

THE LEICESTERSHIRE  
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY,  
1877.

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(*Minute.*)

**Auditor.**

Captain WHITBY.

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## THE ANNUAL MEETING

of the Society was held in the Town Library, Guild Hall, Leicester, on Monday, 29th January, 1877.

*January 29th, 1877.*

The REV. J. H. HILL, F.S.A., in the chair.

The following

## REPORT

for the past year was read:—

THE Committee of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society begs to present the Twenty-second Annual Report of its proceedings.

Whilst the loss of a few members by death and otherwise during the past year has to be regretted, the Committee can congratulate the Society upon a considerable accession to its numbers.

The Annual Summer Meeting, held at S. Albans, in conjunction with our friends of the Northamptonshire Society, was very agreeable and successful. The grand Abbey Church, of course, formed the principal object of attraction and remark. Its architectural history, and its arrangements, were fully explained and dilated upon by Sir G. G. Scott, R.A., the Rev. O. W. Davys, the Rev. H. Fowler, Mr. James Neale, and others.

The excursion to *Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Luton, Wheathampstead, and Hatfield* fully met the anticipations of the members present. The visit to Hatfield especially, with its many attractions, was a source of much enjoyment.

The bi-monthly meetings during the year were fairly well attended, and the Papers read were of an interesting local character.

The Publications of the Society were, as usual, placed in your hands. The Transactions of our Society comprised, in part, an illustrated account of the ancient Leicester glass, now in the possession of this Society. The completion of the description of the glass, with many illustrations, will appear in the next "part" of the Transactions, which is already in the hands of the printer.

So rapidly has the work of church restoration been pushed forward during late years in Leicestershire, as in all parts of the country, that there are comparatively few churches which have not been, more or less, in the hands of the architect and the builder. Indeed, so much has been doing, that it has lately been the province of a Society like this rather to urge conservation than renovation, to fear that a laudable desire to repair "waste places" should not be duly tempered with a reverent care for what could be preserved of ancient work, whether in the structural portion of our churches, or in their furniture and accessories. Too much care of that kind cannot be exercised, and your Committee rejoice to think that architects generally are daily becoming more alive to its importance. No architect, with a love for his profession, would like to blot out a paragraph in a page of its history, which he certainly does when he recommends and carries out the unnecessary destruction of any portion of an ancient edifice. And although some of the architectural accessories existing in our ancient churches are now, it may be thought, of no practical use, still as illustrations of observances now perhaps obsolete, of customs long since dropped, they are of great value to the student of manners in times when religious customs and pageants made up so much of the everyday life of the people.

There have been two churches in Leicestershire reopened after restoration during the past year, in both of which your Committee believe a true conservative spirit has guided the architects and the promoters of the works. Perhaps no two churches

had suffered more from various causes, and more needed the skilful treatment of the architect than those of *Glen Magna* and *Gumley*. The former had evidently suffered much from fire, and had been so modernized that scarcely any of its original beauty remained. Some interesting features, however, of the Norman and of the Early English periods were discovered, and have been carefully preserved. The main body of the church has been rebuilt or repaired with great care, all ancient features being conserved, and an entirely new chancel, with organ recess and vestry erected. The parish church of *Gumley* was in a worse condition even than that of *Glen*, for whilst the main body of the fabric was thoroughly out of repair, the chancel (built about fifty years ago) was most unsatisfactory in every way. The whole has been carefully restored, and a new chancel built on the foundations of the original one discovered during the progress of the works. These two churches will repay a visit from any member of this Society, and your Committee hope that as they were inspected a few years ago during one of the summer excursions, so they may ere long be again visited by this Society, and seen in their new dress and more comely condition.

The fine tower of the grand church of *Melton Mowbray* is now being repaired, under the care of Sir G. G. Scott, R.A.; and, in Leicester, the new churches of *S. Saviour* and *S. Leonard* are progressing towards completion.

One work of architectural and antiquarian interest has been carried out in Leicester during the past year, which calls for more than a merely passing remark, and brief notice: that is, the renovation and refitting of the chancel of the *Chapel of Trinity Hospital*, in Leicester.

A renovation of this Chapel, which had long been in a very unsatisfactory state, has been commenced during the past year under the care, and at the cost, (aided by a few contributions,) of one of our members, Mr. Thomas Nevinson. His liberal offer to restore the chancel having been gladly accepted, he, acting as his own architect, at once commenced the works upon the structure itself. These comprised the opening of the original oak timber roof which had long been hidden from view by an under-drawn ceiling; the cleaning and repairing of all the stone work; a new tile floor, and the introduction of two new windows in accordance with the original design of the Chapel, in the place of two modern ones in wooden frames; and the transformation of what was formerly used as a mortuary, on the north side of the chancel, into the vestry, which was much needed. In this vestry has been inserted a two-light Early English window (*circa* 1250) which formerly belonged to an ancient hospital at Ashby Folville, in this county; and which Mr. Nevinson secured when the hospital there was destroyed many years ago.

Turning to the furniture and fittings of the chancel, many things are found which are of considerable interest to the local antiquary, and a record of which ought certainly to be preserved.

The seats, placed stall-wise, were brought from the chapel of the ancient Hospital of William of Wyggeston, which, until lately, stood on the west side of *S. Martin's Church*. They are of late Perpendicular work and very good of their kind, massive, with rich Perpendicular tracery on the ends and the fronts, and with a very bold moulding on the top: the backs of these seats are formed of particularly good linen-pattern panels brought from various parts of the same demolished hospital, and from the master's house, until recently contiguous thereto.

The pulpit, also from the same chapel, is composed of linen-pattern panels, which, however, are not so good as those at the back of the seats.

The altar rails are made out of some good late Perpendicular screen-work, which, until recently, formed part of the parclose round the font in *All Saints' Church*, Leicester, for which it had been adapted, most probably, from the rood-screen there, or from some side screen in that church.

The credence is formed partly out of old carved oak, found some years ago under the floor of the pews in *S. Mary's Church*, Leicester, and partly from carved oak, from *Wyggeston's Hospital*.

The floor tiles placed within the altar rails were found in various parts of the restored chapel. They are varied in design; several sets of four, form the arms of *Henry, Duke of Lancaster*, the founder of the hospital, in 1371.

The altar table, which is entirely new, is of oak, in the Perpendicular style, to accord with the seating; it is, however, much richer in design.

It will be seen that Mr. Nevinson has not only carried out the work with his

usual care and liberality as regards the structure, but that the chancel really forms what may be termed an architectural museum of no mean local value.

This record of so good a renovation would be incomplete without a notice of the ancient armour which has for so long, and is still, suspended from the walls of the chancel.

There are six suits, each consisting of headpiece (a morion or sallett) gorget, breast and back piece, and a halberd; and one suit consisting of helmet with visor, gorget, breast and back plates, and defensive armour for the arms, with gauntlets and sword and buckler. This armour probably belonged originally to the town watch or patrol, as it has the town arms painted upon the buckler and upon the staves of the halberds. It appears to be of the date of Elizabeth, but has been altered and repaired at various times, and notably during the Commonwealth. The hilt of the sword is modern. The gorget or buckler is old—of the date of Elizabeth or earlier; it was not even then used in warfare; the heads of the halberds are old, but some of the staves have been renewed, and would appear to have been used much later than the defensive armour. Indeed, halberds were used until comparatively recent times, on certain occasions—in processions, at proclamations, &c., &c. The Town Records would probably give information respecting this armour; it is only noticed here to record its preservation.

In the earlier years of this Society your Committee occasionally reported with satisfaction the advance in domestic architecture, as shown in the erection in Leicester of a single office or warehouse in a more pleasing style than that previously adopted for such buildings in this town. Nothing can show more strongly the rapidly increased commercial prosperity of Leicester during the past few years, than the extent and costliness of its new buildings, for commercial and for public purposes. A record of these—even were such a record within the province of your Committee—would be almost impossible. It may suffice to refer to the new Municipal Buildings, lately completed at a cost of about £42,000.; a new School of Art in connection with the Town Museum, which has cost about £7,000.; a new Banking House, of elaborate design and large proportions, which is said to have cost upwards of £25,000.; several new Board and Voluntary Schools, Wyggeston's Hospital Schools, Warehouses, Offices, and other buildings, many of which claim attention from their imposing elevations and artistic treatment. All these show that even in the short existence of this Society, how great a change has taken place in Leicester, and what scope has been given to the architect for the exercise of his professional skill, and for the display of his artistic taste.

As a mine with constant working will in time be exhausted, so we may expect the subsoil of modern Leicester to partially cease being a mine of Roman relics, which it has been for many years, now that so much of it has been excavated during building operations. From time to time, however, discoveries of interest are made, one of which of recent date has to be recorded. In the month of December last, during excavations in Silver Street, on the site of the new Opera House, a pavement of tesserae was found, at the depth of about twelve feet below the present level of the ground. The tesserae were of somewhat rough make, and apparently formed the floor—about twenty feet by fourteen feet—of a room of secondary importance. Strewn about this were found several pieces of Roman pottery, various in kind. Portions of an *amphora* or jar, and of several *ampullae* or bottles of whitish earthenware, fragments of Samian ware embossed with various patterns, one or two smaller jars, nearly perfect, and a few Roman coins, much corroded, were taken up. Earthenware of a later date was also found, as also an Edwardian coin, and a seventeenth century tradesman's token. It will be remembered that Roman relics have been found at various times between this spot and S. Martin's Church; indeed under that church extensive Roman remains were found when the tower was rebuilt. Further remains of the foundations of the Roman building now uncovered were found when the earth below the contiguous back premises of Messrs. Howcutt and Barwell was removed some years ago. All these discoveries show that a Roman building or buildings of considerable magnitude stood in the locality indicated, at a time when it probably was the main thoroughfare running east and west through the Roman city. These relics are in the possession of the owner of the property, Mr. T. T. Paget, a member of this Society. It will also be remembered that Roman relics, found in excavating in Bath Lane, Leicester, were shown at the September meeting by Mr. G. H. Nevinson.



The following gentlemen were elected members of the Society :  
The Rev. W. H. Sandon, Vicar of Stanford-cum-Swinford ; and  
the Rev. W. M. Croome, Vicar of Syston.

The following antiquities, &c., were exhibited :

By the CHAIRMAN : A plan showing the position of the ancient Roman pavement, recently discovered near Medbourne Bridge, Leicestershire. A volume of maps by Speed.

By MR. J. HUNT, for Mr. J. Spencer ; A leaden seal or *Bulla*. On the obverse were, as usual, the heads of S. Peter and S. Paul ; on the reverse the name of Pope Innocent the Third.

By MR. J. HUNT, for Jas. Bouskell, Esq. : A bill of acquittance to John Manners, of Nether Haddon, by Francis Hastings, of Bosworth, in right of his wife, Dame Maude Vernon, 1583. Amount £215. 14s. 2d.

By MR. J. HUNT : Antique inkstand in the form of a ship.

The following letter relating to the excavations in Bath Lane, referred to by Mr. Nevinson at the last meeting, was received from Mr. E. L. Stephens, the Borough Surveyor :

*“ To the President of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society.*

“ Leicester, January 29th, 1877.

“ Sir,—In excavating for the construction of a sewer in the Bath Lane, Leicester, we came upon walls and other remains, at a great depth below the present surface of the road ; in fact, about level with what was the water line of the river previous to its being dammed up for mill purposes, and they are evidently portions of the outworks of ancient Leicester. I have had a sketch made in plan and section, showing things as we found them, which I hope will be acceptable to the Society.

“ I remain, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“ E. L. STEPHENS,

“ Borough Surveyor.”

Votes of thanks were passed to Mr. Stephens for the excellent plan presented to the Society.

*March 26th, 1877.*

MR. G. H. NEVINSON in the chair.

The following gentlemen were elected members :

Hussey Packe, Esq., Prestwold Hall, High Sheriff of Leicestershire ; Sir Archdale Palmer, Bart., Wanlip ; Rev. Thomas B. Hill, Stonesby, Melton Mowbray ; Rev. Franklin Tonkin, Thurlaston