Excursions Reports

10 June 2017 Visit to Addington and Steeple Claydon

Addington House

On 10 June 2017, the Society visited Addington House, the original manor house of the Addington, near Winslow. The property was purchased at auction in 1854 by John Gellibrand Hubbard, a Russia merchant, who had no previous connection with Buckinghamshire. He proceeded to build a magnificent multi-gabled mansion called Addington Manor, 100 yards south-east of Addington House, which was then reduced to the status of a dower house.

J.G. Hubbard was M.P. for Buckingham from 1859-68 and was created Lord Addington in 1887. His son Egerton Hubbard was M.P. for Buckingham 1874-80 and for the North Division of Buckinghamshire 1886-9. After the collapse of the Lord Addington's import and export business, the Hubbards left Addington Manor and moved to the smaller Addington House. Although Addington Manor was demolished in 1928, Addington House survives as three separate residences. One of these beautiful houses is now occupied by Pat Sturgess who provided us with coffee on our arrival.

Addington Church

We next moved to Addington Church, rebuild at the expense of J.G. Hubbard in 1856-8. Our guide was local expert and BAS member David Critchley, who gave us an admirably succinct account of the evolution of the building. We then called at Seven Gables, a smaller Arts and Crafts house built for J.G. Hubbard's daughter Rose Hubbard.

After lunch in Winslow we moved on to Kingsbridge, a farm in Steeple Claydon bought by the Hubbards in 1864 and adapted as a residence for J.G. Hubbard's son Cecil John Hubbard about 1903. In the 1930s Kingsbridge was the home of his daughters Muriel, Hilda and Irene Hubbard and then of Aidan Crawley, M.P. for Buckingham. Kingsbridge is now the home of Thomas and Serina Aldous, who showed us their beautiful garden and gave us all a very welcome afternoon tea.

Julian Hunt

Visit to Hanbury Hall and Hagley Hall, 19 August 2017

Hanbury Hall, near Droitwich, Worcestershire, was built for Thomas Vernon in 1701. Its gardens were laid out in the then formal style but in the later 18th century, the original design was abandoned and the landscape was brought right up to the house. The Vernons continued to live at Hanbury Hall until the estate was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1940. We were guided around the property by head gardener Neil Cook, who has researched the evolution of the garden and has spent much of the last 20 years replicating the original formal gardens. A highlight of our visit was to walk through the tunnel constructed so that the Vernon family were saved the inconvenience of seeing gardeners and servants approaching the house.

In the afternoon, we moved on to Hagley Hall, near Stourbridge, built in 1760 for George Lyttelton. The architect was Sanderson Miller, who had already helped design the landscape garden and built a 'ruined' castle on the hillside above the house. Hagley was in the vanguard of garden design and used an existing stream running down from the Clent hills to form ornamental lakes, cascades and leafy valleys. By the mid 20th century, much of the original garden had been lost to the encroaching woodland, but the estate is now being opened up and a new visitors' centre is planned. Our guide

The Ruined Castle in the Park at Hagley Hall

here was head gardener Joe Hawkins, a man of many words and great energy, who has dredged the ponds, reconstructed the cascades and rebuilt the obligatory Palladian bridge. He stopped occasionally to quote the inscription from a long-disappeared seat, or to repeat a contemporary description of some romantic grotto. He even showed us remnants of solid glass dating perhaps from the 17th century when the Hagley stream was used to power the bellows for a glasshouse.

Hagley Hall

Julian Hunt

Church Crawl

Left: Chancel at Hughenden St Michael and All Angels church.

Right: stained glass at Holy Trinity, Hazlemere.

For our 2017 23rd September Church Crawl, I chose rather a different type of day, as only two of our six churches had origins from before the 19th century. However, I explained that as our day progressed, we would find that a lot of the churches had strong historical connections with each other. We started in the very Victorian setting at Hughenden with St Michael and All Angels church. Hughenden Manor is well known as the home of the author and politician Benjamin Disraeli, who had close connections to many well-known people including Queen Victoria. I reminded everybody that Thea Van Dam had given us an intriguing look into much of Disraeli's Correspondence with her "My Dearest Ben" Bucks Papers No 16. However, as Lord of the Manor, Disraeli's influence is much in evidence in the church as well. It is often known as the 'Church in the Park' which describes its setting very well. The church's origins date from the 12th century, although now the only recognisable feature from around that time is the splendid font. Medieval churches that are near a grand house, but rather isolated from 'ordinary' houses, often originated for a community that was later swept away to make room for parkland. But this was not the case at Hughenden, which originally served a very large parish spreading across the surrounding Chiltern hills. The oldest parts of the church are the 13th century walls of the chancel and the north chapel, with the 14th century arcade between them. They stood unaltered, with a much smaller nave and tower (that partly obscured the Chancel), until the 1870s. Then Sir Arthur William Blomfield was commissioned to build a new nave with north aisle and tower. They were mainly built in the Geometrical Decorated Style. The church's overall character is now Victorian, especially with the ornate decorations of the chancel, done in memory of Disraeli. Hughenden church is known for its 'fake' monuments of the Wellesbourne family, who took existing medieval monuments and re-cut them in the 16th century. However I think that Hughenden should also be known for a fine early 19th century wall monument by George

Garrard to Ellen Countess of Conyngham. It was moved from the chancel to the tower in the late 19th century. I had asked for the base of the tower (now a vestry) to be open so we could see the monument, but I am afraid it was not. Whilst we were there, I also mentioned Sir Philip Rose, a friend of Disraeli, and his lawyer, who we would come across that afternoon.

We then moved to the church of St Francis of Assisi at Terriers, where we were made very welcome and treated to morning coffee on arrival. The church was built in 1930 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Its scale and height bear a resemblance to his vast Liverpool Cathedral, and was quite a surprise to those who had not seen it before, or even heard of it. It was built before most of the housing that grew up the hill from High Wycombe, and the earliest photo shows it standing on its hilltop, virtually on its own. The view from the east of short transepts, chancel, and stair turret clinging onto the tall tower I find impressive. The outside is all flint with ashlar dressings, and the inside is all plastered. It is now known that the structure of all the walls is mainly concrete. The whole interior shows a wonderful control of lighting. The nave is lit by small windows in the west wall and long continuous windows in the aisles, but the tall walls of the nave have no clerestory windows. The chancel is lit by windows at the sides and also originally by a lantern tower effect. In very recent years a huge amount of expensive work has been done to the church to prevent water getting into the walls which was starting to destroy the building. The Vicar described the scale of this work for us, and I was delighted to see that he had also arranged Scott's original drawings of the church for us to see.

Our final church of the morning was just a mile away, Holy Trinity at Hazlemere. In the early 1840s, the area was part of Hughenden parish, and as part of Wycombe Heath was described by some as a wild and ungodly area. Two sisters in High Wycombe decided that a church would benefit the people of the local area, and launched a fund to build a new church. The new church was built of light brick in the short-lived Norman Revival style, and certainly had accurate features replicating Norman details from 700 years earlier, such as round top windows, corbel table, small apse, and ornate west doorway. It had 7 bays including one with a gallery, and was consecrated in 1845. In the 1930s the interior was re-furnished, but by the end of the 1940s the church needed to be enlarged. Work was started in 1957, when another 3 bays were added to the east end of the nave, and a new apse was built. Extra rooms were built around the north and west sides with a narrow but tall tower at their corner, which also acts as an entrance porch. In recent years the interior has been made into a flexible space, with the removal of all the furnishings which even included the font. A feature I was keen to point out was the stained glass. There are 3 James Powell windows of the 1890s in the apse, which previously must have been in the original apse. In the nave there

is a 1923 Morris & Co window, and also a series of 20 Goddard and Gibbs windows which date from 1949 through to 1963. There appears to me that there was a sudden enthusiasm to have all the original windows filled with stained glass before the church was extended, as 12 of them were fitted in 1956 and 1957.

After pausing at lunchtime in New Beaconsfield, our first church in the afternoon was Holy Trinity at Penn, certainly our oldest church of the day. The font is Norman and the walls of the nave undoubtedly date from the Norman Transitional period of the late 12th century. No architectural features survive from that date as they have all been replaced, and the outside of the north wall is an intriguing patchwork of different features from many centuries. The church was enlarged in the 14th century by building the west tower, and cutting an arcade from the south wall to open into a new south aisle. The chancel would also have been rebuilt then, with its floor covered in the local Penn tiles. A reconstruction, by Miles Green, of how they could have looked was in the Vol 45 of the Records. I was very pleased that when we visited, the local historian and prolific writer Miles Green was at the church to meet and talk to us. Soon after 1400, the church was literally given a lift by raising the walls (inside you can see the thinner parts above) and fitting a new Queen Post roof, which we can still enjoy 600 years later, resting on its original stone corbels.

The Doom at Holy Trinity Church, Penn

The new roof made the space above the chancel arch for the famous Penn Doom, with parts of two versions visible, from 1430 and 1480, amazingly just rescued before being destroyed in 1938. The chancel was rebuilt in brick after a fire in 1736, but the east wall was then rebuilt in 1865 in very Victorian flint-work, but fortunately that was never extended around any more walls of the church. Holy Trinity has some fine wall monuments of the 18th and 19th centuries commemorating members of the Penn, Curzon and Howe families. There are also earlier brasses which were revealed for us to see. The most visible work from the 20th century must be seven stained glass windows.

A very short journey took us past the entrance to Rayners, and to the Church of St Margaret at Tylers Green. The large house called Rayners was built by Philip Rose in 1846, which

stayed with his family until the 1920s, then used as a school until 2015. Philip Rose was a lawyer, particularly involved with the expanding railway network. As a friend and adviser to Disraeli, he had assisted with the forming of a new parish at Prestwood. He had also seen Earl Howe build a new church at Penn Street, when Rose soon took over the squire's pew at Penn church. Rose wanted his own estate with the status of Lord of the Manor, and some control over a local territory.

Church of St Margaret at Tylers Green.

Tylers Green was part of Penn parish, where the church was very neglected at the time, so Rose sought to establish a new parish of Tylers Green, so he could then build his own new Parish Church. This was eventually agreed, and the architect David Brandon was appointed in 1852, with the church opening in 1854. The nave is still as it was built, with Early English lancets all containing glass in a similar style by Mayer & Co with nine from the 1880s and one from 1907. Incidentally Brandon's only other new church in Bucks is Bledlow Ridge, which we visited in 2015, that has an East Window by Mayer & Co. The slender tower at Tylers Green was added in 1890, but in 1932 the architect Charles Henry Biddulph-Pinchard completely remodelled Brandon's chancel and enlarged the sanctuary. The 1932 eastern rose window was given some striking new glass in 1965, designed by Terence Randall, and made by Faith Craft Studios.

Our final church of the day was another Victorian one, at Coleshill near Amersham. Local people had been requesting their own church for over 200 years to save them the journey to Amersham, or Beaconsfield. However, it was not until after Coleshill was transferred to Buckinghamshire in 1844 (having been a detached parish of Hertfordshire) that it was agreed to build a chapel-of-ease at Coleshill. The architect was George Edmund Street, the Diocesan Architect, and I am always an admirer of the fairly plain style of his work, but always done in a sturdy way that make furnishings and roofs look as though they are going to last a long time. This is certainly the case at Coleshill with its typical heavy Street pulpit, and its very fine Double Arch Braced Roof. However, particularly in his new churches, Street often adds some subtle decorative features which I think are evidence of the beginnings of the Arts and Crafts movement. This is particularly apparent on the north side of the Chancel

at Coleshill. The chancel has three windows by John Hardman Powell which were installed just in time for the church's consecration. The east window has the unusual distinction of being donated by the same person who it is dedicated to, Rev John Tyrwhitt-Drake the

Rector of Amersham, who died 17 months before Coleshill church was consecrated in November 1861. His will had directed that he should be remembered by a window in the new church rather than a monument in the churchyard. Thanks to the kindness and hospitality of the people of St Michael and All Angels Church at Coleshill, we were able to finish our day with tea. We completed our day's journey feeling very safe in the competent hands of Jamie, our young and very polite driver who also took a great interest in our excursion.

Michael G Hardy