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REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING FOR 1965

The Ninetieth Annual Meeting of the Society was held at the Guildhall, Gloucester, on the 13 March 1965 at 2.30 p.m., when Professor J. M. Cook presided. There were 80 members present and apologies for absence were received from 21 members.

The report of the Council was presented by the Honorary Secretary and the audited accounts by the Honorary Treasurer. On the proposal of Mr W. I. Croome, seconded by Mr K. Barton the report and accounts were adopted.

The Hon. W. R. S. Bathurst moved the confirmation of the new rules of the Society which had been adopted at the previous annual meeting.

The report and audited accounts of the Records Section were presented and adopted.

On the proposition of Mr Croome the following members of the Section were elected:

Hon. W. R. S. Bathurst, Rev. J. E. Gethyn-Jones, Captain H. S. Gracie, Irvine Gray, Wilfrid Leighton, E. S. Lindley, Lt.-Colonel A. B. Lloyd-Baker, P. V. McGrath, Elizabeth Ralph and Dr Margaret Sharp.

Professor A. H. Smith, O.B.E., PH.D., D.LITT., F.S.A., was installed as President for the year 1965-66.

Mr L. E. W. O. Fullbrook-Leggatt, M.C., Mr P. V. McGrath, M.A., and Mr Anthony Scott, T.D. were elected Vice-Presidents.

On the proposition of Captain H. S. Gracie, seconded by Captain O. E. S. Bazeley, members of Council and Officers were elected.

The President gave his address—'England and Classical Archaeology'.

Members were entertained to tea by the Mayor of Gloucester.

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR 1964

There has been a substantial increase in membership during the past year, due not so much to the addition of new members as to the decrease in the number of resignations. The total membership is 704, that is, 607 private members and 97 institutional members. We record with regret the deaths of THE REV. W. D. CHAPMAN, THE REV. S. T. COLLINS, MISS N. LITTLEWOOD, MISS A. MORRISON, MRS H. PLAYNE, MISS E. F. TREW and MR P. E. TYHURST.

Transactions

Volume 82 of the *Transactions* which was issued last June contains valuable contributions on Bristol and Gloucestershire. We are grateful to our Editor, Captain Gracie and to our contributors, who together have made its publication possible. The catalogue of the church plate of Bristol which was begun some thirty years ago by the late Canon Cole was never completed. Therefore the Council welcomed a proposal from Mr S. A. Jeavons, who has already catalogued the plate of several counties, to catalogue the church plate of Bristol. Because of various complications it is proposed to catalogue the whole in one volume. The Society will publish the volume with financial help from other sources.

Library

The Society has a valuable library of books which is most ably looked after by the Honorary Librarian, Mr Parrott. We have not been able in the year under review to complete the catalogue of the books but progress is being made.

Council

It is difficult in a short report such as this to do more than comment briefly on a few matters which have engaged the attention of the Council this year. Several excavations have taken place in the county and the most important are perhaps those at Cirencester where a large courtyard was found under the cinema and the east end of the Basilica in Chester Street. In the garden of Ashcroft House a large mosaic pavement, overlying an earlier mosaic corridor was also exposed. Important as the results on the abbey site are, further excavation is needed to establish the exact site of the Abbey church. The Society made a grant of £50 towards the cost of the work. Excavations in Gloucester towards which the Society also contributed £50 revealed

the line of the wall of the Roman city in the King's School garden site. At Frocester, Captain Gracie had another successful season of digging where the site of a bath suite was uncovered. Mrs O'Neil excavated a long barrow at Withington and at Salmonsbury discovered a Saxon burial. The result of an excavation carried out by the Ministry of Works at Bledisloe Farm, Awre, was inconclusive and further work has to be done there. So much for excavations. The Council has been much concerned with the preservation of buildings scheduled by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and threatened with demolition. The rapid development of many towns in Gloucestershire means that we are in danger of losing buildings of architectural interest, because it is more troublesome to restore old buildings than to sweep them away. Where large areas are being planned as one site, it should be possible to combine the old and the new, to the advantage of both. However, this is not what happens. In the Stroud area a group of 17th-century houses in Nelson Street were demolished by the Urban District Council and the greater part of the Walbridge mill pulled down. Fortunately the mill had been surveyed and photographed by Mr Walrond. Where it is not possible to save the building a photographic record is being made. In Gloucester, the Council is gravely concerned about the Duke of Norfolk's House, an important 18th-century house belonging to the city which is threatened with demolition. It is hoped that the building will be preserved and restored to its former beauty. A grant has been made by the Historic Buildings Trust towards the restoration of Robert Raikes' house which is encouraging.

I am pleased to say that there are cases where our representations have been successful. Bristol Corporation refused planning permission for the destruction of Nos. 2 and 3 Broad Plain, so that together with Nos. 4 and 5, lately reconditioned, this small group of 18th-century houses will be preserved to add beauty and charm to a rather unattractive area. Another 18th-century house which has a group value at Henbury has been saved as also has No. 8 High Street, Thornbury and the old rectory at Barnwood. The preservation of Westbury Court gardens which has been handed to the National Trust is gratifying but the cost of putting them in order will require a large capital sum beyond the means of the National Trust. A local appeal has been launched, the Trust having raised a substantial sum from its members. The Society has made a token grant of £25 and it is hoped that members will support the appeal.

Last Spring the Society visited the Daneway entrance of the Sapperton tunnel which is badly in need of restoration. It was felt that

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR 1964

it would be unwise to propose clearing the entrance without expert advice and supervision. A report made by Mr Christopher Bishop showed that the entrances needed expert attention, but that when repaired they could be maintained in a satisfactory condition at little cost. The Council considered that the Society was not the appropriate body to initiate action and referred the matter to the Georgian Group.

During the year the usual field meetings were held and the Council wishes to record its thanks to Mr Paul Page, the Meetings secretary, to Mrs Robins, Secretary for Gloucester and to Mr Webb, the Secretary for Bristol who were responsible for the excellent arrangements made. For some years now, the only report on field meetings has been that made in the annual report of the Council. Members have on several occasions asked that more detailed reports be printed similar to those which appeared in earlier volumes of the *Transactions*, many of which are of considerable interest. I am glad to be able to say that Mrs Neale has kindly agreed to write reports. Such reports will provide a permanent record of the comments and theories of the excellent speakers whom the Society is fortunate in getting as guides on these occasions and whose expert knowledge of their subjects might otherwise go unrecorded.

No lectures were arranged in Bristol for winter session owing to a substantial increase in the rent for the use of the Red Lodge and the inability to find another meeting place at such short notice. It is hoped that these activities will be resumed next winter.

In conclusion the Council wishes to thank those members of Council who have retired this year. We are indebted to Miss Chamberlayne for the work she does in connection with the sale of our publications.

FIELD MEETINGS, 1964

SPRING MEETING: Saturday 9 May. CIRENCESTER AND DISTRICT.

Cirencester: Parish Church of St
John Baptist

Sapperton Tunnel Entrance, nr.
Coate

North Cerney: Parish Church
Sale's Lot Long Barrow, Compton

Abdale
Northleach: Parish Church

The Spring Meeting of the Society provided an excursion of wide variety, ranging from prehistoric long barrow to Industrial Revolution architecture. We were fortunate in having Mr W. I. Croome as our guide for the greater part of the day.

Members assembled at the Church of St John Baptist, Cirencester, where after an introduction by the Vicar, Rev. R. Hill, Mr Croome gave us a characteristically lucid and fascinating account of the history of this magnificent parish church. The present church, he told us, was at least the third known to have been built on this site; of the first great Norman church, only the piers of the south chancel pillars, and a little doorway between the Lady and St Katharine's Chapels—originally an outside wall—can be seen today. Mr Croome traced the long sequence of alterations and additions to the church throughout the 13th and subsequent centuries. These included the widening and rebuilding of the nave, the extension of the chancel, the addition of the Lady Chapel, and major alterations to improve the lighting at the east end.

The church tower is a permanent memorial to the part played by Cirencester in the turbulence of national politics in 1399–1400. The Earls who had raised an army to restore the deposed Richard II had encamped at Cirencester; but the townspeople, led by Reginald Spicer, whose brass is in the Trinity Chapel, attacked them, routed their followers, and summarily beheaded the Earls of Kent and Salisbury. Henry IV, in gratitude for their loyalty, allowed the townspeople to share the 'prize money' captured in the Earls' baggage train, and further royal grants and money flowed into the town. The building of the Great West Tower in 1400, with the arms of Henry IV in the spandrels of the door, was a material result of this prosperity. The intended spire was abandoned because of subsidence: which became so pronounced that the two huge flying buttresses had to be constructed to prevent it sinking further. The way in which these buttresses necessitated hasty rebuilding of the west ends of the aisles, can be seen in the exterior stonework. The tower was designed to stand above a nave roof much lower than the present one, and even without a spire would originally have looked even more imposing than now. Mr Croome drew our attention to the way in which the lower buttresses are aligned at the usual right angles to the walls, while the upper ones project at 45° from the corners in the local Gloucestershire style.

The features of the several fine 15th-century chapels have been described by Mr Croome and others in previous *Transactions*. The Duke of York was originally portrayed, full length and life size, in the east window of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, but only his head now remains; the Yorkist badge appears on the apex of each arch. Both the coat-of-arms and the merchant's mark of Garstang appear on the screen of the Garstang Chapel: an early example of their use in conjunction, and indicative of the rising prosperity and social status of the Cirencester wool-merchants.

In the 15th century also, further alterations were made to the chancel. The pulpit, with its superb open tracery work, is one of the several pre-Reformation examples in the county. The south porch also dates from this period. It was built by the Abbey as an estate office, comprising two chambers and a crypt in which the parish ales were held. After the Dissolution it was for a time used as a Town Hall.

Between 1517 and 1522 the major task of rebuilding the nave in its present form was undertaken by the citizens, whose arms or devices decorate each pillar. The windows of the aisles would have been ablaze with pictures of saints and donors. Both Atkyns and Rudder give some idea of the magnificence of this glass. Most of it seems to have disappeared in the course of the 18th century: owing more probably to the gradual perishing of the lead, than to any deliberate destruction. Now only the west window of the south aisle survives to give some idea of what these nave windows once looked like. The great height of the pier bases to the nave pillars, indicates that the nave was pewed: the bases being designed to show over the pews. This new nave was barely complete by the Reformation.

Finally Mr Croome touched on the vicissitudes of the church's history since the Reformation, and the great work of restoration undertaken by Sir Gilbert Scott between 1865-7, and in the present century. Recent achievements include the re-setting of much of the surviving ancient glass, as far as possible in its original or associated windows; and the uncovering of the wall-paintings in the Chedworth chantry. The vivid colour of these frescoes against white walls, of the early glass and the painted stone of shields and pulpit, do still save some impression of the blaze of colour which once adorned this fine church.

At midday the party, passing the site of Graham Webster's recent excavations at Dyer Street (now covered by a car-park), set off for the Tunnel House Inn, near Coate. Here, in the midst of most un-industrial Gloucestershire countryside, are the now peaceful remains of the eastern entrance to the Sapperton Tunnel: the second longest canal tunnel in Britain and certainly one of the earliest and boldest pieces of canal-era engineering in this part of the country. The tunnel takes the Thames and Severn Canal under the Cotswold ridge for $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles, linking the two river basins from which the canal takes its name. Construction, blasting the tunnel out of solid rock, began in 1783; George III visited the site in 1788, and it was opened to traffic in 1789. It was a 'legging' tunnel: the bargees propelled their craft through by lying on their backs and 'walking' against the roof or sides of the tunnel. The canal ceased to be used in 1911, but although overgrown the tunnel entrance is still in a reasonable state of repair. The canal runs out of the tunnel into a deep, tree-lined cutting, with stout stone embankments. The entrance façade itself, imposingly classical among the beech trees and stagnant leaf-filled water, still preserves an air of magnificent if dilapidated faith in human enterprise and achievement. Tunnel House Inn started as a hostelry for men employed in building the tunnel. An old print in the *Architectural Review*, 1949, shows the Inn, with the tunnel in the foreground, and a barge emerging into the open canal; the banks are treeless, and there is a wide towpath, now lost in landslips.

Most of the afternoon was spent at North Cerney Parish Church, where once again Mr Croome acted as our guide, and gave us an enthralling account of this church with which he has himself been so much concerned. Recent restorations have thrown new light on the earlier history of the church and it was on these aspects of its history that Mr Croome concentrated in his talk. About 1460-5 there was the fire that gutted the nave and upper tower of the early Norman church. The Norman

stonework and buttresses of the lower part of the tower still survive; it would have been a square tower with a parapet. The fire had been so severe that stones in the tower were reddened to a depth of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Repairs made over the past two years have disclosed ancient frost damage, which suggested that after the fire the tower was left roofless for several years. The gabled roof that replaced it was probably a simple makeshift repair, laying the ridge beam across the least damaged east and west sides, and bringing the gable down to the north and south walls which were burnt down below the window tops. A Norman tombstone was found incorporated into one of these windows. Perhaps, indeed, this was intended only as a temporary roof: one which, however, lasted successfully until three years ago.

A second result of the fire is that the two sides of the church are entirely different. The fire draught obviously blew from south to north: the south wall of the nave is basically the original Norman construction, while the north wall had to be completely rebuilt. Mr Croome indicated another interesting economy entailed by these major repairs: the north wall commenced with lower courses of fine cut, 4-foot slabs of ashlar—but changed in the upper courses to smaller, rougher and cheaper stones. Other details on the exterior of the church have been described in previous *Transactions*: the muzzled bear gargoyle over the north porch, the fine Norman carving with four curious small heads in the south porch, the strangely isolated corbel on the west wall of the tower, the scratch dials, the blocked priest's door, and the famous incised carvings of the leopard and the manticore. Mr Croome suggests that these are masons's 'doodles' of about the 1560's. The 14th-century cross stands outside the south porch, with an earlier gable cross that may well have been salvaged from the original nave roof after the fire.

Once inside the church, tiny and sparkling, dominated by its magnificent rood-screen, Mr Croome described its chequered history: its recent history as interesting as its more ancient past.

The chancel arch and the south wall of the nave are 12th century, and the western arch to the tower is 14th century. The 1½-ton altar slab is early 13th century: not many churches possess so old an altar; this only survived because it was deliberately buried, top downwards, in the floor of the Lady Chapel sometime in the 15th century, where it remained as an unsuspected paving stone until 1912. Three portrait corbels commemorate Henry VI, Sir William Whitchurch (then the Rector) and Edmund Stafford, Duke of Buckingham: all of whom were associated with the rebuilding of the nave and north side of the church after the fire in the 15th century. The two transepts were both added by parishioners in the late 15th century; the Lady Chapel, on the south some ten years before that on the north. Both still possess the original glass. After the Reformation followed two centuries of neglect until by 1734, the fabric was being shored up. It would seem fortunate that at this juncture a disputed advowson left a vacancy during which the income from the living was paid to the churchwardens, who used it for urgent and widespread repairs. Much work, by local craftsmen, can be traced to these four years: including the rebuilt chancel, the font cover, and a set of rails.

The advowson was eventually sold to University College, Oxford; and from then until the present day, an increasing variety of beautiful objects have accumulated in this little church—due in considerable part to the work of the former rector, Rev. E. W. M. O. de la Hey, and to Mr Croome himself. The chancel chest, with linenfold panels, is late 15th century. The cross is of 14th-century French origin; the eagle

lectern is Flemish, of about 1480, with a stand of Spanish steel. The rood screen, repositioned higher up the wall, no longer breaks the lovely chancel arch; the Crucifix, with St Mary and St John, are placed in front of it, at what would have been its original level, and seem almost suspended above the chancel step; the Christ is Italian work of *c.* 1600. The statues in the Lady Chapel, French and South German, are dated from *c.* 1480. The elaborate carvings of the pulpit, which is made from a single block of stone, survived unscathed since the 17th century, under a heavy coat of plaster. One of the most recent acquisitions is an altar frontal in St Katherine's Chapel made from material woven for the robes worn by the Queen for the opening of Parliament after her coronation in 1953. Altogether this little Cotswold church, restored and maintained with such obvious care and delight, seems at once intensely local, in its building, and highly cosmopolitan with the great variety of precious and beautiful objects it contains.

From North Cerney, the party made a short journey to Compton Abdale, where on the very windy hilltop a haybarn provided a most welcome and comfortable auditorium, in which Mrs O'Neil gave us an account of her excavation of Sale's Lot Long Barrow. Constructed of dry-stone walling, Sale's Lot is so far unique among long barrows of the Cotswolds. Mrs O'Neil's excavation is still in progress, and a full report will appear in due course, but members were able to see the main features of this unusual barrow.

The meeting concluded with tea at Northleach, where members had the opportunity to revisit the Parish Church; restoration work there was now almost complete, and we were able to see the modern East window by Christopher Webb.

Further References

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TRANSACTIONS FOR THE YEAR 1965

BRISTOL DISTRICT MEETING: Tuesday 23 June. BABINGTON AND MELLS,
SOMERSET.

Babington Church and House

Mells: Parish Church and Manor
House

The first field meeting for Bristol members this year, took place on a fine evening, when about forty people arrived at Babington, five miles from Frome in Somerset. We were able to visit Babington Church and House at the kind invitation of Col. and Mrs G. W. D. Jennings. Both the house and the church, situated in the grounds opposite, have been beautifully preserved. The church was built in 1750 and still retains all its 18th-century features. It is a single aisled building, with an apsidal east end; there is no east window, but in its place an elaborate cartouche of the IHS monogram makes a striking mural above the curved altar table. The huge windows still contain all their original 18th-century glass, and there is a particularly attractive font. It was a real pleasure to see the care that had been taken in the restoration and maintenance of this lovely little church. Col. and Mrs Jennings then showed us over their very fine Queen Anne house, and extended most generous hospitality to our party. The house, its period architecture forming a perfect setting for the fine furniture, china and pictures which Col. and Mrs Jennings have brought together in it, retains the happy atmosphere of a graciously 'lived-in' private country house.

From Babington we went to Mells, where the Rector, Rev. F. W. Cleverdon, kindly acted as our guide. The Manor of Mells belonged to the Abbey of Glastonbury, and Abbot Selwood (1456-92) intended to replan the village in the form of a St Antony's cross. He died before his new layout was more than half finished; but the one complete little street, an effort at late medieval town-planning unusual in the middle of the somewhat haphazard layout of the village, forms a fitting entrance to the parish church of St Andrew.

The present church is 15th century throughout; the south wall and porch, facing the street, are particularly elaborate, with delicate pinnacles and canopied, though empty, niches. Inside, apart from some fine fan-vaulting in the tower, the chief interest of the church was in the various contributions that have been made to its furniture and monuments by the Horner family, as Lords of the Manor. In particular Katherine Horner, who married Raymond Asquith, was in her day a considerable patroness of the arts. In the tower, two memorials form a fine contrast in styles. One is to Raymond Asquith, killed on the Somme in 1916: a plain lettered inscription incised directly onto the stones of the tower wall by Eric Gill, and decorated only with Asquith's sword and a laurel wreath in bronze by Lutyens. Opposite the sharp, classical perfection of Gill's lettering, is a flowing gesso plaque by Edward Burne-Jones. This pre-Raphaelite design of a peacock on a tomb forms a memorial to Laura Lyttelton, 1886. Burne-Jones also designed a tapestry which hangs in the nave. The glass for most of the windows in the chancel was made locally in the 1850's: an unusual feature for a country church. On the north side of the chancel is the Horner Chapel: as big as the chancel itself, and full of interest. It alone has an original 15th-century roof. Dominating the chapel is an equestrian statue by Munnings, commemorating Edward Horner, 1917; this was the first horse ever sculptured by Munnings. Another artist working here in an unusual medium is Sir William Nicholson, the painter. In 1930 he executed the striking stained glass window in the east wall, of the Virgin and child with St Francis set amidst a blue and

ochre swirl of fishes and birds. In the churchyard are buried the novelist George Birmingham (pseudonym of Canon Hannay, Vicar of Mells 1924-34), and Monseigneur Ronald Knox, who frequently stayed at Mells Manor when working on his translation of the New Testament.

Adjoining the church is the Manor House. The present owner, the 2nd Earl of Oxford and Asquith, is Governor General of the Seychelles, and so the house is at present unoccupied; but we were kindly shown over it by Mr Cleverdon. The Manor House has been in the possession of the Horner family since the 16th century, and passed through the marriage of Katherine Horner and Raymond Asquith, to its present owners. The acquisition of the Manor of Mells by the Horners is the historical fact behind the nursery rhyme of 'Little Jack Horner'. John Horner, it is said, was Steward to the Abbot of Glastonbury at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, and was sent to London with a pie as a Christmas present for Henry VIII. On the way he 'put in his thumb'—and abstracted for himself the deeds to Mells. This tale is not as unlikely as it might appear. The Abbey of Glastonbury was by 1538-9 the last religious house in Somerset left untouched by the King's Commissioners. Abbot Whiting does appear from the State Papers to have sent Christmas gifts to the King on several occasions. Other monasteries, seeking to ingratiate themselves with the King, are known to have done likewise: in many cases sending foodstuffs. What more likely than that Abbot Whiting, conscious of the ominously splendid isolation of Glastonbury, should have attempted to assuage the appetite of the Commissioners with a timely gift to the King of some of his best properties? Perhaps it was his gift for the Christmas of 1538. The trick of the 'surprise pie' was a favourite device in the 16th and the 17th century. Thus far the rhyme seems to have a not improbable basis in fact. What is certain is that a Thomas Horner was among the jury of king's men who condemned Abbot Whiting to death in November 1539; and that in 1543 Thomas and John Horner of Cloford petitioned the King for the purchase of Mells Manor.

A nephew (or according to some authorities, a son) of the steward of Glastonbury, Sir John Horner, High Sheriff of Somerset, inherited the family estates in the late 16th century, and probably built the present Manor House. Set in beautiful gardens, it was originally over twice its present size; but the northern wing was demolished in the 18th and 19th centuries. The remaining wing has been very heavily restored, so that little survives of its original Elizabethan character or fittings, but we were able to see the study used by Mgr. Ronald Knox.

This most pleasant evening's excursion concluded with refreshments at the George Hotel, Frome, before the party returned to Bristol.

TRANSACTIONS FOR THE YEAR 1965

SUMMER MEETING: Wednesday 15—Saturday 18 July. EXETER.

<p>Ilminster: St Mary's Church Hembury Fort Ottery-St-Mary: St Mary's Church Cadhay House Kenton: All Saints Church Powderham Castle</p>	<p>City of Exeter, including the Cathedral and Guildhall Tiverton, including the Castle, St Peter's Church, St George's Chapel, and Blundell's Old School Cothay Manor</p>
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The four-day Summer Meeting of the Society was centred this year on Exeter. About fifty people attended the meeting, although unfortunately neither the President nor any member of Council apart from the Hon. Secretary was able to be present. Mardon Hall, grouped with other halls of residence of the University of Exeter to form a true university 'campus' high up on the outskirts of the city, and commanding fine views, made a most pleasant centre for the meeting.

On the journey to Exeter, brief visits were paid to St Mary's Church, Ilminster: regarded by Prof. E. A. Freeman as one of the best examples of 15th-century church architecture in Somerset: which was kindly described to us by the Vicar, Preb. P. A. Allan; and to Hembury Fort, Devon. The stiff climb up through high bracken to this most impressively sited camp, was achieved by most of our members. Mrs D. H. Woolner, who excavated the site, acted as our guide and described the unexpected discovery that, as at Maiden Castle, an earlier Neolithic causewayed camp underlies the Iron Age fortifications. After tea at Mardon Hall, Mrs Woolner gave us a most informative talk on Roman Exeter.

On Thursday morning members visited St Mary's Church, Ottery St Mary. Miss Mary Coate, who was to have been our guide, was prevented by an accident from being present, and her place was taken by Miss D. Coate, who combined great charm and knowledge in giving us a scholarly and fascinating account of this church, one of the finest in Devon. We spent a full hour studying the magnificent decoration which is its chief feature; the carvings on the elaborate roof-bosses, corbels and pier-caps range from Bishop Grandisson, the founder, in full regalia, to owls and elephants. Grouped attractively around the church are the well-preserved remains of the Collegiate buildings, attached to this foundation since the 14th century. Four lay 'Governors' of the Collegiate buildings, first appointed in 1545, still have special seats and an annual service in the church. S. T. Coleridge was born at the School-house, part of the college, in 1772.

A short visit was then paid to Cadhay House, where we were most kindly received by Mrs William Powlett and her son. This house, set in very lovely grounds, consists mainly of four 16th-century wings grouped round a central courtyard; in each of the courtyard walls is a niche containing a statue of a Tudor monarch: Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I. Inside, it was a pleasure to see the small, beautifully kept rooms, enhanced by their fine furniture.

After lunch, on the way to Powderham Castle, a brief visit was paid to All Saints Church, Kenton, to see the magnificent wooden screen which is the outstanding feature of the church. This screen, c. 1455, extends right across the building. Along the base are forty delicately carved and painted panels of saints and prophets; the screen then rises in slender pillars to an elaborately interlaced 'fan-vaulting' which supports the roodscreen itself: statues of St Michael and four angels with musical instruments, each statue set in a most elaborately carved niche and canopy. It was

felt that the church as a whole merited a much longer visit than we were able to spare it on this occasion.

Kenton lies at the entrance to Powderham Castle, which members were able to explore by themselves. The fabric is in part 14th and 15th century, although extensive alterations and additions in the 18th and 19th centuries give it a somewhat later appearance. Its chief interest lies in the fact that it has been the home of one family: the Courtenays, Earls of Devon: without a break since the early 14th century.

Back at Mardon Hall, Dr W. G. Hoskins gave us a talk on Exeter, illustrated by slides. His talk formed an excellent introduction to the tour which members made the next day. In having Dr Hoskins as our guest on Thursday evening and our guide on Friday, we were most fortunate in having the leading authority on the history of Exeter, both as a citizen and as a writer. He was able to tell us of new information, and show us places which, as ordinary visitors, it is unlikely that we could have discovered for ourselves.

Most of Friday morning was spent on a visit to Exeter Cathedral. Those who have known it before must have been struck by the great work of post-war restoration, which is now almost complete. For newcomers, perhaps the most impressive moment is on entering the West Door, to see the whole length of the Cathedral in one awe-inspiring, unbroken sweep of arching stone culminating in the beautiful East window. Outside, the West Front has been greatly enhanced by its recent cleaning: its delicate tracery now forming an even more pleasing contrast with the plain solidity of the two Norman transept towers beyond.

Members also saw the Guildhall; used as the Assize Court as well as the Council Chamber, it retains the atmosphere of a medieval court room, and has a fine 15th-century timbered roof. A Sergeant at Mace showed us the city insignia.

In the afternoon the party set out on a tour of the city, conducted by Dr Hoskins. Under his able and enthusiastic guidance, two and a half hours in blazing sunshine passed all too quickly, exploring many less well-known parts of the city. We assembled at Northernhay, near the remains of the Norman castle; and our walk included a stretch of the city wall between Bartholomew Street and St Mary Steps. Here, alongside the church, was a well-preserved medieval street: cobbled, with the original gutter down the middle, and several 15th-century houses. Nearby flows one of the ancient city mill leats, which may date back to the 10th century. We also walked along the river to the Quay. The river, now peaceful, was once of great importance to the city's commerce, and the Exeter Ship Canal of 1564 is one of the oldest in the country. On the quay is the late 17th-century Customs House, which has a very fine plaster ceiling in its Long Room. Next door is the 18th-century Wharfingers House, and several other pleasing warehouses complete this remarkable group of quayside buildings.

On the last day of the meeting, the party left Mardon Hall early and made a leisurely journey homewards with several visits on the way. At Tiverton, after a brief look at the outside of Blundell's Old School, we were shown over the Castle by Mr B. D. G. Little who had come down from Bristol to be our guide for the day. We also saw St Peter's Church (Rector: the Rev. C. S. Nye), much of which is the work of prosperous Tiverton wool merchants in the 15th and 16th centuries: including John Greenway's chapel with its vivid frieze of armed merchant ships. There was also time to visit the Chapel of Ease of St George, in Tiverton. Built between 1714 and 1730, it is perhaps the finest Georgian church in Devon: light and delicate, with a gallery round three sides of the interior.

Our final visit, in the afternoon, was to Cothay Manor, Somerset. Mrs Astley Rushton and her daughter showed us round this delightful house. Completely secluded in lovely gardens, it is one of the most perfect small 15th-century manor houses in western England. The main part of the existing house was built in 1480, and the west wing added in the late 16th or early 17th century. Inside the main building, the Great Hall remains in a magnificent state of preservation: with original roof timbers, a squint from the solar, and minstrels gallery complete with high wall and barred window. The parlour, solar and bedrooms formed a delightful succession of ancient yet 'homely' rooms. Many were decorated with frescoes: the history of which is something of a mystery, but thought to date from the late 16th century. This visit formed a delightful conclusion to the four-day meeting.

Further References

- Guides can be purchased at Exeter Cathedral and all the churches mentioned, and also at Cadhay House, Powderham Castle and Cothay Manor.
- Hoskins, Dr W. G., *Two Thousand Years in Exeter*, elaborates the brief summary here, on his lecture and tour of the city.
- Little, B. D. G., *Exeter*, also covers Tiverton, where Mr Little acted as our guide.

BRISTOL DISTRICT MEETING: Tuesday 25 August. CHAVENAGE HOUSE AND CHAPEL.

The second evening excursion of the year for Bristol members, was to Chavenage House, near Tetbury, and was attended by about fifty members. Once again we were fortunate in having a beautiful evening for the visit, with views of over ten miles across the Cotswolds, from the lawns of Chavenage. Mr and Mrs R. Lowsley Williams conducted us round the house and chapel in separate groups. Both the house and the chapel have been very completely described in previous numbers of the *Transactions*, so it may suffice to note that perhaps the most attractive feature of this country house is the way in which its basic structure and successive additions each preserve the characteristics of their various periods. The Elizabethan frontage and Great Hall, the 17th-century panelled dining-room, the heavily tapestried bedrooms with attendant ghost-stories, the high-ceilinged, painted 18th-century games room and the ball room added in 1905, form a happy contrast with each other and combine into a most pleasant whole. We were most grateful to Mr and Mrs Lowsley Williams for showing us over their private home. The party enjoyed refreshments kindly provided at the Ormond's Head Hotel, Tetbury, before leaving for Bristol.

Further References

- 'Visits of Society to Chavenage', *TBGAS*, vol. 22 (1899), pp. 9-12; vol. 61 (1939), pp. 16-18; both with plans.
- Seth-Smith, W. H., 'Chavenage House', *TBGAS*, vol. 22 (1899), pp. 121-7.
- Silvester Davies, Rev. W. H., 'Notes on Chavenage and the Stephens family', *TBGAS*, vol. 22 (1899), pp. 128-33.
- Roper, Miss I. M., 'Note on the Figures in the Chapel Porch', *TBGAS*, vol. 43 (1921), pp. 33-4.

FIELD MEETINGS, 1964

AUTUMN MEETING: Saturday 12 September. DEVIZES AND DISTRICT.

Bromham: Parish Church of St

Nicholas

Devizes: Parish Church of St John

Devizes Museum

Potterne: The Porch House

Roundway Down

The Autumn Meeting took the Society into Wiltshire, and completed a record of fine days for all this year's excursions. Two coachloads of members, and several cars, made up a sizeable party, and it was a great pleasure to have both our President and our Chairman present.

On the way to Devizes a short stop was made at Bromham, where we were shown over the parish church by the Vicar, The Rev. C. E. Walters. The church is basically Early English in style, with traces of Norman windows, and a considerable amount of 19th-century reconstruction. There are several interesting 17th-century memorials in the nave; the poet Thomas More (1779-1852) is buried in the churchyard, and the Somerset historian, the Rev. J. Collinson was born at Bromham in 1757. The feature which most interested our party, however, was the Baynton Chapel, which is a virtual replica of the Beauchamp Chapel which we saw later in Devizes Parish Church. The chantry was built by Sir Roger Tocotes in association with Richard Beauchamp in 1493; after the dissolution it became the family chapel of the Bayntons. Both inside and out, the highly elaborate Perpendicular tracery of the chapel is set off against the plain style of the rest of the building. It has a fine wooden ceiling, and a little pre-Reformation glass. Besides the effigy of Sir Roger Tocotes, there are several fine tombs of the Baynton family. We were reminded of the delightful monument in the Lord Mayor's Chapel, Bristol, to Maria Baynton, who died 1667 and was the widow of Edward Baynton of Bromham.

Arriving at Devizes, the party went straight to the parish church of St John, where after a short introduction by the Vicar, the Rev. W. D. C. Williams, Mr O. Brakspear gave us an expert and detailed account of its history. Mr Brakspear is architect in charge of the preservation and maintenance of this superb church, and told us many details of his discoveries about its construction. The low, almost cavernous Norman chancel forms a striking focal point to the spacious transepts—also 12th-century—and the 15th-century nave of this magnificent cruciform church. The huge, heavy central tower was originally a lantern tower to light the church, and is also 12th century in date, apart from the later parapet and pinnacles. It was ceiled when the 15th-century windows were cut in the transepts; and the blocked clerestory windows can still be seen from the outside. Up in the ringing-chamber of the tower: reached by a tiny and tortuous medieval stairway over a 'bridge' to the north aisle: we saw a frieze in the form of a triple interlaced arcade, which Mr Brakspear thinks may well be unique. It was interesting to note how the local masons occasionally found themselves unable to cope with the complex 'plaits' of this flight of fancy. Outside the church, Mr Brakspear pointed out how the 15th-century transept windows had been cut through the decorative Norman stonework.

There are two fine 15th-century chapels in the church, of which the South or Beauchamp chapel is almost identical with that at Bromham, and was certainly built by the same mason, in about 1483. Once again it was frothing over with lace-like stonework inside and out. One of the most astonishing experiences in this church was to step from the chancel to this chapel: at a step, from one style and one century to another: from the plain, restrained solemnity of the 12th-century chancel, to the colour, light and fretwork of the chapel.

The party reassembled shortly after 2.00 p.m. at the Devizes Museum, where we were given a most interesting talk on its history and long association with the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. In the Society's library many of the books that formed the nucleus of its collections were put out on display for us. We were particularly impressed by the modernization of settings and display techniques that is being carried out in all sections of the Museum, and which makes it not only one of the oldest and most richly endowed of local museums, but also one of the most attractive to visitors.

Our next destination was Potterne, where Dr and Mrs N. Davey most kindly showed us over their private home, the Porch House: the well-known and magnificent half-timbered house in the main street of the village. Here we gathered in the beautiful garden behind the house, and Dr Davey gave us a most fascinating account of its history. It was built about 1470, probably as the residence of the bailiff of the manor of Potterne, which belonged to the bishops of Salisbury. It is a perfect example of a small 15th-century dwelling: kitchen and living quarters divided by a through passage, a great hall the full height of the house, and parlour, solar and other rooms beyond. The construction of the magnificent timber frame, held together with wooden pegs, can be studied in detail in the hall. Some of the glass in the hall windows is 14th century, while the 'squint' from the solar down into the hall contains stained glass reputed to have come from Salisbury Cathedral.

Dr Davey also told us of his most interesting recent discoveries in the garden of Porch House: where he has excavated the site of the Saxon-Norman village church which tradition had always located in this area. Besides the timber chancel and nave, he had exposed the foundations of an ante-room with a recess set in the floor, with steps leading down into it. This recess was exactly the same size as the ancient font now in the present parish church; this may therefore be the only known pre-Conquest baptistery outside Canterbury. Members were able to visit the parish church of St Mary, just behind Porch House, and see this possible Saxon font, which was found in the 19th century, buried beneath the 14th-century font now in use.

As it was a clear, warm evening, the party stopped briefly at Roundway Down, just outside Devizes, on the return to Bristol. Here, on the high downs above the town, Hopton and the Royalist forces secured a decisive victory over Waller and the Parliamentarians in July 1645. A large proportion of the party rapidly disappeared in the direction of Oliver's Castle, the Iron Age camp named after this battle; while the rest were content to enjoy the warm evening and indulge in a little not altogether serious speculation on the battle itself. Waller had, in fact, penned Hopton's troops up in Devizes and was laying siege to the town when he was driven up into the hills by relieving Royalist cavalry. The Roundway Park estate now belongs to the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol. This concluded a meeting that had enabled us to see a delightful variety of places within a small and convenient area.

