

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

**Proceedings at the Spring Meeting at Standish,  
Minchinhampton, Avening, Bisley, and Lypiatt 8 May 1933**

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# Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

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## PROCEEDINGS\*

AT THE SPRING MEETING

8 May 1933

About 130 members, including the President, Mr Claude Basil Fry, and Mrs Fry, assembled at

### STANDISH CHURCH

which had not been visited by the Society since 1909,<sup>1</sup> and were received by the vicar, Rev. A. J. Freeman. The morning was fine, and the group of church, almonry, 'Court' with its gate-house, barn and mills, formed an attractive picture.

Mr W. H. KNOWLES, F.S.A., standing at the lych-gate of the churchyard said that we find here a unique group of medieval buildings, of more than ordinary interest; while the known history of the place exceeds 1000 years, and may further be associated with the prehistoric period. As a fitting background to Standish they could see Haresfield Beacon (706 ft. above the Severn) with its important promontory camp (64 acres), typical of many camps on the escarpment of the Cotswolds overlooking the Severn valley, and within signalling distance of one another. They were occupied only in unsettled times, and the objects discovered show that they belong to the

\* The reports of the Spring and Summer meetings have been most kindly prepared by Mr G. McN. Rushforth, F.S.A.

<sup>1</sup> See *Transactions*, xxxii, 2-7.



STANDISH CHURCH AND ALMONRY

later Stone and Bronze Ages. The Romans afterwards occupied and adapted the camp at Haresfield till, after taking Cirencester, they descended into the Severn valley and established themselves at Gloucester.

Coming to the Christian period, when Beornwulf, king of Mercia, re-established in 821 Osric's monastery (681) at Gloucester, he gave to the church of St. Peter 15 hides of land in Standish (4200 acres<sup>2</sup>). And so the place became one of the manors of the Benedictine abbey (1022) of Gloucester. There is record of a church at Standish as early as 1100, but nothing remains of buildings earlier than those of the 14th century which we now see.

The party then entered the church, and Mr Knowles continued his address in the nave. He said that the church was exceptional as being all of one period, and that the 14th century, for in Gloucestershire we usually find work either of Norman times, when so many monastic and parish churches were erected, or of the 15th century, due to the liberality of the rich wool merchants. But at Standish the period of activity was the 14th century, when the grange or manor-house with its gate and enclosing wall was erected, as well as the aisleless church with its north porch and western tower. The interior is spacious and lofty, but the details are rather plain compared with more elaborate work of the period elsewhere. The chancel is large in proportion to the nave, owing, no doubt, to the connexion with the abbey. Its beautiful east window is the most attractive feature; the side windows are all of the same simple pattern. In the early 17th century the chancel is reported as being without seating, and it was accordingly furnished with seats on three sides and the Communion Table in the middle, as at Deerhurst and elsewhere. These arrangements were removed in 1866. The nave is of the same date as the chancel, but the small chamber on the south (not a porch :

<sup>2</sup> As computed by H. T. Lilley, *History of Standish*, 1932, p. 9.

now the vestry) is slightly later. The ancient roof (concealed by a flat ceiling before the restoration) has carved bosses (masks and rosettes) at the intersections of the panels. The stairs to the rood loft are in the thickness of the wall, but the screen is said to have been removed in 1765. There is a good 18th century pulpit (compare Temple Guiting) and some pews, which have been lowered in height. There is a project to remove the organ from the chancel to the west end, where a case of superior character has been designed for it.

Behind the pulpit is an early 14th century grave-slab with floreated cross and the head of a lady. The only other memorials are some of the Winston family and the grave-slab of Bishop Frampton (1690) on the north of the altar. In conclusion Mr Knowles called attention to the excellent *History of Standish* by Mr H. T. Lilley, M.A.<sup>3</sup>

On leaving the church Mr Knowles described

#### THE ALMONRY

a two-storied building of early 16th century. Doors in the middle of the side-walls led to the screens between a hall (south) and buttery and kitchen (north). The latter has a large fireplace. Near the west doorway was a projecting staircase which has been removed, but is shown in a sketch of 1844. The modern stairs are inside. The building is now used as a school, but has been described as an Almonry or Church House because the revenues of the manor were from an early date assigned to charity, but were repeatedly misapplied. In 1202 Bishop Mauger of Worcester made an ordinance that the revenues should be restored to the poor and be administered by the Almoner. After various other measures Abbot Parker in 1516 reorganized the charity by founding a fraternity of the Holy Cross with thirteen brethren

<sup>3</sup> Copies (10s 6d each) can be obtained on application to the Vicar of Standish.

called St. Peter's men, chosen from old servants or decayed tenants of the Abbey, preferably from those of Standish, and probably they used the building.

By permission of Brig.-General E. B. Cuthbertson, C.M.G., M.V.O., Mr Knowles afterwards conducted the members over the manor house and its surroundings, entered through a fine 14th century gateway, now partly ruined. It had a lodge on the right, and, on the left, stairs to the upper storey. The manor house has been much altered and added to, but the original hall connecting the two parts of the house can be traced. One large room, known as the abbot's parlour, has a late Gothic chimney-piece. Beyond is a pleasant garden bounded on one side by the church and on the other by the mill-stream and farm buildings.

#### MINCHINHAMPTON

Members were welcomed by the rector, the Rev. Rex V. Hodson. The chief features of the Church of the Holy Trinity were described by Mr THOMAS OVERBURY as follows.

At the time of Domesday Survey the manor of Hantone belonged to the convent of L'Abbaye-aux-Dames (La Trinité), Caen, who held it with that of Avening until the suppression of alien monasteries when it passed to the abbey of Syon. As a priest is mentioned in Domesday it may be inferred that a church then existed, but no trace is now apparent. In the 12th century the old church—if it occupied the present site—was rebuilt or extensively enlarged; alternatively an entirely new edifice on the existing site was erected. In either case the 12th century church comprised a nave of four bays with side aisles, a chancel and almost certainly a central tower. Transepts, if any, must have had little projection, but it is doubtful whether they existed in the 12th century. In the 14th

century the tower was rebuilt with a spire, the transepts added (or rebuilt) and arches thereto opened from the aisles. At a later period the steeply pitched nave roof was replaced by a clearstory and flat leaded roof, parapets added to the nave and south aisle, and subsequently external staircases to a gallery over the south aisle and to the belfry were constructed.

In 1842 the nave, aisles, and chancel were entirely rebuilt so that the only ancient portions of the structure now remaining are the transepts and central tower, all of the 14th century. Of these the north transept (20 ft. 9 in. by 15 ft. 6 in.) has externally a plinth of earlier character and inside an ogee arched and cusped tomb recess without an effigy. The four arches of the crossing are lofty and well proportioned, and the quadripartite vaulting with tierceron ribs and bosses is an excellent example.

The south transept is a most interesting piece of work (28 ft. 6 in. by 15 ft. 6 in.), very lofty and divided in length into seven bays by six pierced stone arches which support stone ceiling or roofing slabs from arch to arch, the thrust of each arch being taken externally by narrow buttresses. In six of the bays on the eastern side are two-light Decorated windows and three similar windows exist on the west side. The gable end is entirely occupied in width with a large five-light curvilinear window, having a rose design resembling that at Cheltenham in the apex. Below the window is a fine two-compartment recess occupying the width of the southern wall, each compartment finished with a rich ogee arch cusped and foliated having flanking crocketed pinnacles and containing effigies of a knight and lady. The tombs and window appear to be insertions and possibly this transept, obviously later than the north one, was altered and not entirely rebuilt in 1382 as stated by other writers. The traces of colour on the stonework should be noted and in the south

transept the sacred monogram and the crowned M predominate, probably indicating that this is the chapel of the chantry of the Virgin Mary.

The history of the church will be found at length in A. T. Playne's *Minchinhampton and Avening*, 1915, in which there are illustrations of the building, the brasses and other features of interest.

The effigies are described in Miss Roper's *Effigies of Gloucestershire*, pp. 488-90.

#### AVENING CHURCH

The members were addressed by Mr ST. CLAIR BADDELEY,<sup>4</sup> who began by remarking that the name means that the place is on the banks of one of the Avons which find their way into the Severn. The church is of unusual interest, but even more extraordinary was the conflict which took place in the period of the Conquest when the place with its chapel passed away from one of the greatest of the Saxon thegns, Beortric, who owned Tewkesbury as well as Avening, which in those days had a larger population than Minchinhampton, and included 1440 acres of wood and nearly 3000 of cultivated land. He had to give place to William FitzOsbern, later Earl of Hereford, who may be described as the one genius of the Norman Conquest, and whose long experience at the court of the Confessor fully equipped him for his new position. It was he who induced the Conqueror to make Gloucester a royal town, and to reside there at Christmas, for the ultimate object of his policy was the subjugation of South Wales. Hence, besides building the first castles of Berkeley and Cirencester, he organized the system of border castles along the Welsh frontier, including Chepstow the head of his barony. As for Beortric, there was a story that, when on an embassy to Normandy in the days of the Confessor, he had refused the offer of Matilda's

<sup>4</sup> See also his paper on the church in *Transactions* XLIII, 181-90.

hand, and now that she was the queen of the Conqueror she took her revenge, for Avening and Minchinhampton were granted to her, while he was captured hiding in Malvern Chase, and was consigned to prison in Winchester Castle. It had been found that William and Matilda had married within the prohibited degrees, and in expiation of this each of them founded an abbey at Caen. Accordingly Matilda gave Avening, Minchinhampton, and Pinbury to her abbey of the Holy Trinity, the abbess of which was the Conqueror's sister Cecilia. That the French abbesses from time to time visited their English property is shown by the fact that the sub-manor of Rodborough was held on condition that the tenant was to be responsible for the safety of the abbesses and their goods on their journeys from Southampton to Minchinhampton and back.<sup>5</sup> Thus we hear that in December 1360, Georgia, abbess of the Holy Trinity, Caen, came to Minchinhampton, and in February she was at Avening settling difficulties connected with the rector, Master Philip Bonvalet, who was her proctor.

There must have been a church or chapel here before the Conquest, for in the time of Abbot Fromund of Tewkesbury (1164-78) the nuns paid twenty marks to compromise a claim on the church of Avening originating in some gift of Beortric, who was lord of both places.

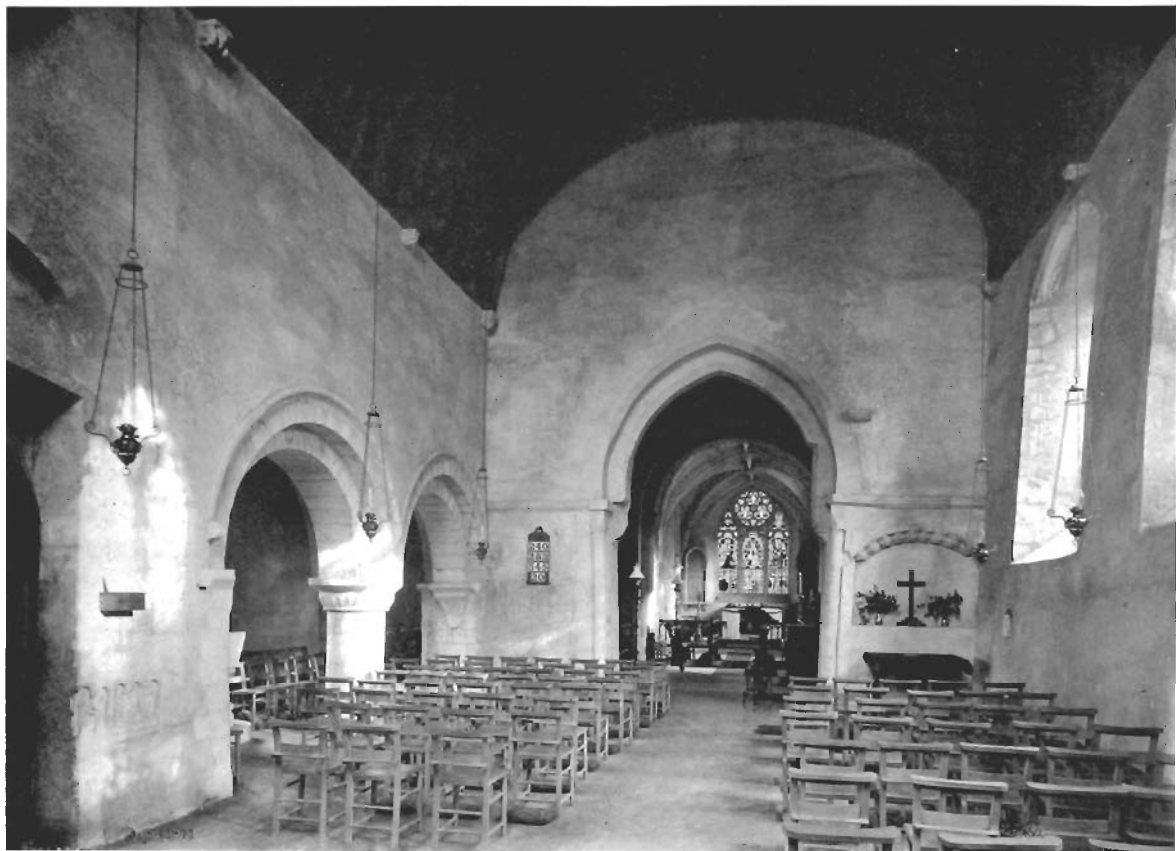
Mr Baddeley went on to recall the circumstances of the restoration of the church in 1902-3 by the late Mr Micklethwaite, who was suggested as architect by Mr Albert Hartshorne, the well-known antiquary, when on a visit to the church with himself. The tower was made secure, and the removal of a late ceiling revealed the fine 14th century barrel-roof of the nave. In the course of the work the column of the Norman arcade of the north aisle slipped into an ancient grave, causing a collapse, so

<sup>5</sup> C. E. Watson, 'The Minchinhampton Custumal', *Transactions*, LIV, 220-1.

that the arcade had to be rebuilt. It was also found that the outer wall of the aisle partly rested on a stone coffin. Among various fragments discovered (now built up in the west wall of the aisle) was a piece of rope moulding, and a small coped grave-slab covered with interlaced ornament. The north porch had a chamber over it, the floor of which cut through the head of the fine late 12th century doorway. This room apparently connected with other apartments above the north aisle, for high up in the eastern wall of the porch there is a shouldered door *in situ*. At the east end of the aisle were found traces of a 'recluse' or anchorite's cell, which must have belonged to the days before the construction of the transepts, when the space under the tower was lighted by the two round-headed windows, deeply splayed, which may still be seen in its north and south walls. From the north transept the small outer opening of the window is visible, evidently closed by a wooden shutter. The western arch of the tower and its piers have been partly cut away for the later rood-screen. On either side of it, at the east end of the nave, was an arched recess for an altar, but of the northern one only a fragment remains.

Originally the chancel extended only one bay east of the tower. Beyond this the Early English vaulted chancel was perhaps intended for a Lady Chapel to take the place of one on the north side, which has disappeared. Outside, its piscina and a doorway from the chancel can still be seen. The history of the western part of the church is defective, and it has been so much altered that it is difficult to say anything definite about it. But on the south side of the nave there are traces of the Norman doorway.

Built into the north wall of the nave on either side of the doorway are some very interesting fragments of 12th century sculpture which may have belonged to a square font. The larger one has pairs of small figures (perhaps



*facing p. 8*

AVENING CHURCH (*see p. 6*)



LYPIATT PARK (see p. 10)

apostles) under an arcade. The other shows two more figures of the same character, but on a rather larger scale. The arcade in this case is supported by twisted shafts.

At the restoration the monuments were collected in the transepts. On the east wall of the north transept is one with a kneeling figure of Henry Brydges (d. 1615), 4th son of Sir John Brydges of Coberley, first Lord Chandos of Sudeley, which recalls the curious fact that this Henry was accused of highway robbery and privateering in the Bristol Channel.

The party returned to the Bear at Amberley for tea, during which the President proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Knowles and Mr Baddeley for their guidance and addresses during the day, and also to Mr Overbury for the admirable way in which he had made the arrangements for the meeting. They then proceeded across the Stroud valley to the

#### BISLEY (or Lypiatt) CROSS

now set up beside the high road and protected by a railing. Here Mr BADDELEY addressing the members described how the year before last a Bisley man had called his attention to the stone, standing in the old grass-grown track beside the modern road. Some cleaning of the surface revealed not only the modern letters B.P. for 'Bisley Parish' showing that it had been brought here to be used as a parish boundary probably when the new road was made in the time of Sir Paul Bagehot of Lypiatt, but also on the four faces round-headed niches with figures of saints in relief, and above these smaller rectangular panels also containing traces of figures. The whole would be surmounted by a cross, and recalled the great Anglian crosses in the North (Bewcastle and Ruthwell), belonging to the 7th and 8th centuries. We know that such crosses were set up as religious centres before churches came into existence, and when the Christian Church was represented by its missionaries. The Bisley

cross may be connected with the first Christian generation of the Mercian royal family. It was in 681 that Gloucester abbey was founded by King Osric and his sister Kyneburga.

The cross originally stood on Stancombe Green (250 yards to the north) where two ancient roads (one is Catwood Lane) crossed. Here it is marked on an 18th century map. It must be remembered that Bisley was a very important manor, and in Domesday it is the only church in Gloucestershire with two priests.

The figures of the saints are too much weathered for identification, though it is possible that the lower one facing the road may be St. Laurence, for a series of holes at the right side of the figure suggest that the gridiron of his martyrdom may have been attached, probably at a later period.

Before leaving Mr Baddeley paid a tribute to the interest and care displayed by Colonel E. S. Sinnott, Surveyor to the Gloucestershire County Council, in taking measures for the preservation of the cross.<sup>6</sup> Members then went on to

#### LYPIATT PARK

with its mansion, built by Wyatt and Wyattville but already venerable in appearance, standing on a terrace above the richly wooded valley.<sup>7</sup> Beside it is the ancient chapel (14th and 15th centuries), surmounted by the stone spirelet of its bell-cote.

Mr Baddeley said that Lypiatt was originally part of the great manor of Bisley, but later appears as a separate manor held in succession by two Sir William Mansels

<sup>6</sup> The cross is described by Mr Baddeley in *Transactions*, LI, 103-7, 2 plates. An account, also illustrated, will be included in vol. 6, part 2, of the late Prof. Baldwin Brown's *Arts in Early England*, which is announced by Mr John Murray.—EDITOR.

<sup>7</sup> Described and illustrated in *Country Life*, 1 December, 1900.

(the inquisition post mortem of the first shows that he died in 1324). Sir Philip Mansel, son of the second Sir William, may have built the house. His sister, Joan, married William Whittington of Pauntley and Gloucester, a family which produced several County Sheriffs, and to which Richard Whittington, the famous Lord Mayor of London, belonged. When Philip Mansel got into difficulties, he mortgaged Lypiatt to Richard Whittington for £500, and subsequently by foreclosure the manor became the property of Richard who left it to his brother Robert Whittington and his son Guy (died c. 1440). Guy's grand-daughter Maud, the heiress of the family, married William Wye, and the Wyes were still in possession when Leland visited the place about 1540. About 1580 the heiress of the Wyes married a Throckmorton, and the Throckmortons sold Lypiatt in 1610 to Thomas Stephens, attorney general to Prince Henry, whose monument (by Baldwin of Stroud) is to be seen in Stroud church.

The chapel was built by Philip Mansel or by one of the first Whittingtons. The chancel arch within seems to be of the time of Richard II, but the rest is Perpendicular. There is a record that a Stephens marriage took place in it in 1688,<sup>8</sup> but later it was used as a store-room till in modern times it was cleared.

Mr Baddeley called attention to the four Romano-British sculptured altars from Custom Scrubbs,<sup>9</sup> now placed in the chancel. Six were discovered in 1802, one of which, now in the Gloucester Museum, is signed 'Juventinus fecit' and has a dedication to Romulus, the deified son of the Emperor Maxentius, the pagan rival of Constantine. The pagan cause seems to have been

<sup>8</sup> P. H. Fisher, *Notes and Recollections of Stroud*, 1891, p. 201.

<sup>9</sup> See *Transactions*, xxix, 173-8; xlv, 88. Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae*, II, p. xxviii, figs. 5-7.

strong in Gloucestershire, where we find hardly any trace of Christianity before we come to the successors of Penda.

A short time was spent in visiting the gardens and the ancient granary at the back of the house, with its curious ox head through the mouth of which grain is supposed to have been poured into the sacks of the tenants of the manor. Before the party dispersed the President proposed a vote of thanks to Miss Talbot for allowing the Society to visit Lypiatt.