband's death married Thomas Savage.<sup>7</sup> The monument obliterated a square-headed window of five lights (visible on the exterior) which Habington describes as filled with a Tree of Jesse in glass. The names of the five sets of donors which he records show that it belonged to the early years of the 16th century.<sup>8</sup>

In the churchyard is a remarkable Tudor sundial, which once, no doubt, adorned the garden of the house.<sup>9</sup> On

<sup>7</sup> *Complete Peerage* (2nd ed.), III, 472, referring to *The Herald and Genealogist*, VII, 97-115, where the story is told fully.

<sup>8</sup> *Survey of Worcestershire*, II, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Described and illustrated in *The Book of Sun-Dials*, by Mrs Gatty, new ed. by H. K. F. Eden and E. Lloyd (London, 1900), p. 99.

one face is a shield with the Savage arms and quarterings, and the rest is covered with numerous hollow dials of various shapes and inclinations, some of them retaining fragments of the metal gnomons. The President said that these elaborate dials were characteristic of the 16th century, and were intended to tell the time of day under various conditions.

By the kindness of General Sir FRANCIS DAVIES, K.C.B., access to ELMLEY CASTLE was permitted.

Before entering the house, and in view of the site of the castle on a wooded hill to the south, the PRESIDENT reminded members of the early importance of the place, the seat of the Beauchamps from Norman times until, through the marriage of Walter de Beauchamp with the heiress of the old Earls of Warwick in the 13th century, Warwick castle became their principal residence. Elmley castle, which had reverted to the Crown with the other Beauchamp properties, gradually fell into decay.<sup>10</sup> In 1544 it was acquired from the Crown by Christopher Savage, of a Cheshire family, members of which (Sir John Savage, &c.) had been associated with the place as constables of the castle and keepers of the park from 1488 onwards. He built the present mansion, but it has lost a good deal of its Tudor character by alterations made in 1702, when also a palatial staircase with fine plaster ceiling was added between the two wings facing south.

In the absence of General Sir Francis Davies, members were received by Lady Davies. The party was divided into sections for visiting the interior, Lady Davies, Miss Davies, Mr W. H. Knowles, and the President being stationed in the principal rooms to point out the chief objects of interest. They contain fine furniture of the

<sup>10</sup> John Leland noticed (about 1540) ' but one tower, and that partly broken. As I went by I saw carts carienge stone thens to amend Persore bridge about a ii miles of '. *Itinerary* (ed. Toulmin Smith), v, 9.

17th and 18th centuries together with a notable collection of pictures by the Old Masters (chiefly Italian and Dutch), and historical and family portraits. Two by Zoffany, painted in India, represent Warren Hastings and Thomas Davies who served under him as advocate-general at Calcutta. There are others of Andrea Doria, Admiral De Ruyter, Edmund Spenser, Sir Robert Cotton.

There is a reference to Queen Elizabeth's visit to Elmley castle in Valentine Green's *History of the City of Worcester* II, app. p. xlii (Saturday, 20 August 1575) 'and so to Elmley Bredon, wher she lay that nyght, and on Soneday all day . . . And on Moneday, at the uttermost parte of the countie, between the Elmley and the Castle of Suydley where she took leave of the bishop of Worcester, the sheriff, and other gentlemen of the shire'.

After tea in the village hall and taking the unexpected opportunity to watch some May dances by the children in the village, members returned to their destinations after a most interesting day.