

PEAK SCENERY
OR THE DERBYSHIRE TOURIST
BY EBENEZER RHODES

1819

Edited by David Trutt

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Part II, Section IX
HADDON VALLEY:
HADDON HALL

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HADDON HALL ILLUSTRATION FROM PEAK SCENERY, VIEW LOOKING FROM THE NORTH

Ebenezer Rhodes published a series of four books (1818 - 1823) detailing his travels in Derbyshire. The second book, containing Haddon Hall, was published in 1819 and includes the details of his personal visit in 1816. He describes the John Manners - Dorothy Vernon marriage with the consequence of passing Haddon to the Rutlands, but there is no mention of an elopement. He does, however, describe author Ann Radcliffe and places her at Haddon Hall. The stories of these visits, made up by the Haddon Hall caretaker, would commonly be told to visitors and were embellished with the passing of time. The caretaker and his wife are providing Haddon Hall with a new allure, perhaps in hopes of increasing the traffic of visitors and the gratuities to be received for showing the building and grounds.

“Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, who was a native of Derbyshire, often visited Haddon Hall, for the purpose of storing her imagination with those romantic ideas, and impressing upon it those sublime and awful pictures which she so much delighted to portray: some of the most gloomy scenery of her *Mysteries of Udolpho* was studied within the walls of this ancient structure.”

Rhodes appears to have been the first to recount the caretaker’s tale of the manacle in the Banqueting Hall.

“On the wainscot we observed an iron fastening large enough to admit the wrist of a man’s hand, and which we were informed had been placed there for the purpose of punishing trivial offences. It had likewise another use, and served to enforce the laws and regulations adopted amongst the servants of this establishment. The man who refused to take his horn of ale, or neglected to perform the duties of his office, had his hand locked to the wainscot somewhat higher than his head, by this iron fastening, and cold water was poured down the sleeve of his doublet as a punishment for his offence. One of the old servants of the family, who attended upon strangers when I first visited Haddon, while pointing out the uses to which this curious relique of former times was applied, facetiously remarked ‘that it grew rusty for want of use.’”

The tale of the manacle is retold over the next two centuries in novels and histories of the Hall. It is, however, simplified to what is reported in the present Haddon Hall Guide: “Attached to the screen you can see an iron manacle and lock. Supposedly, if a guest ‘did not drink fayre’—that is, too little or too much, his punishment was to have his wrist secured in the manacle while the remainder of his drink was poured down his sleeve!” The fuller explanation of the caretaker carries an authority which indicates the possession of an insider’s knowledge of the history of Haddon Hall.

HADDON VALLEY - HADDON HALL

Following the course of the Wye, we entered near Bakewell, the sweet *Vale* of *Haddon*. An old baronial edifice, now the distinguishing ornament of this part of Derbyshire, and in earlier times the seat of feudal splendour and festive hospitality, gives both name and dignity to this delightful valley. Fuller, in his *History of the Worthies of England*, observes, with his usual quaintness, that “the north part of Derbyshire called the Peak is poor *above* and rich *beneath* the ground: yet,” he adds, “are there some exceptions therein; witness the fair pastures nigh Haddon, belonging to the Duke of Rutland, so incredibly battling of cattle that one proffered to surround it with shillings to purchase it, which because to be set sideways, not edgeways, were refused.”

On a rocky knoll near the river Wye, about two miles south of Bakewell, stands Haddon Hall. The magnitude of this venerable pile of buildings — its castellated form — and its embattled turrets rising above the trees that adorn and encompass it, have a magnificent effect, especially when seen from the vale between Haddon and Rowsley, where the best and the most imposing view of this fine old mansion is obtained. From this situation its richest and most ample front is displayed, its towers rise more majestically, and its groves assume a considerable portion of grandeur. When the sketch which accompanies this description was made, the Wye, swollen by heavy rains, had overflowed its banks, and its windings round the base of the woody eminence on which Haddon stands, presented the appearance of a formidable river, which happily harmonized with the surrounding objects, and completed the composition of one of the sweetest pictures in the Peak of Derbyshire. The day was gloomy, and the sombre effect of the sky, together with the dark unvaried tone that prevailed, increased the solemnity of the scene. A transient ray of sunny light moved gently over Haddon as we beheld it, and gradually unfolded its architectural detail: it was a momentary gleam, at whose bright touch the landscape glowed with beauty; too soon it passed away! a thicker gloom succeeded, and again involved the whole in shadow.

THE KING OF THE PEAK

Haddon Hall has evidently been erected at various and remote periods of time. The old tower which surmounts the gateway, that once formed the principal entrance into Haddon, is said by [William] Gilpin to have had its origin anterior to [before] the Conquest, and he intimates that though this structure was never formidable as a place of defence, it had then a military character, which it gradually exchanged for that of a mere domestic dwelling. Gilpin, I apprehend, has fixed the building of Haddon at too early a period: there is no testimony, either written or otherwise, that any portion of it was erected many years before the reign of King Stephen [1135-1154], when one of the descendants of William Peveril resided here: however this may be, it is abundantly evident, both from its design and structure, that it was never intended to have a military character. Early in the reign of Richard I [1189-1199] Haddon came into the possession of the Vernons, with whom it remained through a period of nearly four centuries, during which time it was invariably regarded not only as the seat of feudal splendour, but of the most sumptuous and munificent hospitality. Sir George Vernon, who died in the seventh year of the reign of Elizabeth [1565], was distinguished by the appellation of the "*King of the Peak*." His wealth, and his influence in the neighbourhood where he resided, were alike unbounded: he was the lord of thirty manors, which at his death descended to his two daughters, Margaret and Dorothy, the latter of whom was married to Sir John Manners: thus Haddon passed to the noble house of Rutland, and was the family residence until the beginning of the last century, when it was deserted for the more splendid castle and palace of Belvoir.

How changed are the fortunes of this once hospitable mansion! the festive board at which thousands were regaled is no longer spread within its halls, nor are the sounds of mirth and gladness heard in its gates. A gloomy and solemn silence pervades its neglected apartments, and the bat and the owl are alone the inmates of its remaining splendour. Grand and imposing as Haddon is without, but little attention has been paid to convenience in its interior construction: with the exception of the kitchen, the cellar, the dining-hall, and the gallery, it is a discordant mass of small and uncomfortable apartments, crowded together without order. The style of architecture that prevailed in England previous to the reign of Elizabeth, when it experienced considerable improvement, was but little adapted to domestic convenience, and some of its defects are exemplified at Haddon.

THE CHAPEL AT HADDON

Those portions of this old mansion which were appropriated to the purposes of good living, and essential to that princely hospitality by which it was distinguished, when in the days of the first Duke of Rutland upwards of seven score servants were maintained within it, are sufficiently ample to justify all that tradition has told of the ancient festivities of the place. The very limited capacity of the chapel, when contrasted with the magnitude of those apartments, shows, that though the good people of this establishment took up a large space in which to manage their temporal affairs, they contrived to arrange their spiritual concerns within very modest dimensions.

The chapel, which occupies a part of the south and west fronts of Haddon, is enriched with painted windows. One of the subjects represented is the Crucifixion, and another the Twelve Apostles, disposed in different compartments. The date, millesimo CCCCXXVII [1427] appears on the stained glass, but it does not refer to the time when this part of the building was erected, which was at a much earlier period, and probably very soon after the Conquest, when William Peveril, who was the natural son of William the Conqueror, was Lord and Governor of the counties of Nottingham and Derby. He had several houses or castles in Derbyshire, where he resided in a magnificent and princely style.

A ROMAN ALTAR

In the ante-room to the chapel was a Roman Altar, uncouth in workmanship, and by no means an imposing object; it is nevertheless preserved with that care and attention which such a relique of antiquity requires; and has been lately removed to the central gateway that forms the communication between the two quadrangular courts of Haddon. The inscription it contains is now much injured, and the letters are so far effaced by time that not great difficulty only, but even an uncertainty, occurs in copying them: hence a considerable difference appears in the transcriptions of those travellers who have honoured this monument with their notice. The three following profess to have been copied with equal fidelity: the first is from Camden edit. 1695; the second was taken by a stranger who visited Haddon a few years ago; and the third was made with great care in the year 1818, by a gentlemen from Sheffield, who endeavoured accurately to trace out the form of each letter, as it now appears.

Camden	Traveller	In 1818
DEO	DEO	DEO
MARTI	MARI	MARTI
BRACIACÆ	BRACIACÆ	BRACIFACA
OSITIUS	OSOTIVS	QSOH·VS
CACCILIAN	CAECILIAO	CARQHIO
PREFECT	PRAEF . COH	PRAIISOI
TRO	I . AQVITANO	P . AQVIIBIR .
V . S.	V . S.	IVR A

[Editor's insertion of sketch and note.]



The Roman altar is to the god Mars. The best information is that the inscription translates “To the God Mars; Braciaca, Ossittius Caecilianus, Prefect of the first Cohort of Aquitani, in performance of a vow.” The sketch is by the antiquarian Llewellynn Jewitt, circa 1871.

We leisurely surveyed the exterior of Haddon, as seen from the upper and the lower courts before we explored its numerous apartments, and I know not that I ever beheld a mansion that afforded shelter and accommodation to so great a number of swallows: every projecting frieze overshadowed their nests, round which the busy flutterers played with ineffable delight. It was impossible to witness such a scene without calling to recollection the following beautiful passage in Shakespeare, which Sir Joshua Reynolds has so happily introduced in illustration of his remarks on what may properly be denominated repose in painting:

This castle has a pleasant site; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our general sense.

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here. No jutting frieze,
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed
The air is delicate.

ANCIENT TAPESTRY

Many of the rooms in this ancient residence of the noble family of Rutland are hung with loose tapestry, behind which the doors are concealed. Occasionally, for the admission of company, it was folded back with large iron hooks, some of which still remain: their form, and the uses they are here applied to, may probably have suggested the manufacture of that modern and ornamental article now made of gilt and lacquered brass, and lately much used for similar purposes, in many elegant apartments.

Tapestry may certainly be classed among the finest ornaments of ancient halls and castles: there is a cumbrous magnificence about it that no other decoration possesses, and which in connection with the structure it is intended to adorn, assimilates with our ideas of former times, creates a species of delusion, cheats the mind of its realities, and prepares it for the reception of those visionary and sublime impressions, that constitute a part of its felicity. The entire covering of the walls with loose arras was less essential to the splendour than the comfort of Haddon; the inner doors are so rudely fashioned, and in point of workmanship so ill made, that any other mode could hardly have been adopted to render the place tolerable as a winter residence; hence the tapestry with which the principal rooms were hung, served a more useful and important purpose than that of show.

GALLERY AT HADDON

In the dining-room, amongst a profusion of rude carving in wood, are the portraits of King Henry the Seventh and his Queen, to whose son and heir Sir Henry Vernon was Governor and Treasurer — the crest of Edward the Black Prince, on a shield — the arms of the Vernon family — and the royal arms inscribed underneath, “Dread God and *honor* the king.” The inscription might pass without particular notice, were it not that it is carved in fine old English characters, and the word “*honor*” spelt in the modern way.

The [long] gallery, which occupies nearly the whole of the south part of Haddon, is a noble apartment; its style of architecture fixes the date of its erection in the time of Elizabeth, in whose reign this venerable structure passed from the Vernons to Sir John Manners, who was the second son of the first Earl of Rutland. In the windows of the gallery are the arms of both families in stained glass; and the boar’s head and the peacock, their respective crests, liberally ornament this part of the house. This room is one hundred and ten feet long and seventeen wide, and the whole of the floor is said to have been cut out of one oak tree, that grew in the park.

In the dining [banqueting] hall there is an elevated platform, a general construction in ancient halls, and still retained in many colleges, whereon the high table is placed at which the lord of the mansion presided at the head of his household and his guests. A gallery, which on festive occasions was appropriated to mirth and minstrelsy, occupies two sides of this apartment. On the wainscot, near the principal entrance, we observed an iron fastening of a peculiar structure, large enough to admit the wrist of a man’s hand, and which we were informed had been placed there for the purpose of punishing trivial offences. It had likewise another use, and served to enforce the laws and regulations adopted amongst the servants of this establishment. The man who refused duly to take his horn of ale, or neglected to perform the duties of his office, had his hand locked to the wainscot somewhat higher than his head, by this iron fastening, when cold water was poured down the sleeve of his doublet as a punishment for his offence. One of the old servants of the family, who attended upon strangers when I first visited Haddon, while pointing out the uses to which this curious relique of former times was applied, facetiously remarked “that it grew rusty for want of use.”

REFLECTIONS ON HADDON

Some old pictures, of but little consequence, have lately been sent from the lumber-rooms at Belvoir Castle to decorate the walls of Haddon, but, independently of their want of merit, they seem strangely out of place. These, together with the clean white-wash with which they have covered every wall, have materially impaired the effect of this ancient edifice. It has thus lost something of its former character within. These tricks, however well intended, have absorbed a century or two of its age, and nearly obliterated the venerable appearance of its interior, but its external grandeur remains undisturbed and imposing. Cleanliness is certainly a very commendable quality; it may nevertheless be misapplied, and I confess I would rather see the walls of Haddon stained with the marks of age, and the ceilings festooned by the spider, than thus adorned with modern white-wash.

Haddon Hall, from its great antiquity — from its being almost the only baronial residence now remaining entire and untouched by modern improvement to tell the tale of what it was — is a place that excites considerable curiosity, and will amply repay the traveller for the hours he may loiter away in its precincts. Though desolate and cheerless within, it will long remain the ornament and attraction of this part of the Peak.

A venerable edifice, or a dilapidated ruin, is an object of great and powerful interest, exciting an association of ideas from which some of our most pleasurable sensations are deduced. Whether it is because we regard with reverence whatever has been touched by the hand of Time, and rendered sacred from his impression being stamped upon it — or from an attachment to whatever is picturesque in form and colour, the force and beauty of which almost every mind can feel and appreciate — or whether it is that in the contemplation of ancient halls and castles the tales of other times take possession of the soul, and the scenes of centuries gone by are again presented to the imagination, passing with a rapidity and an indistinctness like figures in a dream, not intimately known, and yet recognized — whatever be the cause of that subdued and hallowed feeling which almost every man has experienced from beholding such objects, it ranks amongst the purest pleasures of reflection, and enriches existence. This mysterious sensation of undefinable delight is no doubt attributable to that subtle quality of the mind which we denominate imagination, and Haddon is admirably calculated to afford incentives to the exercise of this active and excursive faculty: its towers and turrets — its massy walls and gloomy apartments — its loose hanging tapestry, and dark carved ceilings, rich with crests and armorial bearings — its painted windows, admitting only a dubious light — these, the remaining fragments of its grandeur, all conspire to exalt the mind of the spectator — to impress him with solemn and soothing emotions, and to fix his attention on objects and scenes of a remoter date, in the contemplation of which all considerations of self are lost: to him, Haddon is a link in the chain by which he is more intimately connected with a period of time and a race of beings long since passed away.

Dr. Johnson observes, that “whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses — whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, and virtue: that man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.” Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, who was a native of Derbyshire, often visited Haddon Hall, for the purpose of storing her imagination with those romantic ideas, and impressing upon it those sublime and awful pictures which she so much delighted to portray: some of the most gloomy scenery of her “Mysteries of Udolpho” was studied within the walls of this ancient structure. [In fact, Mrs. Radcliffe never was at Haddon Hall. This was a fiction offered by the caretaker to visitors.]

LIME TREES

The rising grounds behind Haddon are covered with a regular plantation of oak, lime, ash, and sycamore of the most luxuriant growth, which forms a capacious avenue, that communicates with an excellent garden and a summer-house of modern construction: passing along this avenue, my mind occupied with the scenes of other times, and filled with those ideas which a contemplation of Haddon is peculiarly calculated to inspire, and thus previously prepared to be imposed upon, I felt myself the momentary inhabitant of an enchanted grove, that almost realized some of the fanciful pictures of Tasso: a rich profusion of blossom covered the lime trees, and filled the air with fragrance — ten thousand bees were feeding on the treasures they contained — the bell of every flower was inhabited and in motion, and the lighter branches, agitated by these little marauders, seemed every where imbued with animal life, while all around, their hum of felicity and enjoyment kept up a perpetual concert of native melody. The summer-house, which is approached by this grove of limes, is pleasantly situated on the summit of the hill, and commands a very extensive view of the mountain scenery of Derbyshire. In this really charming place the late Duke of Rutland established a bowling-green, for the accommodation of the gentlemen of Bakewell and the neighbourhood, who are chiefly his tenantry; some years ago during the summer months, it was occasionally well attended, but in the year 1816, when I last beheld it, it was totally neglected, and had a very desolate appearance; the rank grass every where prevailed.

FAREWELL TO THE RIVER WYE

Lower down the vale, about a mile and a half from Haddon, is the village of Rowsley, near which the Wye loses itself in the bosom of the Derwent. How reluctantly the mind quits its hold of objects that have produced a portion of its felicity! with what regret it lingers round scenes on which it has dwelt with delight, and as it pauses to recall sensations originally excited by objects no longer present, it feels a softer glow of pleasure as it beholds them through the medium of recollection. Such were the feelings with which I quitted the borders of the Wye. Adieu, thou lovely river! I have traversed thy romantic banks from thy source in the vicinity of Buxton, to where thy clear and silvery stream mingles with the yellower waters of the Derwent, and feel grateful to that Being who has intimately connected some of our most refined and purest pleasures with the contemplation of those works in the midst of which he has placed our habitation.