

CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER BUILDING
SOCIETY

TUDOR PANELLED ROOM - GLOUCESTER
OFFICE

The handsome mantelpiece was cleverly constructed by Mr. Howitt from old wood-work found in this part of the house at the time of its restoration by Mr. Fisher. It contains three of the original linen-fold panels with carved medallions representing the heads of two females and a male, six twisted ballusters, or rails, from the staircase which led up from the rooms below, and the following remarkably good imitations of ancient carvings executed by Mr. Howitt: - the royal supporters of Henry VIII, a greyhound and dragon bearing shields on which the Tudor red and white rose and the pomegranate appear crowned and between them, on smaller shields, the arms of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester.

A sword in pale, point downwards, surmounted by two keys in saltire.

A device found on the impression of a seal used by the Provosts of the City of Gloucester about A.D. 1200:- "A castellated building with central tower with conical roof, and two tall embattled towers. The central tower has a large round-headed doorway with a quarter-foiled window or opening over it. On the field are two stars in chief, and the River Severn in base.

The seal of the first Mayor of Gloucester.

The arms of William Parker of Malvern, last Abbot of Gloucester.

In the centre of the mantelpiece, immediately above the fireplace, Mr. Howitt has carved the monogram of the then proprietor, Mr. J. Ambrose Fisher.

Above the sideboard, at the opposite end of the room, Mr. Howitt has constructed a similar over-mantel from five original panels and six ballusters and has added the following devices, which he has himself carved:

The seal of the Bailiffs of Gloucester, of the time of Edward III, for the recognizances of Debtors.

A device on a seal of the Bailiffs of Gloucester.

The earliest of the five corporate seals used successively by the City of Gloucester, bearing a conventional representation of the City.

The second seal of the City of Gloucester.

A device used by the early Mayors - a pair of maces in saltire.

The arms granted to the City by Christopher Barker, Garter King of Arms, on the 18th October 1538.

And now for the original carvings, commencing with the medallions above the fireplace:

1. A female head in profile, within a garland and spandrels. The coif or close fitting cap has a fillet ornamented in the same way as the garland with repetitions of the letter I, which may possibly be the initial of Joan, the Lady's christian name. The marks on the coif represent jewelled ornaments, or slashes through which the hair may be seen.
2. Instead of a garland, this lady has a somewhat vain motto: BE HOLDE MI FASE. The coif is adorned with a classic fillet and border, and is apparently slashed. The lady wears a partlet or habit-shirt also slashed and a gown with full sleeves, perhaps of "velvet cut, and lined with cloth of gold, made after the fashion of Savoy." The medallion which corresponded to this one has unfortunately needed restoration.

3. A male head in profile, with a garland and spandrels corresponding to those of No. 1. The twisted fillet or chaplet round the brow reminds us of the obverse of a Roman or Greek coin. The ornament, like the letter I, is also to be seen on the garland and may be the initial of a man's name.
4. Mr. Howitt has substituted for a missing figure a cinque-cento shield bearing a sword in pale, point upwards, on the point a cap turned up with emine, between two horse-shoes in chief, and six stub nails in base. These are thought to be the arms borne by the Mayors of Gloucester during the reigns of Richard III, Henry VII and Henry VIII, previously to the new grant of arms in 1538.
5. A gryphon passant, with wings displayed. This mythical beast had the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. It may be intended here for a combination of the English lion and the Spanish eagle.
6. Mr. Howitt, in the place of a missing carving, has represented an unfortunate man, bound head, hand and foot to the tail of a she-devil.
7. A sea monster, half man, half fish, with a two fold tail, composed of conventional foliage. In his hands he brandishes a club and leaf shaped shield.
8. A similar monster of the female sex, with a mace and shield, preparing to attack her mate.
9. The lamb and flag. The Agnus Dei was a sacred emblem used by wool merchants, to denote their occupation. The merchants' mark of the Middle Ages, such as we find at Northleach, Cirencester, Chipping Norton, Burford and elsewhere on the Cotswolds, resembles a cross with short legs and a streamer attached to the shaft. This streamer was an adaption of the cross and banner borne by the Agnus Dei. The presence of this emblem here implies that the owner of the house traded in wool or woollen goods.
10. The garland and oak-leaf spandrels are original. Mr. Howitt has filled in the space which was once perhaps occupied by the bust of the master of the house, with a spirited head of Henry VIII.
11. A vase with branches and fruit. Here, as elsewhere, we may detect a playful allusion to the pomegranate, a badge of Queen Katharine.
12. A shield bearing "a bend between three stags, in chief three barrulets." No such heraldic bearing is to be found in any work on heraldry; but, for all that, these arms may have been used by the owner of this mansion, or by a guild of which he was a member. Perhaps these are the arms of a local guild of leather sellers, with bend and barrulets for difference.
13. A cloud radiated, adorned with a triple crown. This is the badge of the Draper's Company: the arms granted to them in 1439 being azure, three clouds radiated proper, each adorned with a triple crown or. But what are the tassels at the side? The part of Westgate Street from Grace Lane to the Cross was called the Coifery, or Cap-maker's Row. Was a tassel the badge of a Coifier? If so we can understand why the ladies in Nos. 1 and 11 wear such excellent head-dresses.

14. On a shield a love-knot binding together two arrows and two cross-bow bolts, and forming the letters H and K, each cord terminating in a heart. On the dexter side of the shield there is a Tudor Rose, (the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York combined) and on the sinister side a pomegranate, both ensigned with a Royal Crown.

This device, or rather group of devices, carries us back to the earlier years of the reign of Henry VIII, when as yet he retained his love for Katharine, his first and truest Queen.

15. The Royal Arms of England: France and England quarterly, with a greyhound and dragon as supporters. Henry VIII, in the earlier part of his reign, used the same supporters as his father, Henry VII had used, i.e. a red dragon on the dexter side, and a white greyhound on the sinister side.
16. A portcullis supported by lions. A portcullis was an additional defence for gateways in mediaeval fortresses. It was drawn up and let down by chains, and moved in a groove constructed in the side walls, as may be seen at Chepstow Castle.
17. The monogram T.P., the letters being linked together with a tasselled cord.
18. The lion of England. The earliest example extant of this Royal cognisance is to be found on the first great seal of Richard Coeur de Lion. Only one lion counter rampant is visible on the half shield, but there may have been a second. On the great seal, used by him after his return from captivity, there are three lions passant in pale, as they continue to be borne on the Royal Shield.
19. The red dragon of Wales which, as we have seen, was first the dexter and afterwards the sinister supporter of Henry VIII. The monster appears to be swallowing his own tail.
20. The greyhound of the Somersets, with its head thrust deep into an iron three-legged fleshpot. Similar caricatures are to be found on the misereres in the stalls of Gloucester Cathedral.
21. A conventional pineapple on a stand, with foliage.
22. Queen Katharine's badge: a pomegranate within a garland of fruit and leaves.
23. A two-headed dragon, "dreadful", with the Rose of England on its tail, carved by Mr. Howitt.
24. A sea horse ridden by a child, also the workmanship of Mr. Howitt.
25. A centaur carrying a horn made of shell, a cornucopia or perhaps, as Mr. Howitt has suggested, a lighted torch. These strange mythical creatures of human fancy, combinations of men, beasts and trees are characteristic of the Renaissance of classic art, known as the Cinque Cento, or fifteenth century style.
26. Two grotesque creations of Renaissance Art, made up of masks and foliage and bearing, on what may be imagined to be their knotted tails, conventional fruit.
27. A companion to the last.
28. An eagle with wings extended, regarding the sun. The apostolic eagle was, as we have seen, one of the supporters of Queen Katharine.

29. Two nude figures, winged, one on either side of a tree bearing fruit, possibly a fanciful representation of the temptation of Adam by Eve.

These descriptive and archaeological notes were extracted from a publication dated 1893 written by the Rev. William Bazeley M.A., the then Hon. Gen. Secretary of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.