

The form of the Stone is three-square, and picked in the end ; in colour outwardly blackish, somewhat like iron : crusted over with that blacknesse about the thicknesse of a shilling. Within it is a sort of a gray colour mixed with some kind of minerall, shining like small peeces of glasse. This stone brake in the fall : the whole peece is in weight nineteen pound and a halfe. The greater peece that fell off weigheth five pound, which with other small peeces being put together, maketh foure and twenty pound and better.

It is in the countrey credibly reported that some other Thunder stones have bin found in other places. But for certainty there was one taken up at Letcombe, and is now in the custody of the Shrieve."

---

## **Bisham Abbey.**

*By Ernest W. Dormer.*

*(Continued from page 18, Vol. 12.)*

---

The Abbey as it stands to-day is a picturesque mixture of chiefly two styles. The existing portions of the conventual building which add to its beauty are scanty, considering the size of the original structure. The entrance is clearly a remnant of the early days, as is also a two-light window with a rose head above to the East. The porch has a beautiful groined vaulting with moulded ribs and light stone shafts with capitals. The hall, which is said to have been the church of the ancient Abbey, is of commanding size and has a minstrels' gallery in dark carved oak at one end. When it was restored about half a century ago, the original ribbed roof of oak was discovered ; it had been hidden by a plaster ceiling. It is apparent to anyone who has been over the house that much of the work anterior to the Hobys' erection lies buried behind their additions, especially at the eastern end, and although a recent periodical has made light of the fact, it is not a stretch of imagination to say that the turret which we shall read of later and which was "builded" by Sir Thomas Hoby, contains a good deal of the material of the tower which was erected in the 12th century. But the greater part of the erection is Tudor, and the sweetest Tudor

imaginable. The time caressed crenellated gables seen through the trees are a sight which leaves a trace of longing for many a day.

Mr. Edgar Powell has devoted much time and energy with the owner to the history of the Abbey and the Hoby family, and it is due to their careful researches that so much authentic information is now available. The author is able to express himself indebted for much of the following from the preface to the "*Lief and Travels of Sir Thomas Hoby, Kt.*":—

"On the death of Sir Philip Hoby, in May, 1558, Thomas succeeded to the Bisham Abbey Estate. . . . In the year 1557, we learn from the autobiography that Sir Philip had taken in hand some scheme of new buildings at Bisham Abbey which must have been of considerable extent, since it is not till four years later that we hear of its completion by Thomas, who gives some interesting notes as to the nature and progress of the work done. The mansion house at Bisham had been the residence of Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, whose arms impaled with those of her husband, Sir Richard Pole, are still to be seen there in the Council Chamber window; but on her attainder in 1539 the King reserved the place for his own use. In 1552, however, Sir Philip Hoby was allowed to purchase it in fee farm and the surveyor's description of the house at that date is extant. According to this document, it appears that the house consisted of the present hall and Council Chamber and a cloister which formed a square, with several other remains, of which the exact position is not given. It would seem probable that the cloister, of which only one side now remains, extended eastwards, as foundations have been found of late years in that direction. Thomas Hoby, no doubt, pulled down this cloister and the lodgings about it and used the material for his large additions on, the north side of the hall, where he tells us the turret was built in 1560. The fact also that his arms impaling those of his wife appear over the fireplace in the tapestry room, seems to point to his being responsible for the room on the south side of the hall as well. The monastic buildings were quite independent of the mansion and were situated on the north side of it, nearer the moat, where foundations may be clearly traced in a dry summer. It is also interesting to note that as early as 1552 the Abbey hall and Church had been completely swept away. In 1561 the new structure appears to have been finished and the house to have assumed very much its present form, and in the following year the gallery was put up at the west end of the hall, decorated with noblemen's arms, which unfortunately are not now visible."

The room called Elizabeth's Council Chamber is, as its name implies, the room in which Her Majesty held a Council. It remains to-day as it was altered for her reception with the large bow window and the associations of over three centuries blended in its walls. It is a most interesting room apart from a very pleasant situation and its royal memories. The windows contain some ancient heraldic glass, which was removed from the church. Among the shields are those of Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who died in 1343, Sir Richard Pole, and Cecil, Earl of Exeter.

In the great hall is hung the very fine tapestry, illustrating the story of Tobit from the Apocrypha. Until recently and for over a hundred years, the hangings were attached to the walls of a bed-chamber, from which access is given to the secret chamber by a small door on the right of the fireplace with the Hoby arms. Slits were cut in the material to allow the door to be opened. The design and workmanship of the secret room leaves little doubt that it is part of the Tudor erection. To prevent any possibility of even the most minute observer's suspicions being aroused, the chimney from the fire place was skilfully connected with that of the hall. Another very interesting piece of work in this room is the arch of a door which must have been part of the old conventual buildings. It is clearly a very early arch, and the imposts have been destroyed.

But to return to the tapestry. It had evidently been disposed of in the bedchamber for convenience, as the room was much too small, and it was mutilated and worn in the attempt to make it fit the walls. It has been cleaned and restored by experts, and now hangs where its beauties can be appreciated. It is of Brussels origin, and was evidently manufactured in the first part of the 16th century. There is a record that Sir Philip Hoby was commissioned to buy tapestry for Henry VIII. in Brussels, and this may account for the presence of the very fine set at Bisham, for, as we have seen, the King held the Abbey for some time for his own residence, and possibly contemplated making it a more permanent country seat. It may have been part of the furnishing of the Abbey for Anne of Clves. "In few tapestries is there finer drawing or nobler types of heads, and that of young Tobias might pass for a youthful portrait of Michael Angelo," says Mr. Thomson, the expert.

*(To be continued.)*