

## **St. Mary Redcliffe.**

After luncheon a visit was paid to the noble Somerset Parish Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, where the members were received by the Rev. J. de la Bere in the unavoidable absence of the vicar, the Rev. W. J. F. Robberds.

Lieut.-Colonel BRAMBLE acted as cicerone, and said St. Mary's had been described as the finest Parish Church in England. There was a church there in very early times, but the present building was of later date than Norman. The tower at the west end is to a very great extent Early English—thirteenth century architecture. All Bristolians knew that the spire of the Church, except the lower portion, was of comparatively new work. The special peculiarity of this Church, of which there are very few instances, is that there were transepts with eastern and western aisles. There was a choir, and behind that a very beautiful lady chapel. The elaborately groined roof, with its rich bosses, was supported on clustered columns and deeply moulded arches of graceful elevation. In the north porch there were old chests, in which Chatterton alleged that he found the documents which he afterwards translated and published as the poems and history written by one named Rowley. Whether it was so or not, it was now always assumed that they were forgeries of his own. There is a great peculiarity about this porch, in the second story of which there are doorways and a gallery; and it is suggested, and probably correctly, that it was the place where the relics belonging to the Church were exhibited. At Christchurch, near Bournemouth, there are two turrets with staircases, at the eastern end of the Church, one at each corner, and a room between them which was used for the exhibition of the relics. St. Mary Redcliffe Church was not strictly in Bristol: it was a suburb of Bristol, and it was attached to the great Bedminster manor of the Berkeleys. Bedminster had several chapelries attached to it—Redcliffe, St. Thomas,

and Abbot's Leigh; but they had now been separated for a number of years, and constituted as distinct parishes. In the churchyard of Redcliffe there was a chapel known as the \* chapel of Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, and there was also a religious house or hospital near, known as St. John's Hospital, the site of which they would presently see. They would also notice an anchorhold, or, as it used to be called, a hermitage, which was situate on Redcliffe Hill. The popular idea of a hermitage was that someone with a taste for holy living went out into the desert and settled down. There were numbers of such hermits in the East, particularly on Mount Carmel. But in England these people were called Anchorites, and lived in the towns. There was often an endowment for an anchorite in a particular locality, and they frequently performed minor duties in the Church, such as watching or cleaning. Small cells were frequently attached to the Church as the abode of an anchorite. At the Church of Axbridge, on the north of the chancel, are unmistakable signs of an anchorite's cell. There is a lean-to roof, with a narrow window or loop opening into the chancel. There is another room west of the Church, now called the treasury, which might or might not have been a similar cell of an anchorite. The cell which would be seen presently is a small one in the grounds of the hospital of St. John. Many would recollect that when they were excavating at Brandon Hill for the foundations of Cabot's Tower they found remains of the anchorhold or hermitage of St. Brandon. In the eastern part of the Church were some good brasses; amongst them one to Judge Inyne, once recorder of Bristol and Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who died in 1439. There were also two monuments to William Canynges, who was the second founder of this Church, one as a merchant and the other as Prior of Westbury-on-Trym. There was in the north transept a good effigy in chain armour of about 1270 probably, of one of the Berkeleys, and a mural monument under the tower to Admiral Sir John Penn, father

of the founder of Pennsylvania, and a native of Bristol. The Church was at one time almost in a state of ruin, but within the last fifty years it had been restored, and the spire completed. Now it is evidently very greatly cared for. Many old Bristol merchant families were connected with the parish, and they had always been imbued with a spirit of maintaining their churches, a spirit which he had no doubt would long be maintained.

The restoration of the Church, it might be mentioned, a few years ago cost £40,000.

While the monuments referred to by Colonel Bramble were being inspected, he gave a detailed description of them.

The registers of the Church were afterwards inspected, dating from the year 1559. Included in the entries is one of the plague in the year 1645, but particular interest was manifested in the records of the baptism of Chatterton, and the marriage of Coleridge and Southey to two sisters, the Misses Fricker.

Near the north-east corner of the Churchyard there is a monument to Chatterton, with a figure of the poet on the top in his blue-coat dress. As he committed suicide in London his body was not allowed within the precincts of the Church.

### **An Ancient Hermitage.**

After leaving St. Mary Redcliffe Church a move was made to St. John's Hermitage, close at hand, yet hidden behind Redcliff Street, in a corner of the secluded burial ground which the Society of Friends acquired upwards of a couple of centuries ago. With the aid of lighted tapers the Hermitage was explored, and the inscription on its walls deciphered.

### **The Hospital of St John, Bristol.**

The following paper on this subject, written by Mr. John Latimer (who was absent from Bristol at the time of the visit of the Society) was read by Mr. John Pritchard, F.S.A.:

“I have for some time past been seeking to clear up the obscure history of St. John the Baptist’s Hospital, formerly situated in what was called Redcliff Pit, and in some way connected with the neighbouring church of St. Mary; and propose to lay the result of my researches before the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, of which I am an unworthy member. But as the Hospital was formerly a Somerset institution, and may be of interest to some Somerset antiquaries, there will, I hope, be no great impropriety in my first communicating the chief facts I have collected before those who are now honouring this city with a visit.

The date when the Hospital came into existence cannot be precisely fixed. There is indeed a very definite statement in the last edition of *Dugdale’s “Monasticon,”* but it can be proved to be erroneous. Under the heading, “St. John’s Hospital at Bristol,” the writers say: “The chief which we know of this Hospital is from the founder’s charter,” and they proceed to reproduce a charter of King John, confirming a charter granted by him whilst Earl of Moretain, such grant being specifically made to the lepers of Bristol of a croft, “extra portum Lacford,” on the road to Bath. John’s foundation is thus conclusively shown to have been in Gloucestershire, and was in fact the Hospital of St. Lawrence, outside Lawford’s Gate, situated on what is now known as Lawrence Hill, and suppressed by Edward III nearly five hundred years ago. According to the Little Red Book of the Corporation of Bristol, the real founder of St. John’s was one John Farceyn, *alias* Farcey. But the entry to this effect is near the end of that remarkable volume, upon a page of which the two first items are dated 1481 and 1475, so that the statement seems to be merely the record of a tradition. That the hospital was in existence in the time of King John can, however, be proved beyond dispute. In the collection of local deeds belonging to Mr. Jerdone Braikenridge, of Bath, is a charter of Robert de Berkeley, Lord of Redcliff, who kept a



gallows there handy for the summary punishment of felons. His lordship granted to the church of St. Mary Redcliff a well, called Rugewell, with a proviso that the Hospital of St. John the Baptist should have a pipe, of the dimensions of a medium-sized thumb, for carrying water to their building. One of the witnesses to this charter was John, Abbot of St. Augustine's, who died in the last year of King John's reign. The deed was probably executed about 1207.

I have recently discovered in the archives of the Council House four more charters relating to the hospital, of about twenty-five years later date, tending to show that the place was founded for the relief of lepers, inasmuch as its beneficent purposes were administered by a mixed community of men and women. In the mayoralty of James la Warre, who became chief magistrate in 1235, Elena Russell granted to the Hospital of St. John of Redcliff, and to the brothers and sisters thereof, a house in the Marsh of Avon, near Baldwin Street, and some adjoining land, in consideration of religious services to be rendered by the grantees for the souls of her late husbands, her children, and others. By another charter of the same year, this lady made a further grant to the brethren and sisters of all her land in the Marsh, reserving a small quit rent. A third deed, by Adam Havering, attested by several of the witnesses to the above charters, granted in the same way a yearly rent of five shillings; whilst by a fourth, Jordan le Vieke granted the Hospital all the land that his father had in Bristol Marsh. The next document in point of date, which has also escaped the notice of local historians, and is of greater interest, inasmuch as it affords the only information now extant in reference to the erection of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, formerly in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff, is dated 1254, and is in the archives of the Dean and Chapter of Wells. It is an undertaking of the Master and Brethren of the Hospital—the sisters apparently being held of no account—and sets off by stating

that forasmuch as the late Henry Tessum, Precentor of Wells, and Prebendary of Bedminster in Salisbury Cathedral, had built at his own expense the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in the cemetery of St. Mary Redcliff, and had likewise given rents to the Hospital, the Master and Brethren undertook to support the chapel, and to provide a secular chaplain, or one of themselves, to serve therein daily, guaranteeing that the Rector of Bedminster should suffer no loss thereby. The Precentor's munificence was doubtless due to the fact that sufferers from leprosy, and those succouring them, were forbidden to attend the daily services in parish churches. This chapel continued in use until the Hospital was suppressed, and remained in the hands of the Crown until 1571, when it was granted by Queen Elizabeth to the parish of Redcliff for the establishment of a free school. It was finally demolished in 1766.

From another document at Wells, it appears that the Dean and Chapter, in 1306, confirmed a grant made by their Bishop, Walter de Haselshaw, of a portion of the rectory of Backwell, Somerset, to the authorities of St. John's Hospital, on account of their extreme poverty and starving condition. By another deed, in the Council House, dated July, 1322, Thomas, Master of the Hospital, with the consent of the brothers and sisters, sold off some of the Hospital lands in Bristol Marsh, which seems to indicate that the charity was still in financial difficulties. Matters apparently went from bad to worse, for Barrett, without giving his authority, states that about 1442, the community was reduced to the Master and a single brother. The history of the house for the next ninety years is a blank; but the place turns up again in 1534 in a manner characteristic of the age. Queen Anne Boleyn, during her brief reign of favour, followed the example of the courtiers around her, who habitually sold what influence they possessed to those willing to buy it; and on January 20th, 1534, she addressed what was practically a mandate to the

Corporation of Bristol, requiring them to confer the next presentation of the Mastership of St. John's Hospital upon two of her servants and a Bristol grocer named Hutton, asserting that they would appoint a fitting person on the next vacancy. The Corporation obeyed the command with the utmost alacrity, their grant of the presentation, which is copied into the Little Red Book, being executed only four days later, Whether Mr. Hutton, who was doubtless the leading spirit in this transaction, got his money's worth for his money, is uncertain. Nor can the date be precisely fixed when the Hospital came to an end, the deed of surrender to the King having perished. But proof exists that the Corporation made a vigorous but unsuccessful effort to secure the royal plunder. A deputation was sent off to Court, and the two members for Bristol are recorded to have taken great pains before the Court of Augmentations, for which the corporate body entertained them to a sumptuous breakfast, for the small consideration of ninepence. Their exertions were of no avail, for in April, 1544, Henry VIII granted the Hospital and his estates to his physician, Dr. George Owen, reserving an insignificant rent. The buildings seem to have been demolished soon afterwards, and even 120 years ago Barrett was unable to find a trace of them. It is not improbable that the cemetery now belonging to the Society of Friends was adjacent to, if it did not form part of, the Hospital premises. At all events a Hermitage was founded there by Thomas, Lord Berkeley, in 1346, and the hermits' cell, one of the few remaining in England, is still intact, being cut out of the solid rock, and is approached under the original arch.

A few words illustrative of the increasing value of real property in Bristol will bring these dull details to a conclusion. After holding the King's gift for nine years, Dr. Owen, in May, 1553, handed over the Hospital estates situated in Bristol to the Corporation, in trust to expend the income,

which he estimated at about £15 a year, in maintaining additional almspeople in Foster's Almshouse. So recently as 1836 the rents do not appear to have exceeded £150. In the hands of the Charity Trustees, the profits increased by leaps and bounds, and have now reached upwards of £1,500 per annum, the whole being devoted to charitable and educational objects.

### **Temple Church.**

Temple Church was afterwards visited, the party passing the Schools where Chatterton was educated. The visitors were received by the Vicar, the Rev. W. HAZELDINE, who explained the salient features of the building. He said it was a very old church, having been built in 1145, and a small part of it was Norman. After coming from St. Mary Redcliffe Church, with all its ornament, they would notice a great contrast at Temple Church. But there was a nobility about the Temple Church, and many people regarded it as the most historic Church in the city. The tower leaned five feet out of the perpendicular, and this was probably caused by a subsidence of the soil. The Vicar then called attention to the curious candelabra in the chancel. Many persons from America had come to see it, and large sums of money had been offered for it. The Church was remarkable as being one of the churches connected with the Knights Templars. The Church was also connected with the Weavers' Guild, and it contained the font in which Colston was baptised. There were many relics belonging to the Church—MSS. of the fourteenth century, and charters not possessed by many churches. The building had undergone considerable changes, and he (the Vicar) had had the pleasure and privilege of restoring it during his incumbency, now going on for thirty years. That was the third time he had had a visit from the good people of the Somerset Archaeological Society.



Lieut.-Colonel BRAMBLE added a few remarks, and said that in Bristol they had in the old churches every ancient Monastic Order represented except the Cistercians and the Carthusians, who preferred the country districts. There were no transepts to the Temple Church, but there was a nave and north and south aisle. The nave was separated from the aisle by a form of column which was almost unique in that neighbourhood, a group of four three-quarter shafts. The characteristic form in the West of England was a square shaft with large hollow chamfers at the angles and a half or three-quarter circular shaft attached to each face. Wherever they went in Somersetshire they found that form of column. On the north side of the Church was a chapel of the Weavers' Guild, which had a fine hall in that neighbourhood, and whose history had been written by their friend, Mr. F. F. Fox. Near the Church was the house of the Templars, still known as the Great Gardens, and in the south corner was the entrance to the roof-loft. There was some exceedingly fine iron work in the Church, and good wood work, but the gem of the Church was the little brass candelabrum to which the Vicar had alluded. As they had heard, the tower was leaning considerably, but there was no reason to apprehend any danger. The district was at one time a marsh, and they were never able to put up heavy buildings on the ground there without piles, and it was probable that the piles of the tower had given way on the western side, where there would be no collateral support.

The interesting candelabrum in the chancel was afterwards inspected, and it had on the top a figure of the Virgin and Child. The altar was of olive wood made in Jerusalem, and a doorway leading into the Weavers' chapel was noticed, it being mentioned in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. In the vestry were seen some old relics of the fourteenth century, and MS. relating to church property, and dated the thirteenth century.

## **St. Peter's Hospital.**

St. Peter's Hospital was next visited. The Chairman of the Bristol Guardians, Mr. E. M. Dyer, welcomed the party, and Mr. J. J. Simpson, the Clerk of the Board, gave an interesting account of the ancient building. He said that the hospital is one of the most interesting specimens of ancient domestic architecture remaining in Bristol. All domestic architecture of olden times was picturesque in form, and this gabled building will probably be admitted to be one of the most picturesque and characteristic now in existence.

The original mansion is believed to have been erected about the end of the twelfth century by John Norton, and occupied the ground from the churchyard to the river. It remained in the possession of the Nortons for several centuries, and in 1435 it was bequeathed by Thomas Norton to his two sons, Thomas and Walter, by whom it was divided into two tenements. Walter is said to have resided in the western part of the building, and Thomas in the eastern part, and the latter is believed to be identical with one Thomas Norton, who, according to various biographers, was reputed the most skilful alchemist of his time, and claimed to have found out the elixir of life and the art of transforming metals, but who nevertheless appears to have died, and to have died in poverty. The premises continued in the occupation of successive generations of the same families, till 1580, when Sir George Norton, who then owned the whole, and also the Manor of Leigh (Abbots Leigh) sold it to Henry Newton, Esq., afterwards Sir Henry Newton, of Barr's Court. It does not appear though to have become the habitation of any of the Newton family. The next known owner is stated in 1602 to be Robert Chambers, gentleman, by whom it was sold in 1607 to Robert Aldworth, a wealthy merchant, whose monogram is to be seen on the river front with the date 1612. At the date named this gentleman made considerable alterations and additions, practi-

cally rebuilding the house in the style of the period, for in a later deed now in the possession of the Guardians, it is described as having been "by the said Robert Aldworth erected and new built." The street frontage, with its gables and arabesque enrichments, belongs to this date (1612), and the Court room is also a part of the alteration made by him. There is a very fine tomb in the adjoining Church to the memory of Aldworth, who died in 1634. Although the principal part of the building was reconstructed by Aldworth, a portion of the churchyard frontage towards the east is part of the original building of the Nortons.

From Aldworth's time it was occupied by various families as a private residence, and then became appropriated to trade purposes, being in that capacity first used as a sugar house. It is supposed that this is the place in Bristol visited by the Diarist Evelyn, who in 1654 wrote "Here I first saw the method of refining sugar and casting it into loaves." Then, in 1696, on the Government determining to supplement the coinage at the Tower by the establishment of branch mints in some leading provincial towns, the Civic Authorities pressed the claims of Bristol, and being informed that provision of a suitable house must first be made at the cost of the citizens, it is reported that the Corporation appointed a committee "to make a bargain with Sir Thomas Day for the Sugar House, and the house will find the way to pay the rent." The Sugar House referred to was this building, and it was occupied as a Mint from 1696 to 1698. Finally, in 1698, it passed into the hands of its present owners, then known as the Corporation of the Poor. This body was established, under special Act of Parliament, in 1696, and was the first Board of Guardians formed in England. The Corporation of the Poor, finding in 1697 their Workhouse inadequate, appointed a Committee to select some other building, and this body reported in December that they found "none so fit or convenient for the purpose as the Mint."

Negotiations were opened, and in 1698 it was purchased for £800 from Edward Colston and others, and thereupon converted into a Workhouse for the Poor. The beautiful Jacobean sitting room, erected by Aldworth, was fitted up by the Guardians as a Chamber or Court Room for their meetings, and has been used continuously since October, 1698, for this purpose. This Court Room is a sumptuous apartment, and the plaster ceiling is constructed in square and diamond compartments with floral and other devices, and the deep cornice has a running series of armorial shields supported by griffins. All this was, time after time for a long period, covered with whitewash, but twenty years ago this encrustation of white lime was carefully removed and the entire ceiling emblazoned with colours and gold leafage in supposed accord with the original design. Over this Jacobean ceiling there exists a fine open timbered Gothic roof of fifteenth century date, which appears to have been the canopy of the great hall of the mansion before the reconstruction in 1612, and probably extended from back to front of the building.

The entire premises are now occupied for administrative purposes only by the Guardians, who, finding their Court Room too small for their larger numbers and greatly increased work, are now erecting a new Board Room in the south-western portion of the building, but the present apartment will remain intact.

The Bishop of CLIFTON proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Dyer and Mr. Simpson, which was heartily carried.

### **Church of St. John the Baptist, Bristol.**

The last Church to be visited in the City of Bristol was the Church of St. John the Baptist.

This Church was shortly described by Mr. H. C. M. Hirst, A.R.I.B.A., architect, Bristol, as follows :



This Church, although probably the smallest of all the old Bristol Churches, is by no means the least in point of interest. In the first place its situation is worthy of note. It stands upon or rather forms a part of the ancient city wall, and the archway under the tower is one of the old Bristol city gates. In 1574 Queen Elizabeth, on her visit to Bristol, stopped underneath this arch. The groove of the old portcullis looks as fresh to-day as ever.

The side archways for foot passengers were, however, constructed in 1828. The floor of the Church stands some six feet above the entrance, and beneath, and level with the street on the lower side, is the crypt. This is almost as large as the Church itself, and was formerly the meeting place of the Guild of the Holy Cross, established here in 1465.

Another notable point about this Church is the fact that—like its noble sister of Redcliffe—it was founded by a great Bristol Merchant. The name of Walter Frampton is not so well known as that of Canynge, the great Redcliff founder, but it deserves to be remembered. He thrice occupied the civic chair—in the years 1357, 1365 and 1374. His tomb occupies the north side of the chancel.

The Church, as it stands to-day, was rebuilt in 1388 and following years, a former Church having stood on the site. The first Rector whose name is found was in 1285. William Wyrcester (writing in 1450), speaks of the Church having been built some time before. The interior has undergone some little alteration, and in 1570 the present East wall was built, and a vestry formed behind it. And again later, in 1627, considerable repairs and alterations to the chancel were made.

The altar table is of 1635 date, and the chairs in the vestry about 1650. In the vestry are to be seen a very large number of deeds dating back to 1305, many of them having seals of great interest. These have all been carefully catalogued. An hour glass of elegant design, and apparently of foreign manufacture, still remains in position near the pulpit.

Lieut.-Colonel BRAMBLE said that they could follow the line of the city wall from the Church in both directions, and considerable portions still existed in many parts. A good deal had lately been exposed in consequence of the additions being made to Messrs. Fry's establishment. About the time this Church was built there was a second wall erected beyond it by the river Frome, and there was a strong gateway on each side of the river, and this would have rendered the original wall of less importance as a defence.

The party afterwards visited the crypt of the Church.

This concluded the day's excursion.

### **The Evening Meeting.**

The Dean of Wells (Dr. JEX-BLAKE) presided at the evening meeting, which was held in the Lecture Theatre of the Bristol Museum.

Professor LLOYD-MORGAN, F.R.S., gave a very interesting lecture on the megalithic remains at Stanton Drew, which were to be visited on the following day. His remarks were illustrated by some very good views shown by limelight.

The Chairman, at the close of the paper, thanked the Professor for his interesting address, which he said fully bore out the great reputation the Professor had, and the high position which he filled.

The Rev. Canon CHURCH then read a paper describing the history of the Cathedral Library at Wells,\* which was founded in the thirteenth century, and to which Bishop Bubwith was a very generous contributor. Canon Church particularly dealt with the works in the library of the fourteenth century, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the eighteenth century, and spoke of a visit which Leland made to the Library in 1540.

\* Printed in *Archæologia*, 1901.

The Chairman, having thanked the Canon for his paper, mentioned that the Rev. A. J. Woodforde, rector of Locking, had offered to the Society three of the regimental colours of the East Somerset Local Militia, of just over one hundred years ago.

### **Conversazione at the Museum.**

Afterwards the members of the Society and a large number of friends were the guests of Lieutenant-Colonel Bramble at a conversazione, held in the Museum and Library, by permission of the Museum Committee. In addition to gentlemen whose names have already been given, there were present the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, Judge Austin, Colonel Yabbicom, the Rev. P. A. Phelps, Dr. Rogers, Dr. Watson Williams, Alderman F. F. Fox, Alderman J. W. S. Dix, Messrs. J. R. Bennett, J. Fuller Eberle, C. B. Fry, W. E. George, W. V. Gough, H. C. Hirst, W. W. Hughes, J. G. Holmes, J. T. Lane, E. A. Pritchard, J. J. Simpson, S. Tryon, J. Walls, W. Reid, C. J. Lowe, F. A. W. T. Armstrong, etc.

The various apartments utilised were tastefully furnished and decorated with foliage and flowers.

Special exhibits in the Museum comprised prehistoric implements and weapons, a series of objects from prehistoric sites of Egypt, finds from the Roman villa recently discovered at Brislington, Bristol antiquities, including ancient weights and measures, Bristol china, pottery and glass, the Paul loan collection of objects from Sikkim, Tibet and Nepaul, and the Brereton loan collection of objects from ancient cities of Mexico.

On the staircase and in an upper room were natural history collections; and the library exhibits included early-printed books, Chatterton and other manuscripts, and old views of Bristol and Somerset.

In the Museum a well-balanced orchestra, under the direction of Mr. G. A. Webb, gave a delightful concert, and a couple of rooms were set apart for refreshments.

The gathering proved of a most enjoyable character, affording opportunity for the interchange of social courtesies under eminently pleasing conditions, and the indebtedness of the Society to Lieut.-Colonel Bramble found felicitous expression.