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Bristol Archaeological Notes For 1906

by J. E. Pritchard
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BRISTOL ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOTES FOR 1906.¹

VII.

By JOHN E. PRITCHARD, F.S.A.,

Honorary Secretary for Bristol.

It is interesting that I can once more begin my annual notes with a reference to prehistoric times, and trifling as is the evidence, it is invaluable to have further traces of the existence of man of the prehistoric Iron Age upon the site on which the Norman town of Bristol grew up.

Members are doubtless quite familiar with the illustrations of the various finds of that period, described in my notes of 1900,² 1902,³ and 1903,⁴ more especially in those of 1900, which recorded and illustrated the first finds of such an early occupation of the small peninsula that was, as it now is, nearly surrounded by the waters of the Avon and Frome.

As the result of constant watching during deep excavating on the bank of the smaller river, principally in the Pithay district, during 1906, I have again been fortunate in obtaining several interesting objects, which I will briefly describe.

The well-pointed and polished bone needles and spindle whorls of the earlier finds just referred to seem to indicate actual occupation, and show that necessary domestic work had been carried on by the owners of those implements ; that is, by the women of the village living upon this marshy site, which has always been considered by Professor Boyd-Dawkins to be one of a group of fortified oppida.

I have pleasure in exhibiting a *small bone pin*, $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches long, which it will be noticed is very crude. The top is slightly broken, and it is difficult to surmise for what purpose

¹ Read at the Bristol Evening Meeting, January 23rd, 1907.

² *Trans. B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, vol. xxiii., p. 270.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 139. ⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 330.

the pierced flat extension was required. It was found at a depth of eighteen feet below street level in July last, and is the only object relating to dress yet discovered. It had probably been worn by one of the "ladies of the camp." (See illustration, Fig. 1.)

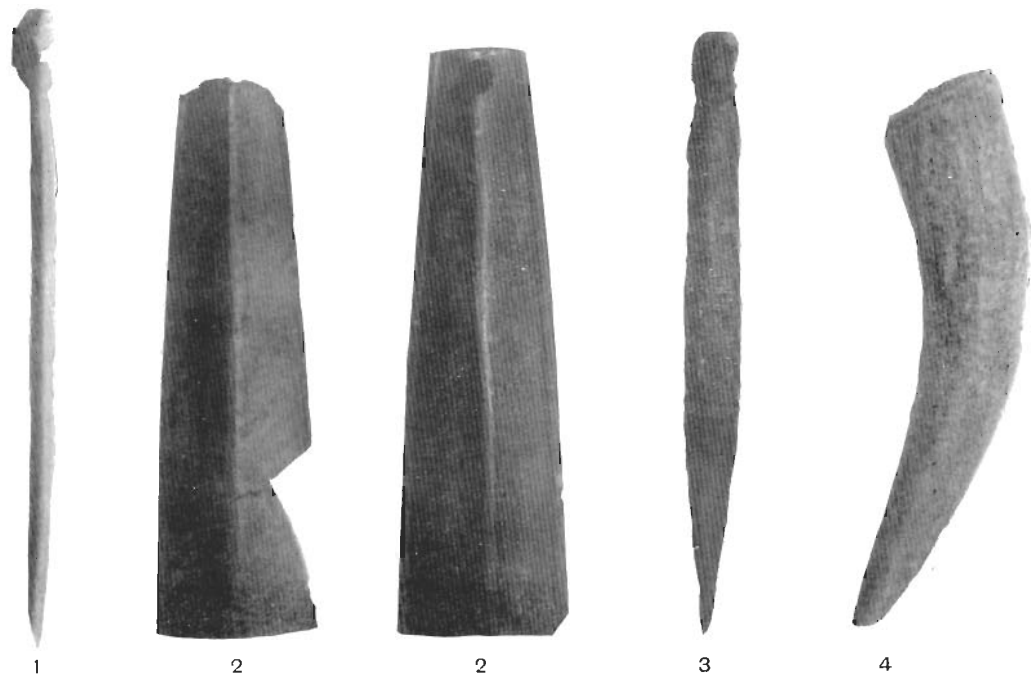
The two bone sides of the *handle of a weapon*, probably a dagger, each $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches long, were found in September at a depth of twenty feet. It is to be regretted that one side was damaged by a blow from the excavator's tool, and that no blade could be traced, but it is clear that the handle had been affixed with iron rivets, traces of which remain. Daggers belonging to the Iron Age rarely turn up, and nothing at all like this handle has been found, even at the Glastonbury Lake Village. (See illustration, Fig. 2.)

Equally interesting was it to secure another *tine tip* (see illustration, Fig. 4) of the red deer. It was similar to those previously discovered, and had been drilled to form the handle of an implement or weapon. A pointed *wood plug*, possibly prepared for some work in carpentry for camp requirements, was also found. (See illustration, Fig. 3.)

And the discovery of the tine of a young roe deer was of great interest, for it is only the second specimen yet recorded from Bristol diggings.

Various other *relics* which have turned up during 1906, at depths of from thirty to forty feet below street level, comprise further fragments of black pottery; horns of the early British ox (*Bos longifrons*), and of the domestic goat; a piece of the trunk of a tree showing undoubted marks of having been chopped out with a tool, and a length of about six feet from another trunk, measuring nearly ten inches in diameter; all of which seem to show certain occupation, and apparently by folk of the same prehistoric age as the Somersetshire Lake Village.

As the demands of rapid building in a crowded city like Bristol always preclude extended investigations, we must wait



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PRE-HISTORIC IRON-AGE OBJECTS FOUND IN BRISTOL, 1906.

for further discoveries as occasions arise in other parts of the ancient area before we can hope to elucidate the mode of life upon this site in prehistoric times.

I had several letters during the year about the danger attending the cromlech at Druid Stoke, Stoke Bishop,¹ on account of the building operations around, but I was assured by Mr. Milverton Drake, the owner of the land, in April last, that the stones in question would not be disturbed nor covered up, which will be a satisfaction to members to hear. It had been hoped that we might be allowed to make some "diggings" around the stones, but the owner prefers that this should not be taken in hand at the present time. At the City Council Meeting on May 8th,² the Sanitary and Improvement Committee reported that an application had been made for diverting the footpath passing close to these stones. In connection with the proposed diversion, the committee were desirous of making an arrangement whereby the Druidical stones standing on the land should be accessible to persons interested, and as the owner readily agreed with this suggestion, arrangements were embodied in an agreement, to which the Council assented.

As I have nothing to report concerning the Romano-British period, let me refer to the miscellaneous FINDS of the year, and begin by describing those found during the work in the south aisle at *All Saints' Church (city)*, which the architect (Mr. Oatley) kindly handed to me for identification, and are exhibited by the kind permission of the churchwardens (Mr. R. H. Carpenter and Mr. John Curtis). The several interesting points which have arisen in connection with the Norman pillars I must leave to Mr. Oatley to record at a later date.

In the first place, a brass *seal-top spoon* [measuring $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches long] with a pear-shaped bowl came to light in pulling about

¹ Seyer (Rev. Samuel), *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, Vol. I., p. 103, with illustration.

² See *Western Daily Press*, May 9th, 1906.

the old vicarage. (See illustration.) The top was originally silvered as far as the bottom of the moulding, and the seal bears

three pounced letters ^{E.T.}_{W.} Now, as the date of the spoon may be approximately taken as *circa* 1635, and the Rev. George Williamson was vicar from 1626 to 1685, it may be assumed that this interesting specimen belonged to his family, as the initial of the surname coincides. It is exceedingly rare to obtain a specimen apparently bearing such interesting identification.

As was quite expected, some sundry *coinage* was found in and about the house, and it included the following:—

Elizabeth Shilling, in poor condition.

James I. Half-crown (1604-25) of the usual type, m.m. a lis, and in fair condition

Charles I. Farthing Token (or Harrington).

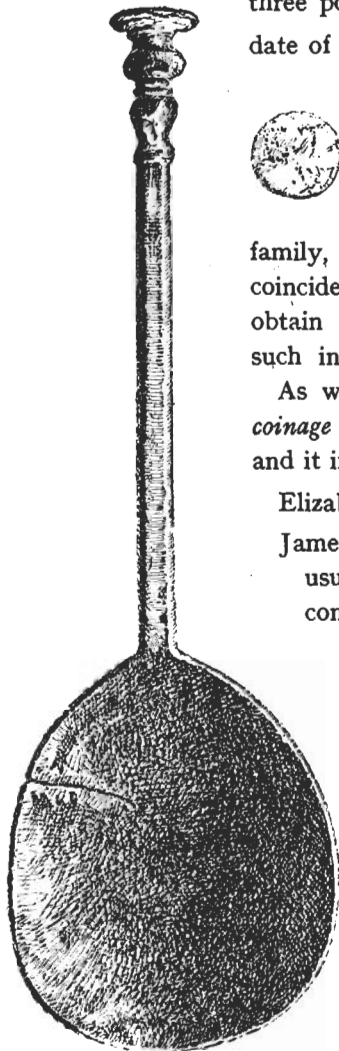
Bristol Circular Farthing, dated 1652, with the letter R. under, for Ramage, the engraver. In unusually fine condition.

Charles II. Farthing, issued in 1674.

William and Mary Half-penny, 1691.

Three Abbey Pieces, too worn to decipher.

Two merchants' Lead Tallies, and a Lead Weight.



A part of a string of small cut Steel Gilt Beads, *circa* 1800, probably French.

These are now preserved in the Vestry.

Then in January, when the roadway of *Lodge Street*, in the parish of St. Augustine, was taken up for the purpose of laying new water pipes, several objects were found :—

A Stone Shot,¹ probably of the fourteenth century, at a depth of seven feet, near the top of the street.

Several seventeenth-century clay Tobacco Pipes of Bristol make.

A fragment of Encaustic Tile, possibly from the site of the Carmelite Church just below.

An Abbey Piece of a somewhat scarce type. The device on the *obv.* a Crown or Coronet, with the legend, "AVE. MARIA. GRACIA. P." On the *rev.*, a foliated cross within a quatrefoil.

With regard to Abbey Pieces, there is still a good deal of mystery as to their original use. It is, however, believed that they were issued only for the use of monks and pilgrims in travelling between religious houses as a passport for admittance. They have been largely found upon and near the sites of such houses, hence their name.

When the thoroughfare at the top of *St. Michael's Hill*, by Highbury Place, was pulled up for a similar purpose in February, it was noticed that the workmen cut through two older roads at lower levels, the lowest being eight feet beneath the present road.

During the work a Stone Shot,² similar to the one found in Lodge Street, and a lead bullet were dug up on the lowest level. Several ancient horseshoes were also found, which probably ranged from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, and a number of fragments of eighteenth-century combed pottery.

¹ and ² presented to the Museum by the writer.

In the garden ground of *The Fort* (Miss Tyndall's residence) close by, a seventeenth-century Buckinghamshire Trader's Token was turned up, which had been issued by one Daniell Sayer of Winslon (Winslow). This bears the arms of the Grocers' Company on one side.

From other excavations in our midst sundry fragments of mediæval pottery, and also of later periods, have turned up, all shedding side-lights upon the domestic life of those times.

Though the usual title appears on this my annual paper, I might have added a supplementary one, for a good deal of what I have to say would be more appropriate under the style of the

PASSING OF OLD BRISTOL,

for during 1906 our losses in examples of ancient architecture have been unusually severe.

A London correspondent in *Notes and Queries* asked two very pertinent questions in a recent number. He said :—

“ Lord Macaulay [in his *Life and Letters*, by his nephew, G. O. Trevelyan, M.P., 1877, vol. i., p. 165] is recorded as saying :

“ ‘ In London, what with the fire of 1666, and what with the natural progress of demolition and rebuilding, I doubt whether there are fifty houses that date from the Reformation.’ ”

“ This was in 1830-2. Are the very few that must remain to-day noted ? and which are they ? ”

Surely we may well ask what would the total of our historic houses be if a careful perambulation of the city was made. And I am inclined to think that perhaps an annual schedule might make us individually more careful in the retention of our old domestic buildings.

We began the year 1906 most disastrously, for on the 15th of January a fire broke out upon the property now known as

Back Hall, anciently called *Spicer's Hall*,¹ when nearly all of the few interesting remains of that great house were destroyed.

It originally faced the Welsh Back, extending towards Baldwin Street in the rear, and appears to have been erected by Richard le Spycer or Spicer, a renowned merchant of the Middle Ages, whose family had held official positions in the city since early in the thirteenth century, when a certain Thomas le Spycer was Prepositor (1223-4).

Richarde le Spicer, with whom we are concerned, undoubtedly an important personage, was three times mayor,² in 1353, 1354 and 1371 or 1372, and represented the city in Parliament in 1355.

Barrett tells us he founded a chantry at St. Nicholas, of the value of £12 7s. 11d.; and according to William Wyrcestre, Spicer founded the Chapel of St. George³ in the old Guildhall, but the remains of the chapel were demolished when the new building was erected in 1843. From the city records we also find that in 1377 Spicer bequeathed his residence and seventeen other tenements in Bristol to the Mayor and Corporation.

Now as Tyson, a noted Bristol annalist, quoting from a MS. under date 1569⁴—says that John Willis, chamberlain of this city, “obtained the Back Hall for a gift to the city; wherein he himself dyed,” we can only assume that there were two properties close together, for Spicer's Hall had been given to the city nearly two hundred years previously. If this was so, the more convenient style of “Back Hall,” from its position on the river-side street, has apparently continued in common use for both.

No records exist as to the size of Spicer's house, and we can only assume from the scanty remains that it was originally

¹ Latimer (John), *History of the Society of Merchant Venturers*, 1903, p. 18.

² See Latimer's list of civic officers, *Trans. B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, vol. xxvi., p. 125.

³ Barrett's *History of Bristol*, 1789, p. 493.

⁴ See Tyson's *Bristol Memorialist*, 1823, p. 44.

a most important pile, erected by this wealthy burgess for his own occupation.

It was entered by an unusually fine doorway,¹ which is in the possession of the city, as pointed out in my notes of last year.

The door itself contains seven panels, with exquisite tracery over. Equally ornate are the carved and shaped side brackets, and the groining springing from the capitals of the side shafts flanking the entrance is also a particular feature of the work.

This woodwork was taken down in 1885, and certain fragments of domestic screen-work within were removed at the same time, though they have disappeared.

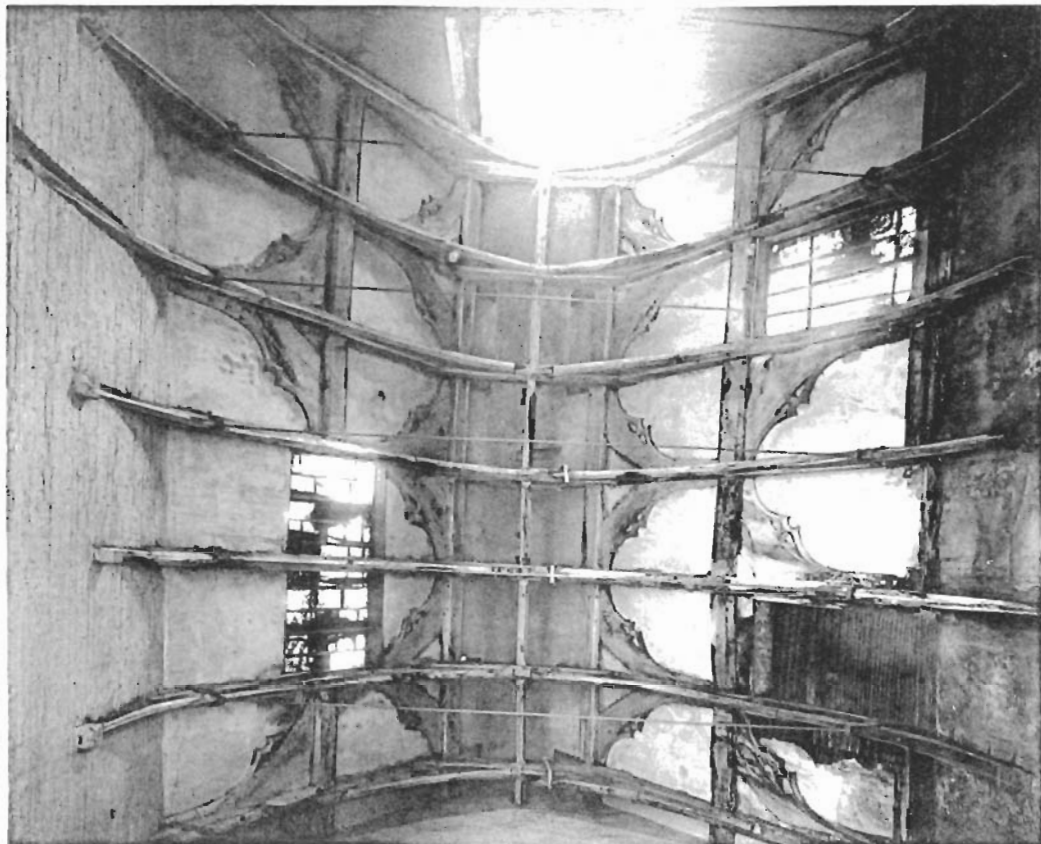
It is futile to attempt a plan of the building, for Seyer, who wrote in 1821, could only offer conjecture as to the use of some of the apartments, and Barrett, who penned his history thirty years earlier, only mentioned the name "Back Hall" once.

With regard to the recent catastrophe, the fire unfortunately destroyed what little remained of the original roofs and floors in the centre of the group of buildings, but the unique *roof* of the apartment considered to be the hall was untouched. (See illustration.) This spacious compartment, which is now used as a warehouse, is situated nearer the Welsh Back than Baldwin Street, and is over thirty feet in height.

It is fortunate that Mr. Dollman, an enthusiastic architect who visited Bristol and saw this interior nearly half a century ago, left some detailed drawings and notes.² After referring to the doorway he said: "The front towards the 'Back,' or quay, is now occupied by small tenements. Proceeding by a passage to a courtyard in the rear of the house, there are on the right hand the remains of the screen forming the

¹ Seyer (Rev. Samuel), *Memoirs of Bristol*, vol. i., p. 366, and plate in vol. ii.

² See Dollman and Jobbins, *Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture*. London, 1863.



entrance to the hall, now entirely bare, deserted, and decayed, the dimensions of which are 32 ft. 3 in. by 21 ft."

Since that time a slice of the hall has been walled off for business purposes, the length being now about 25 ft. 9 in. ; and whereas the roof was formerly divided into ten bays, only seven are left, though traces of the others are visible outside the dividing wall. It is, however, still in its original condition, and remarkably well preserved for its age.

Mr. Dollman further said : " The roof is plain, but good in character, and consists constructionally of principal and common rafters, collar, purlins (the angles of which are chamfered), and moulded wall plate. Under the collar, which is high up between the rafters, is a large main arch, with chamfered edges, resting at the foot on a foliated capital in each alternate truss, the intermediate one abutting direct on the wall. There are two tiers of arched wind-braces, the centres of which alternate one over the other. The wind-braces are traceried, and the general effect is exceedingly good."

If you visit the place you will notice that longitudinally the apartment runs almost north and south. On the west wall the alternating corbels comprise two representing foliage and one grotesque mask-head ; and on the east side one of foliage and two grotesque mask-heads.

Besides the roof, there escaped destruction four carved Dundry-stone corbels, representing grotesque mask-heads, which at a later date had been inserted in the south wall of the central apartment, now in ruins, sometimes described as the dining-hall. My impression is they originally belonged to the apartment just described, where three similar corbels still exist. (One is illustrated as a tail piece.)

As the premises, in consequence of the fire, would have to be rebuilt, I approached Mr. Rowland Adams, the tenant, in April last (as he holds the warehouses on lease from the Corporation), in order to ascertain if he would allow these fourteenth-century carvings to be removed to the Museum,

and he gave a generous and ready release, provided the Estates Committee of the city concurred. Permission having been granted by that body on May 4th, your Secretary undertook to carry out the transfer of the corbels on behalf, and at the expense, of a few members of the Society,¹ and the gift was duly acknowledged on June 29th, in that form, by the Museum Committee.²

In sending these specimens to the Museum and Art Gallery, I expressed the opinion that these interesting heads would form yet another contribution towards an "Architectural Court," which it is hoped will be provided before long.

Another feature of interest exists upon the Back Hall property, for built into a wall on the west side is an "achievement," representing the arms of the city. The carving is probably of the middle of the seventeenth century, but nothing is known of its history. Also on the right side of this panel is a carved emblem of George I. Both these examples have been built into framework of a much later date, and now await their fate.

Two *old inns* have been lost to us during the year, and each possessed an interesting exterior.

The "Rising Sun," at the corner of Lower Castle Street (sometimes called Castle Ditch) and Ellbroad Street, to which I have drawn attention many times, was a very small house, and evidently erected early in the reign of James I. It was doubtless much frequented during the stirring times of the Civil Wars, being situated just without the castle walls.

Those who gazed at it when passing, but had not entered its portals, could never have imagined how interesting was the interior, for externally it had been much altered since its erection.

The accommodation was small, and the rooms were very

¹ Messrs. C. E. Boucher and C. B. Fry, Dr. Harvey, Mr. G. H. Oatley, Mr. J. J. Simpson, and the writer of this paper.

² See Report of Museum and Art Gallery for 1906, p. 42.



Pl. 160.

THE "RISING SUN."



low, but the bar-parlour, on the right hand on entering, possessed a curious stone chimney-piece with a carved centre panel, intended to represent "Adam and Eve," and a smaller panel of an eagle. The typical moulded ceiling divided by a rare oak beam, the walls covered with finely-moulded original panelling in oak, the quaint window of leaded panes, and the unusually wide window-sill together formed a notable interior. (See illustration.)

This room has probably attracted as many artists visiting our city in search of "old-world" corners as any other bit of Bristol, and yet how very few members of this Society knew of its existence.

Now the back kitchen, which was rarely in a presentable condition years ago, and into which visitors were hardly ever allowed to enter, possessed a carved stone chimney-piece exactly three hundred years old, which was quite unique, being late Elizabethan in style, and an unusual specimen, because dated. The shield in the centre of the frieze carries the initials of the builder, and also the date of its erection, T.M.
A.
1606.

On either side of the shield the carving consists of short panels of typical scroll work, and a large Tudor rose. (See illustration.)

Of the bedrooms, the front one at the corner on the first floor must be specially referred to, as besides being largely panelled in original oak, it contained a handsome moulded plaster cornice, representing griffin-like monsters,¹ divided by mask-head brackets. Below this was a carved oak frieze of Renaissance ornamentation, specially noteworthy from the fact that several shields, each bearing the same initials as on the chimney-piece in the back kitchen, intersected the design; but who the builder was I am unable to say.

Largely owing to the inconvenience of the premises, the owners, Messrs. Georges & Co. Ld., made an application to the city authorities in March to rebuild, and this was granted on the understanding that the line of street frontage should be

¹ Similar to those in the Court Room of St. Peter's Hospital.

set back. This necessitated pulling down the two old messuages in Ellbroad Street adjoining in the rear.

By the courtesy of the Board of Directors of Messrs. Georges, the Chairman of the Museum Committee was approached some time in May with regard to the possible destination of the relics from this house, and having personally met two of the directors at the old inn, at their request, a short time previously (April 24th), I feel I am in a position to realise what was the intention of the board when its emissary first required an answer to the question, "What would be done if the relics were given to the city?"

It was unfortunate that the Chairman of the Museum Committee was only able to point out the position the Committee are in as regards space for exhibiting such objects, and explain that the provision of space for the purpose was under consideration. As that reply was not satisfactory to Messrs. Georges, it resulted in a loss to the city collection of the most interesting Jacobian relics, which would have been of distinct educational value.

During August and September the demolition of the old tavern was accomplished, and the remains, which we have been considering, were deposited in a store pending their re-erection in a modern house, now building from a design by Messrs. Paull and James.

The sequel to be pressed home to every member of this Society is this, that an architectural court is a necessity, and all who take a genuine interest in the architectural and historical antiquities of the city should urge the establishment of this.

No additional costly erection is needed, and is it not a well-known axiom that a provincial museum should firstly collect and preserve local antiquities before seeking foreign exhibits?

The properties pulled down in Ellbroad Street were two late *seventeenth-century gabled houses*, with overhanging frontages, and lean-to shelters over the entrances. Two of the gable ends rested on carved brackets, but the third has

been missing for many years. The houses contained four floors and cellar, but there were no features of interest within the buildings.

The "Crown Inn" was the second old tavern demolished last year. It stood on the Broad Weir, and possessed a double-gabled elevation. I understand the workmen came across some portions of a carved chimney-piece in pulling down the principal room, but all ancient decorations had long since gone.

About the middle of June, when workmen were engaged in laying pipes in the roadway fronting the Council House and towards the centre of the cross streets, they cut into the arches of some cellars, and into some massive stonework which appeared to have been a sustaining arch. Unfortunately no objects of antiquity came to light, and no explanation has been forthcoming as to the origin of this masonry.

The timely protest of this Society (in conjunction with the Bristol Society of Architects) last spring to H.M. Office of Works, against the unexpected and extraordinary order for the removal of two *fire-places* from the County Court Offices for transference to London, was reported at our evening meeting on March 21st, and the communications were fully recorded by the Bristol Press¹ on the following day. Judging by the prompt response and most courteous concurrence, we can only presume the order was issued without a full knowledge of our history as a city.

The principal *fire-place* stands on the ground floor of one of the offices of the High Bailiff, in St. Werburgh's Chambers, Small Street, and measures 9 ft. 1 in. high, and 6 ft. 9 in. across. It is of stone, the frieze containing panels of Renaissance scroll work, divided by a centre leaf-pattern truss, with another on each side; and a border of small ornaments below. The overmantel, also of stone, is

¹ Bristol newspapers of March 22nd, 1906.

surmounted by a cornice of scroll work, bearing the Royal arms (before the union) on a shield in the centre, supported by three brackets, which form two panels having strap-work borders. These panels are quite plain, which was certainly not the case originally, and consequently we lose our clue to the exact date of the work, which may, however, be considered early Jacobian.

The other example, standing 5 ft. 11½ in. high, and 5 ft. 5½ in. across, is fixed in an upper office. This stone fireplace is, I think, also Jacobian, but of later date. The frieze is ornamented by heavy scroll-work, having in the centre what Mr. Were terms a crest or badge—a falcon preying on a pheasant—rather than a coat of arms, which is supported by two monsters; and below is an unusual shell-pattern border.

The many coats of paint on both these specimens besides preserving the beautiful carving possibly cover minor details which might solve the question of age.

With regard to the subject of the Dutch House, which has been so fully discussed at our meetings, it is only now necessary to place on record the fact that by the vote of the City Council on October 23rd last, it was decided by fifty votes to fourteen to retain the structure on the present site.

It will be in the recollection of those members who were present at last Summer's Meeting at Bristol, and stood in the guest room of LANGTON'S HOUSE, that I led you to expect further notes upon the subject, illustrated by some pictures by our member, Mr. Moline. He has accomplished his difficult task, aided by artificial light and other resources, and his pictures will illustrate a special paper in a later volume.

The whole of the beautiful interior work of the house has been duly demolished and deported from Bristol, but every particle of the Jacobian remains is to be used in the new house designed by Mr. Lutyens, which is to be hereafter known as

“New Place,” Shedfield, Botley, Hants, where, I am assured by Mrs. Franklyn, every facility will be granted for inspection by those genuinely interested in such things.

Bristol—always spoken of as “a city of churches” and “a city of charities”—could also, in the past, have claimed distinction as a city rich in choice domestic architecture; but, unfortunately, owing to various reasons she has been prevented from retaining many of her priceless treasures.

It is sometimes “sanitation,” which of course claims the first place in city life, particularly in this hygienic age, though often that excuse might sometimes be over-ridden by a little architectural engineering; not infrequently it is “streets improvements,” which are absolutely necessary in a city like ours, when the enthusiastic antiquary has to stand quietly aside; and too often it is the “race for gold,” which allows no time for thought.

But in the present case the loss is due to neither of these causes, for the Jacobian fittings of the Langton House have been taken away from Bristol, at great expense, by the lady who owns the freehold for the purest sentimental reasons.

Mrs. Franklyn rightly felt that no business firm could, in these days of rush, possibly take such care of the architectural features as Messrs. Franklyn, Davey & Co. had done during many years past, and as that firm was quitting the old premises, she thought she would build a country house “expressly to safeguard and display the old work,” where the chimney-pieces and other features would find a “full and worthy setting.”

Though it is greatly to be regretted that everything has gone, we certainly must feel thankful to the owner for her promise to re-erect the principal parts exactly as they have always stood.

It is a most unfortunate loss to Bristol, which will only be realised in time to come; but I am still inclined to believe that if some foresight had been shown, and reasonable space

had been provided within our Museum and Art Gallery precincts for specimens of architectural detail, this exquisite interior work might not now be leaving our midst, nor should we as a city have lost so many similar specimens in the past.

And so, one by one, these priceless relics of our ancient city disappear.



CORBEL FROM SPICER'S HALL.