

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY



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JANUARY 1951 TO DECEMBER 1951

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PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 435

STATISTICAL MECHANICS

LECTURE 1

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THE IRON GATE AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE GROUNDS OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE FROM TRINITY PIECE

J. S. BOYS SMITH, M.A.

MISS CATHERINE E. PARSONS, in her paper on 'Horseheath Hall and its Owners' (*Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, vol. XLI, pp. 1-50), quotes a contemporary advertisement of the final sale, in the summer of 1777, of articles in and about the Hall. The items advertised included 'Large iron gates, railing and iron-work'. Miss Parsons writes (p. 47): 'The large iron gates above mentioned are those which found a home at the back entrance of Trinity College, Cambridge.' This statement is incorrect. The Trinity gates did indeed come from Horseheath Hall, but they were presented to Trinity College in 1733 by the Hon. Henry Bromley, afterwards first Lord Montfort, Baron Horseheath, father of Thomas, second Lord Montfort. The evidence for this is given in Willis and Clark, *Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. II, p. 644, where entries in the Trinity College accounts for 1732-3 are quoted containing particulars of the cost of carriage and erection of the gates.

Miss Parsons's paper, however, throws a welcome light upon another Cambridge gate—the iron gate which now stands at the southern entrance to the grounds of St John's College from Trinity Piece. There is reason to think that this gate was bought at the sale at Horseheath Hall in 1777 of which she writes.

The evidence concerning the St John's gate is as follows. The gate was erected in its present position on the northern boundary of Trinity Piece in 1822. The decision to remove it to that position is recorded in a College Order of 4 July 1822. It had formerly stood near the inner, or northern, end of the narrow strip of land, now a gravel walk, which lies between the ditch that forms the eastern boundary of the Fellows' Garden (the 'Wilderness') of St John's College and the ditch which forms the western boundary of Trinity Meadow. Its removal to its present position was a part of extensive alterations¹ carried out in the grounds of St John's in 1822, made possible by the incorporation in the grounds, under the Inclosure Award for the Parish of St Giles of 1805, of certain additional pieces of land, of which this narrow strip, formerly unenclosed, was one. The gate had been set up in its former position in 1780. A College Order, dated 19 February 1780, reads: 'Agreed that the blue gate

¹ I have described these alterations, not recorded by Willis and Clark, in *The Eagle: a magazine supported by members of St John's College*, vol. LIII, no. 235 (August, 1949), pp. 147-61.

at the end of the Bachelors' walk,¹ leading to Trinity, be taken down, & the Iron gate, [*deleted*: lately bought at Lord Montfort's sale,] be put up in its place.' The deleted passage in this Order can be read with certainty, except that some letters of the proper name are difficult to decipher under the heavy pen-strokes of the deletion. Professor J. E. B. Mayor, who printed the Order in his edition of Thomas Baker's *History of the College of St John the Evangelist* (1869), p. 1086, line 14, read the name as 'Mountfort's'; but there can be no doubt that 'Montfort's' was intended. What is probably the same gate is mentioned in an entry in the College Rental of 1778, which reads: 'Mr Jackson for an Iron Gate & carriage of Do £36. 18. o.' There is no clue to the identity of this Mr Jackson, but he may perhaps have been a dealer who had bought the gate at the Horseheath sale in the previous year. This would afford an explanation of the deletion of the words from the College Order: the gate, though bought at Lord Montfort's sale, had been bought by the College, not at the sale, but from Mr Jackson. But, whatever may have been the reason for the deletion, the words deleted afford strong evidence for thinking that the gate had come from Horseheath Hall at the sale in 1777.

At three points both on its outer and on its inner face the gate to-day carries the device of a Tudor rose and three fleurs-de-lis. At first sight, the presence of this device seems to cast doubt upon the connexion with Horseheath Hall and to suggest that the gate was made for the College. But the same device is found on the large iron gates at the main entrance to the grounds of St John's College from Queen's Road, which were put up in 1822 as part of the extensive alterations already referred to. The roses and fleurs-de-lis on these latter gates are identical in form and size with those on the gate which now stands on the north side of Trinity Piece, and the two sets must have been made from the same moulds. There can therefore be little doubt that the device was added to the Trinity Piece gate in 1822—the device in each of its positions is attached by rivets and not cast with the gate—when the gate was moved to its present position, and the device has therefore no bearing upon the origin of the gate. The gilded crest, an eagle, was probably added at the same time, or possibly in 1780 soon after the gate was purchased.

Thus, by a strange coincidence, the Trinity gates, which came from Horseheath Hall in 1733, and the St John's gate, which seems to have come from Horseheath Hall in 1777, stand to-day within a few yards of each other, one on the eastern, the other on the northern boundary of Trinity Piece.

¹ The Bachelors' Walk is the walk on the south side of St John's Meadow, adjoining the ditch which separates St John's Meadow from Trinity Meadow. David Loggan, in 1688, shows a gate—perhaps the 'blue gate' of the College Order—at the western end of this walk at the point at which the iron gate was set up in 1780. The walk is described as 'leading to Trinity' with reference no doubt to the route by Trinity Piece. There was at that time no direct route from the St John's grounds to the Trinity grounds. The present iron footbridge adjoining the river was placed there in 1874, and was then an innovation.

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