

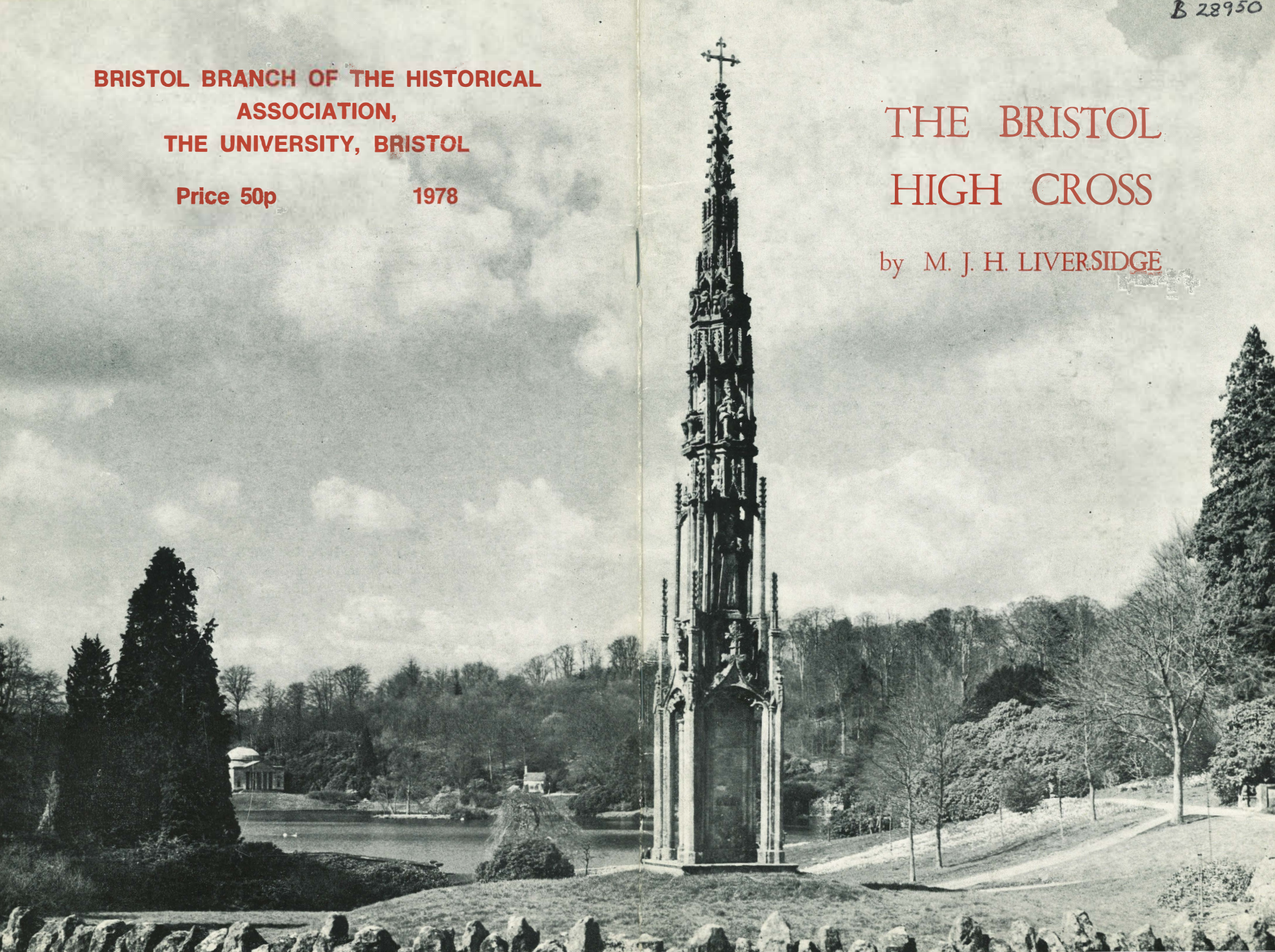
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# THE BRISTOL HIGH CROSS

by M. J. H. LIVERSIDGE





BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
LOCAL HISTORY PAMPHLETS

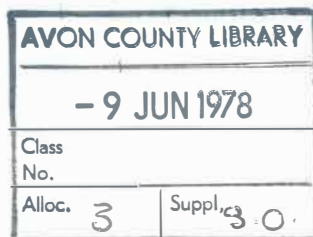
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The Branch appeals to all readers to persuade others to buy the pamphlets and to place standing orders for future productions. The pamphlets can be obtained from most Bristol booksellers, from the shop in the City Museum, from the Porters' Lodges in the Wills Memorial Building and the Senate House, or direct from Mr. Peter Harris, 74 Bell Barn Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, 9.



THE BRISTOL HIGH CROSS

When Celia Fiennes passed through Bristol on her way to Cornwall in 1698 one of the city's architectural curiosities which she remarked upon in her account of the journey was the ancient High Cross,

"a very high and magnificent Cross built all of the stone or sort of marble of the country, its in the manner of Coventry Cross a piramedy form running up of a great height with severall divisions in niches where is King John's Effigy and severall other Kings round and adorned with armes and figures of beasts and birds and flowers, great part of it gilt and painted, and soe terminates in a spire on the top; the lower part is white like marble".<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the Coventry Cross, which was demolished in 1771, Bristol's High Cross has survived although it was twice dismantled during the eighteenth century before eventually it was found a new site overlooking the lake at Stourhead in Wiltshire where it has remained since 1765.

The landscaped garden laid out around the artificial lake at Stourhead is one of the most perfectly preserved of its kind and period in England. It is perhaps the only eighteenth century garden created by an amateur that still appears in all its essentials very much as it was originally conceived, and with its classical temples mingled with the occasional Gothic feature it illustrates the impact that the emergence of the Picturesque cult combined with the contemporary revival of interest in British antiquities exerted on English taste. Henry Hoare, the merchant banker who created the Stourhead landscape between 1744 and 1785, initially set out to compose a classically inspired vision of Arcadia evoking the elegiac poetry of Vergil and influenced by the Vergilian ideal as it had been interpreted in the seventeenth century by the landscape painter Claude Lorrain.<sup>2</sup> Assisted by the Palladian architect Henry Flitcroft, and stimulated by the example of other landowners who were likewise engaged in improving their estates, he laid out around his lake a carefully planned sequence of calculated vistas and garden ornaments which included a Temple of Flora (1744), a Grotto inhabited by a sleeping nymph and river god (1748), a Pantheon (1754), and a Palladian bridge (1762); in 1765 his last purely classical addition to the Stourhead scene, the Temple of Apollo, was completed. At the same time, on a site opposed to the Pantheon and in a position of special prominence, he installed the Bristol High Cross which he had acquired from the Dean of

<sup>1</sup>. See footnotes at the end of the pamphlet

the Cathedral, Dr. Cutts Barton, in 1764. By then the climate of taste in England was changing and the Picturesque was becoming fashionable. Already in 1762 "a greenhouse of false Gothic" was noticed at Stourhead by Horace Walpole whose 'Gothick' villa at Twickenham, Strawberry Hill, was visited by Henry Hoare in 1763.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter at Stourhead there followed a succession of new features which combined 'Gothick' details with Picturesque effect: King Alfred's Tower, some distance from the lake garden on Kingsettle Hill, was completed in 1772, and in the woods below it a Rustic Convent was added in the 1760s. In 1766 a second genuine Bristol antiquity, St. Peter's Pump, was acquired from the City Corporation and erected over the springs in Six Wells Bottom.

The circumstances which led to Henry Hoare's acquisition of the High Cross in 1764 are well enough known to require only the briefest rehearsal and have frequently been recounted by the authors of local histories from the eighteenth century to the present.<sup>4</sup> Until 1733 it stood in the older part of the city at the intersection of Broad Street and High Street with Wine Street and Corn Street where it was seen by Celia Fiennes. In 1733, on 21 July, a meeting of the City Council received a representation from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood requesting the demolition of the Cross:

"It hath been insinuated by some that this Cross, on Account of its antiquity ought to be lookt upon as something sacred; But when we consider that we are protestants, and that popery ought effectually to be guarded against in this Nation, we make this our request to you to consider. If the opening of a passage to four of the principal streets in this City ought not to outweigh anything that can be said for the keeping up a ruinous and superstitious Relick, which is at present a public nuisance . . ."<sup>5</sup>

Apparently the principal objector to the High Cross was a Mr. John Vaughan,

"a silversmith who lived fronting it, out of enmity to this structure so esteemed by others, offered to swear before the magistrates that every high wind his house and life were endangered by the Cross shaking and threatening to fall (though it was not generally then believed) and so requested its removal. On this pretence and of its obstructing the road by filling up the street, it was taken down and thrown by in the Guildhall as a thing of no value, though its removal was much regretted by most of the citizens."<sup>6</sup>

It was fortunate that the stones were not discarded altogether. They were eventually rescued from municipal cellars in 1736

following the intervention of an Alderman Price who, together with "a few other gentlemen residing near the College-green"<sup>7</sup>, raised a subscription to re-erect the Cross near the Cathedral. With the consent of the Dean and Chapter it was sited in the centre of College Green where, as it appears in a painting of the scene by Samuel Scott done from an earlier engraving,<sup>8</sup>

"it made a most conspicuous figure and was greatly ornamental; it adorned its new station, and its station reflected an ornament to it, and it was here viewed with pleasure by all as a most curious piece of antiquity. But even here in time the Cross lost that reverence and regard that had been hitherto paid it throughout all ages, for . . . it was at length found out that this beautiful structure by intersecting one of the walks interrupted gentlemen and ladies from walking eight or ten abreast."<sup>9</sup>

In fact the Cross survived one attempt to remove it in 1757 when a proposal to demolish it was submitted to the Dean and Chapter by a Mr. Wallis who had been engaged to improve and repair the footpaths on College Green,<sup>10</sup> but it was not finally dismantled until 1762. On 21 August of that year *Felix Farley's Journal* reported that "several Workmen are now employed in raising the walks in College Green, and in taking down the High-Cross; which, when beautified, will be put up in the Middle of the Grass-Plot near the Lower Green, about thirty yeard from where it now stands". The circumstances of its removal and eventual acquisition by Henry Hoare for Stourhead are more fully reported in Barrett's *History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol* and in an essay on the monuments contributed in 1816 to *The Bristol Memorialist* by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the distinguished antiquary. According to Barrett,

"One Mr Champion, a great projector, interested himself much in its removal, and solicited subscriptions of money to be laid out in removing the Cross, and widening and rendering more commodious the walks in College-green. The dean and chapter, on whose ground it was erected, gave leave for its removal. But many people who had subscribed for widening and improving the walks, subscribed also for rebuilding the Cross in any unexceptionable place, but no such could be found in Bristol—all the money subscribed for the Cross was spent solely in laying out the walks, the Cross itself rudely torn down and much injured by the workmen employed, was thrown by in a corner of the Cathedral, where it lay for a long while neglected . . ."<sup>11</sup>



So it remained until the Reverend Cutts Barton was appointed Dean:

"He was the intimate friend of Henry Hoare, Esq., of Stourhead . . . The worthy Dean informed his friend of the wretched state of degradation into which this celebrated High-Cross had fallen . . . and that compassion was immediately shewn, which a work of such high antiquity, such historical interest, and such distinguished architecture, most deservedly claimed. The scattered fragments of this elegant structure were collected and removed to a neighbouring county, where it still remains, a distinguished and highly admired ornament of the gardens at Stourhead."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, having lain dismantled in some obscure corner of the Cathedral for fully two years, the Bristol High Cross found its way in 1764 to its present site where it was re-erected once again in the following year.

A letter written by Henry Hoare from London on 2 October 1764 and addressed to "Mr. Paty, Sculptor, Bristol", describes the arrangements which were to be made for transporting the monument, and also supplies some useful information regarding its condition and intended renovation:<sup>13</sup>

"The Dean of Bristol is so obliging as to write me word I may send for the Cross directly. I have therefore ordered my servant, Faugoin, to send out two waggons from Stourhead on Monday morning. I suppose they will be three days in and out; and if it is the Dean and Mr. Tyndall's opinion it should go all at once, as you think there is six loads of it from the point you marked in the print sent me, for the legs are not worth fetching, I beg of you to hire four more waggons to accompany mine, and to be so kind to see it safely and carefully packed and well bedded with hay or straw, and to let one of your men to come with it, to see it unloaded; and I make no doubt you will insist on *careful drivers*; and as I shall be at Stourhead the end of November or the beginning of December, wish it may be convenient to you to come over, and let me see you and consult with you how to repair and put it up, and what base or support will be required for it . . ."

The departure of the High Cross was briefly commented upon in *Felix Farley's Journal* on 27 October 1764:

"Ye People of Bristol deplore the sad Loss  
Of the Kings and the Queens that once reign'd in your Cross;  
Tho' your Patrons they were, and their Reigns were so good,

Like Nebuchadnezzar they're forc'd to the Wood.  
Your *great Mens' great wisdom* you, surely, must pity,  
Who've banish'd what all Men admired from the City."

It was not until over a year later, however, that it was at last reassembled and set up in the grounds of Stourhead, appropriately in the corner nearest to the parish church of Stourton with which, from the Grotto and from the Pantheon, it forms an engagingly Picturesque composition, carefully contrived to unite the garden with the adjacent village. On 9 December 1765 Hoare remarked in a letter to his son-in-law, Lord Bruce, that

"The Cross is now in hand & there are so many pieces that we must I believe employ Harriot to put it together as she is such an adept at Joyning the map of the Countys of England."<sup>14</sup>

In the course of re-erecting the Cross one important alteration was made, rendered necessary, as Henry Hoare's letter to Mr. Paty cited above makes clear, because the elegant shafts and central pier on which it had originally rested was seriously decayed. A solid base was introduced—"an alteration for the worse, in point of appearance, but necessary for its general preservation"<sup>15</sup>—and the structure was reinforced with iron to strengthen it further. However, the use of iron proved detrimental in the long run and at the end of the nineteenth century the Cross again required extensive restoration. The iron which had been used for the dowels, cramps and tie-rods, as well as for a central reinforcing rod through the whole height of the monument, had expanded and rusted, causing the stonework to split and fracture; this, according to one report, "together with the fall of a tree against the Cross in recent times, had rendered the condition of the fabric most perilous, and many of the more delicate portions had become lost".<sup>16</sup> Renovation was imperative and late in 1894 "when the fall of the Cross appeared to be imminent" the repairs were duly carried out under the direction of the architect C. E. Ponting who had surveyed the monument for Sir Henry Hoare and submitted a detailed report on its condition and his proposals for restoration (Appendix). Much of the stonework was evidently renewed, and it is obviously important to bear in mind the various restorations and dislocations that the Cross has survived in order to determine which parts of the existing monument are in fact original.

Most topographical records of the High Cross dating from the eighteenth century show it either on College Green beside the Cathedral or else at Stourhead. Because they record its appearance only after it had been removed from its earliest site, however, they are of limited value in assessing the original character of the Cross, or at any rate its configuration before the stonework

was disturbed in 1733 and again in 1762. Of most use in this respect is an engraving by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published in 1734 which shows the Cross without any background. By then, of course, it had been removed from its High Street site and stored away in the Guildhall, so the print must have been made from a drawing done when the Cross was still *in situ* where it had been first erected. Comparison of this engraving with later visual evidence and with the Cross itself reveals that in all its essentials the present structure remains very much as it appeared when it was dismantled in 1733, indicating that neither when it was relocated at Stourhead nor when some of the decorated stonework was renewed in 1894 were any significant alterations made to its architectural form. However, it does appear that the floridly embellished pinnacle has been modified, and the original disposition of the sculptured figures of English sovereigns was disrupted, probably in 1765.<sup>17</sup>

The extent to which the 1734 engraving records the original mediaeval structure is more difficult to ascertain since there is no absolutely reliable topographical evidence, visual or documentary, of an earlier date. However, scattered references to the High Cross in the archives can shed some light on its history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most substantial alteration, and the best documented, occurred in 1633-4 when the Cross was partially taken down, repaired, and a new storey added into which the four seated figures were inserted.<sup>18</sup> Above them a tier of armorial shields with cherubic supporters appeared, and above that, rising from gabled trefoil niches, a square tower of perpendicular design from which the elaborately carved finial rose. All of this was entirely new work which completely replaced the original finial of which there is no record, and although in its general design it follows a Gothic pattern the decorative vocabulary employed incongruously combined debased baroque figures and ornament with rather coarsely executed perpendicular detail. Nor did the lower part of the Cross entirely escape alteration: the canopies over the standing statues were quite improperly embellished with cherub heads of distinctively seventeenth century style on the cusp ends. How much of the earlier mediaeval stonework was in fact renewed or recarved in 1633 cannot be determined, but certainly some renovation was carried out in the course of a general restoration and enlargement of the monument. The *Mayor's Audits* for 1633 and 1634 include a detailed account of the expenditure involved totalling £198. 11. 03, but individual payments do not always specify the precise nature of the work undertaken. However, it is clear that at least one of the original statues was taken down, presumably for restoration (8 June 1633), and that

other parts of the original structure were replaced and refurbished may be inferred from the considerable quantities of stone that were brought to the site from Dundry and elsewhere. The cost of the new work included "xxxs paid for carriage of a great stone to make the Crowne stone for the highe Cross and viis ix<sup>d</sup> for the stone it selfe" (28 October 1633); the reconstruction must have been virtually complete by 5 March 1634 when two labourers were paid "for raising the statue of the King unto the high Crosse (presumably the figure of Charles I), and on 20 April there is an entry "for three stones for the making of 3 figures more for the Crosse". Although the names of individual masons are recorded in the accounts, what they were paid for is rarely itemised so it is impossible, for example, to discover from the documents who carved the four new statues. Neither the records nor their craftsmanship suggest that they were anything but moderately competent local artisans except for John Settle who seems to have been the superintending mason and so probably was responsible for designing the new work. He first appears in an entry for 17 June 1633 when payment was made "to John Settle free mason for his charge comeinge of the fforest to survey the Crosse, and giveinge his opinion", and thereafter he figures prominently in the accounts, receiving payments which seem to indicate that he was directing operations. When finally the work was completed the Cross was painted and gilded, as it had been originally, to protect the stonework against the weather.<sup>19</sup>

The four new statues added in 1633 represented Henry VI, Queen Elizabeth, James I and Charles I, all of whom had renewed or confirmed charters to the City. The last is in fact a Restoration replacement, the original having been removed in 1651 when the Commonwealth government had ordered the destruction of all public images of the king.<sup>20</sup> The new statue, resplendently exuberant in the handling of its costume, was carved by a stonemason named William Thorne who also carried out minor repairs to the other figures on the Cross when it was installed.<sup>21</sup>

It would appear from the documents, however, that the work done in 1633 was in fact the second occasion on which the High Cross was renovated. An entry of 1525 in the *Mayor's Kalendar* records that

"This yere Maister Maire, as well with his costes as with the costez of the comons of this wurshipfull Towne, caused to be taken downe Stalenge Crosse, beyng right old, corrupt, and feble, and caused the Crosse there nowe to be made of the newe; not oonly that Crosse, but also he commaunded that the hedges of the crosses at the galowes and markett place shuld be made of the newe, as they nowe be."<sup>22</sup>



The Stallenge or, as it is sometimes called, Stallage Cross was another mediaeval market cross that stood near the Temple Church; the "Market-place" Cross which received a new "hedde" was the High Cross. Once again the archives do not report whether any more extensive work on the rest of the fabric was undertaken at the same time, but the documentary and topographical records relating to the Bristol High Cross from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries do at least indicate very clearly the extent to which the monument at Stourhead is a composite design which has, over the years, altered its appearance quite radically.

How much of what survives is genuinely mediaeval, and what the Cross originally looked like are problems that are much harder to resolve in the absence of reliable early descriptions and visual records. Nor is the architectural and sculptural evidence supplied by the lower parts of the Cross itself altogether clear. Proportionally it must have been very different and probably less elegantly attenuated than at present—rising from a square base through open arches with cusping and ogee gables to canopied niches containing full-length statues of kings, it might have terminated in a crocketed stone finial surmounted by a cross. This kind of three-tier formation is to be found in other mediaeval crosses,<sup>23</sup> but a likelier alternative is suggested by the example of the Winchester Cross where there is a third storey of clustered pinnacles and gabled niches inserted between the canopies over the principal statues and the base of the finial shaft. The open base and detached buttresses of the Bristol High Cross correspond in a general way to the configuration of the Winchester Cross, but the similarity is by no means conclusive.<sup>24</sup>

There is one rather puzzling late mediaeval drawing which shows a High Cross in the centre of Bristol. It is to be found in the Calendar compiled by Robert Ricart, elected Town Clerk in 1479.<sup>25</sup> The exact status of this drawing, however, is difficult to assess: although in its essentials it is apparently a contemporary view of Bristol, neither its topography nor its architectural detail is entirely convincing, and it possibly may have been intended to represent the city very much earlier in its history. It occurs in the manuscript immediately after Ricart's account of the foundation of Bristol, so it could be interpreted as an imaginary reconstruction of the city. Consequently, although the arches at its base and the ornamental spire with a cross at its top correspond to similar features found in the High Cross that Ricart would have known, the *Alta Crux* shown at the centre of the plan is not necessarily intended to portray the monument as it actually appeared in the late fifteenth century. The canopied niches containing the statues of Kings which certainly would

have been known to Ricart are not shown at all, an omission that cannot very easily be explained unless the drawing is presumed to represent the city and its cross as its author imagined it may have appeared in earlier times. Whether or not there had actually been a cross on the site shown in Ricart's drawing since before the Conquest is unknown, and anyway not particularly relevant to the present enquiry, but the High Cross now at Stourhead possibly was not the first to have been built in the centre of Bristol. The existence of a predecessor is confidently asserted by various local antiquarians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the description of "a faire Cross . . . which is beautiful, with the statues of several of our Kings" supposedly erected in 1247 which they cite as evidence is derived from an early chronicle that cannot be corroborated. William Barrett, of whom Horace Walpole wrote in 1789 that "If his book and very foolish credulity can impose on anybody, they must be as silly as he . . .", claimed that such a cross existed in *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol*, and his book was apparently followed by most of the later writers on the subject.<sup>26</sup> Reliable early references to the High Cross are rare. The earliest genuine record of its existence occurs in the ordinances regulating the conditions under which the blacksmiths of Bristol conducted their business, "enrollyd in the yeldhalle of Bristow by the wyse men of the Crafts of fferours, Smythys, Cotillers and Lockyers in the tyme of John Barnstaple, Mayer of the seyd towne, the yere of the regne of King Henry the fourthe aftir the Conquest the ffyfte", the date being 1403-4. There it is stated that unless "they have an open place bysydes the hyecrois of Bristow" no smith could trade within the city, "And that all estraungeours that commeth to the same towne wyth eny penyworthes yclepid smythware to sylle, that they schulle stond in a place bysydes the hye cross of Bristol openlych . . ."<sup>27</sup> The executions of William Scroop, Sir John Bushy and Sir Henry Green in 1399 and Lord Despencer in 1400 are stated in various local histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to have taken place in the shadow of the High Cross, but there is no corroborative evidence to support the tradition. The only other mediaeval records which relate to the High Cross are too late to be of any use in arriving at a date for the Stourhead monument, but they afford some idea of its original gilded and polychromed appearance. In 1491 Ricart reports that "the High Cross was paynted and gilt, which cost xxli", and in 1495 it was again similarly embellished to preserve the stonework.<sup>28</sup>

Neither the architectural detail of the mediaeval parts of the High Cross nor the style of the four principal statues conclusively establish its date. Although the sculptures are traditionally sup-

posed to represent King John, Henry III, Edward III and Edward IV, only the figure of Edward III can positively be identified from the evidence of costume and by comparison with other portraits such as the one that decorates the illuminated initial letter of the charter granted to Bristol on 8 August 1373. The other three figures are evidently contemporary and clearly all four are from the same workshop: while they differ in the details of their costume and in the accessories they carry, they each exhibit the same standardised conventions in the handling of drapery and for the features they all follow a stereotyped pattern which is formally and technically indistinguishable from the portrait of Edward III. It may therefore be presumed from their evident congruity that all four statues were supplied together as a group at the same time, and their style is consistent with other English sculpture of the early fifteenth century.

According to tradition the High Cross is supposed to have been erected in 1373 to commemorate the charter granted by Edward III which conferred upon Bristol the status of a county in its own right, and the statue said to represent Edward IV is assumed to have been added later following a visit in 1461, the year of his accession. However, there is no documentary evidence to sustain either assertion, nor is it very likely that the Cross would have been left incomplete for so long. Evidently, since all the mediaeval statues are of the same date and may be assigned to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, the figure identified as Edward IV since the eighteenth century must in fact represent an earlier king.<sup>29</sup> In his report on the condition of the High Cross (7 September 1894, Appendix E) C. E. Ponting suggests that the figure in fact represents Edward I, which seems to be altogether reasonable.

Interpreting the architectural and sculptural evidence in order to arrive at a date for the mediaeval part of the Cross is complicated by the various restorations that are known to have been carried out in the course of its history. The sculptural uniformity of the four principal figures may be due in part to later recarving, and at least some of the architectural detail is known to have been renewed and reworked. Neither in its general design nor in the character of the decorative detail of the canopies over the statues or the ogees below them is there anything that manifestly proclaims those parts of the Cross that are genuinely mediaeval to be of the late fourteenth century rather than of the fifteenth. Apparently the traditional date assigned to its construction was first suggested in the eighteenth century, but there is insufficient evidence to attribute its design to 1373 and if, as seems likely, the statues were placed in their niches when the Cross was first erected the whole structure must be somewhat later.

There are, unfortunately, too few surviving monumental crosses of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries with which to compare the Bristol example. The Winchester Cross, which dates probably from around 1425 but was drastically restored in the nineteenth century, exhibits a more developed Perpendicular design than the surviving mediaeval members of the Bristol Cross, while that at Iron Acton in Gloucestershire is also apparently later. It was set up before 1439,<sup>30</sup> and although it is now in a very mutilated condition it is evident from what survives that it was less ornately enriched than the Bristol design. A closer parallel to the architecture of the Bristol High Cross may be found at Tewkesbury where, in 1422, a splendidly elaborate chantry was erected in the Abbey over the Earl of Worcester's tomb: the canopy, richly decorated with ogees and pinnacles, and the tabernacles for statuary on the piers at either end, can be compared with what remains of the original mediaeval monument at Stourhead.<sup>31</sup> Both the quality and complexity of the work at Tewkesbury indicate superior craftsmanship but nonetheless the apparent congruity which exists between its architecture and the style of the lower parts of the High Cross suggests that they cannot be separated by more than a few years.

From the evidence of its architectural composition, therefore, the history of the Bristol High Cross at Stourhead may be conjecturally reconstructed. It appears in its lower tiers to be a monument of early fifteenth century origin, rather than of 1373 as is usually stated, and very probably replaced an earlier example on the same site. If the "hyecrois of Bristow" mentioned in the ordinances regulating the blacksmiths issued in 1403-4 and contained in the city's *Little Red Book* is the same High Cross now at Stourhead it must then have been only very recently erected, but the document could refer to a predecessor. Thereafter, the Cross received a new finial in 1525 in the course of being extensively restored, and in 1633 it was partially or maybe wholly dismantled, renovated and enlarged by the addition of a further tier of seated figures placed beneath canopies and for the second time its pinnacle was renewed. In its original state it must have resembled the monument described in *Piers the Ploughman's Creed*.

"A curious cros craftily entayled

With tabernacles y-tight to toten al abouten

The pris of a plough-lond on penyes so round

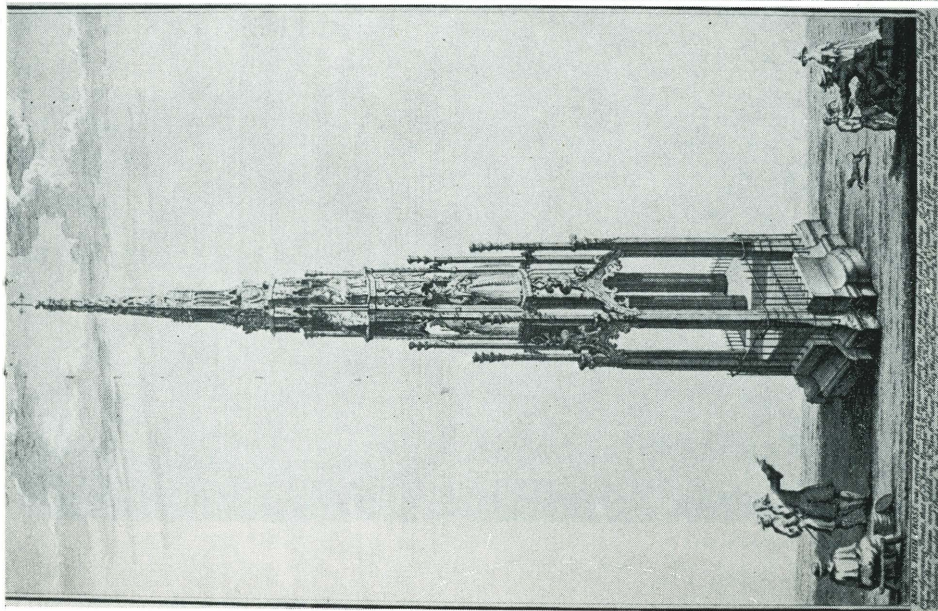
To aparaile that pyler were pure lytel".

Crosses such as these were commonplace in mediaeval England. They were to be found in towns and villages presiding over market places and churchyards, and they were erected at cross-roads and by the wayside. The commonest type consisted of a simple shaft

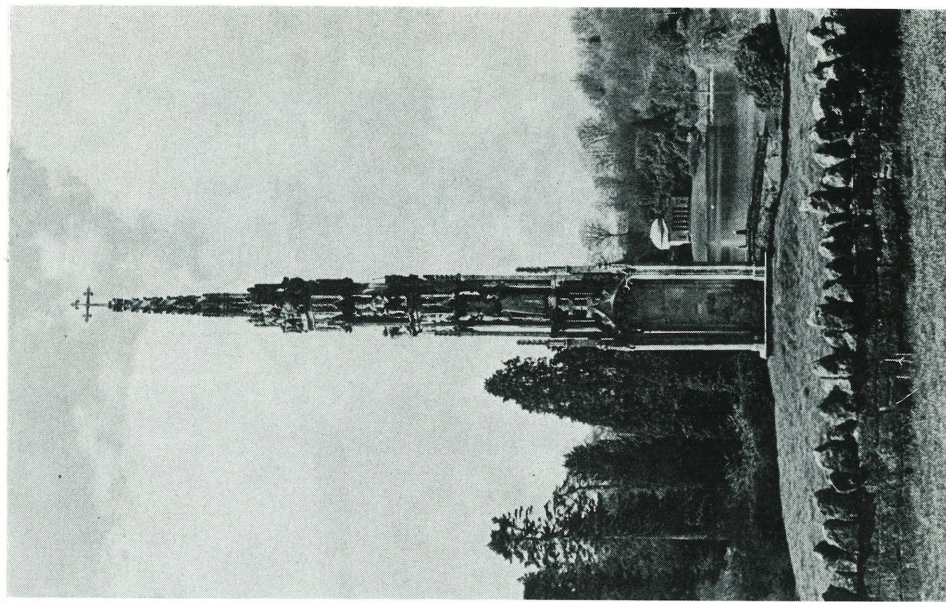


rising from a calvary of steps to a sculptured head or plain crucifix, but in larger towns more elaborate monuments like the Bristol High and Stallenge Crosses or the Winchester Cross were erected.<sup>32</sup> Towards the end of the fifteenth century these became much larger architectural features combining the cross with the covered market, as at Chichester, Salisbury, Malmesbury and Shepton Mallet, and formerly at Wells and Glastonbury. There were also preaching-crosses and occasionally commemorative crosses were erected, the most celebrated examples being the twelve Eleanor Crosses set up between Lincoln and London along the route taken by the funeral cortege that escorted the body of Edward I's queen to Westminster Abbey in 1290. Of these only three remain, at Geddington and Hardingstone in Northamptonshire and at Waltham in Hertfordshire, but one other has given its name to a railway station, Charing Cross. In some respects it was these crosses, elegant polygonal monuments rising to canopied niches containing statues of Queen Eleanor, that established the type from which the Bristol High Cross was ultimately derived.

A great many of England's mediaeval crosses were demolished by iconoclasts in the sixteenth century during the Edwardian Reformation, and in the seventeenth century an equally large number were systematically destroyed by zealous Puritans as part of the Commonwealth campaign against idolatrous images. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many more were lost through indifference and decay, and (as in the case of Bristol High Cross) others were removed to ease the passage of the growing volume of traffic in the narrow streets of old mediaeval towns and city centres, while not a few among the survivors were severely disfigured by over-enthusiastic Gothic Revivalist restorers. Bristol was fortunate that its High Cross largely escaped the attention of the Puritans, presumably because it was regarded as a civic rather than a religious monument, and that in the eighteenth century local interest preserved it from destruction and prevented it from being discarded altogether in 1733. Following its removal from College Green in 1762 its second escape was perhaps even more fortuitous in that it was rescued by virtue of Dean Barton's friendship with Henry Hoare of Stourhead. Whether or not the Dean was prompted to dispose of the Cross by his anxiety to avoid the cost of re-erecting it at the Cathedral's expense as one source suggests is a matter for speculation.<sup>33</sup> At any rate, by the mid-1760's the taste for Picturesque antiquities and the fashion for the Gothic style stimulated by Horace Walpole's "gothicked" Strawberry Hill had created a new and more appreciative climate which is reflected at Stourhead by the acquisition of the High Cross and its prominent placement there as one of the principal objects of interest



S. and N. Buck, the Bristol High Cross, 1734.  
Engraving

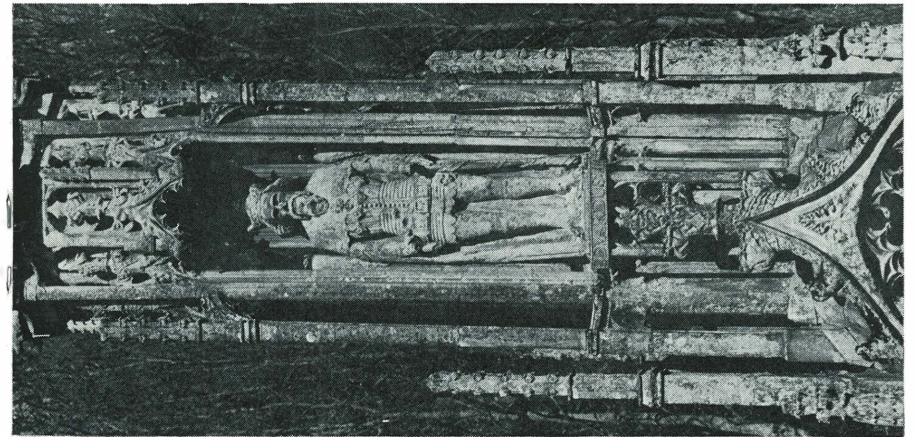


Stourhead, Wiltshire. The Bristol High Cross.  
Photograph by G. Kelsey

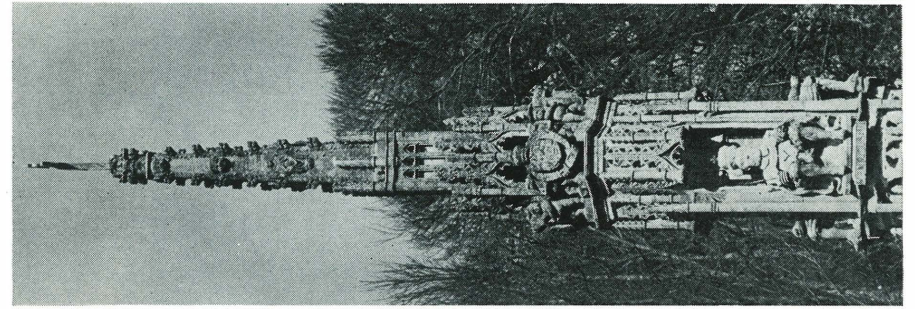




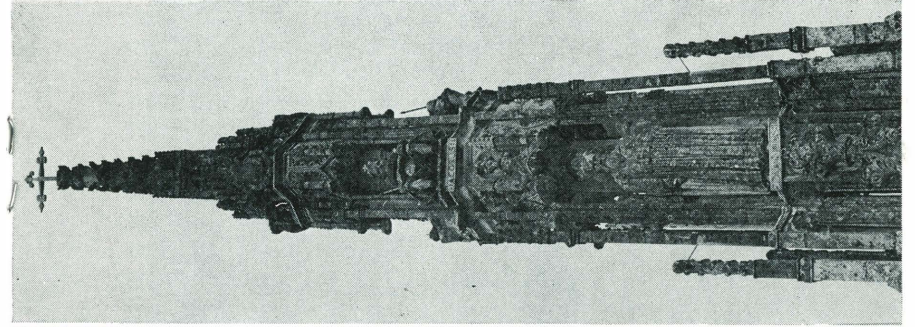
*Samuel Scott (1701/3-1772) The Bristol High Cross on College Green.  
Bristol City Art Gallery*



*The Bristol High Cross: Edward III.  
Photograph by G. Kelsey*



*The Bristol High Cross:  
Henry VI.  
Photograph by G. Kelsey*



*The Bristol High Cross:  
Edward IV, James I.  
Photograph by G. Kelsey*





Bristol, College Green. The New Cross.  
 Photograph by courtesy of Bristol City Art Gallery

in the landscape, appropriately situated nearby the village church. There is, as it happens, an indirect association between Strawberry Hill and the Bristol Cross: Samuel Scott's painting of the Cathedral from College Green with the High Cross in the foreground was originally in Horace Walpole's collection, and it appears hanging in the long gallery at Strawberry Hill in an eighteenth century engraving of the interior.<sup>84</sup>

The history of the High Cross in Bristol does not end, however, with the removal of the monument to Stourhead in 1764. The Gothic Revival which for much of the nineteenth century dominated architectural taste in England and generally promoted a serious and at times pedantically imitative interest in the characteristic forms of mediaeval design and ornament encouraged architects as well as antiquarians to turn their attention to the ancient stone crosses that had remained from the middle ages. Some of the survivors such as the Winchester Cross were rather too enthusiastically restored and had their missing parts renewed, as in the case of the Eleanor Cross at Waltham not always very convincingly, while elsewhere reconstructions appeared where others had completely vanished, in the market square at Devizes for instance and at Charing Cross in London. New Gothic crosses were also built as commemorative monuments, as happened in Oxford when the Martyrs' Memorial was erected after the fashion of the late thirteenth century Eleanor Crosses. In Bristol a new High Cross, ostensibly a replica of the original at Stourhead but suitably improved to conform to the Gothic Revivalists' insistence upon authenticity in design and detail, was built at the eastern end of College Green. It was formally inaugurated in 1851, three years after the project had been initiated at a public meeting held on 22 September 1848, when it was decided to raise a public subscription for the purpose. Sufficient funds to build the new cross were in due course raised, and the foundation stone was laid in 1850. An account of the occasion was published by the *Bristol Mercury* on 10 August:

"If a stranger, unaware of what was going on, had visited the good city of Bristol on Thursday last, and had witnessed, before the rain spoiled it, the pretty pageant which filed along our streets, he would, no doubt, have wondered what great occasion it was meant to celebrate. Supposing him to have been content to follow the throng of the excited sightseers, his first feeling on reaching the destination of the procession in College-green, and contrasting the preparation with the visible result, would probably have been one of disappointment: he would have been apt, very likely, to set down the Bristol people as folks who make a great ado about nothing, and his thoughts might in-



voluntarily have reverted to the moral indicated by a fable of the parturient mountain. Had he expressed anything of the sort to those around him he would, of course, have been told by some one who partook of, or simulated a degree of, the general enthusiasm on the subject, that he was uttering rank heresy: and then he might have gathered from the speech of his Worship, or from a bystander, that the ceremony was one which was hallowed by historical associations; that the citizens were having restored to them, on that day an heir-loom long cherished, long neglected, and long lost; a monument of their city's antiquity, though three generations have passed away since it was standing erect within its walls. Our spectator would now have gazed upon the scene with heightened interest: he would have acknowledged that our display of civic feeling, though rather late in the day, was to be commended, and in view of the fact that funds are still wanting to complete the structure intended to be raised above the stone laid on Thursday, he would have admitted that a little parade about the matter was politic as well as proper. For surely the noble masons, and others, will not hesitate to contribute handsomely toward the consummation of an undertaking whose inaugurative stage was graced and rendered so imposing by their presence."

The architect of the new cross was John Norton, an undistinguished Gothic Revivalist who prepared a design which in its essentials reproduced the original that it replaced but omitted some of the more incongruous seventeenth century features that had been added when the monument was heightened in 1633:

"While the old Cross exhibits throughout marks of debased and discordant additions, in the new one an attempt has been made, not only to preserve the beautiful outline, but to embody one uniformly harmonious feeling throughout, being that of the period of its earliest foundation. For example, above the sitting figures, in the Old Cross, is a tier or frieze of boys bearing shields, in the taste of Charles's reign. This looks crowded and excrescence-like, and by its 'bustle' mars the grace of the outline and therefore, this feature has been discarded, and the pyramidal lines made at once to spring from the upper canopies.<sup>35</sup>

Architecturally the effect was more severe, but it might have been successful had the quality of the decorative detail been less lifeless.

Although the cross itself was completed in 1851, it was several years before all the statues were added to it. In 1855 the Freemasons of the city donated a figure of Edward III, but it was not

until 1889 that the remaining seven statues were installed.<sup>36</sup> In the previous year the monument had been moved to a new site near the centre of College Green in order to make way for the statue of Queen Victoria which was set up to commemorate her Golden Jubilee celebrated in 1887. The cross remained in its new position until 1950, when College Green was levelled and the trees that used to border it were removed. Like its predecessor the New Cross was ignominiously discarded but some parts of it survive. The statue of King John was preserved by Mr. Reece Winstone, and in 1956 the Civic Society together with the Park Street Traders and Berkeley Square Associations raised £300 to re-assemble its uppermost tiers in the corner of Berkeley Square.<sup>37</sup> What remains of John Norton's work may still be seen there, a rather forlorn reminder of Bristol's High Cross.



## APPENDIX

### The 1894 restoration.

Among the Stourhead papers at Trowbridge there is a lengthy report prepared by C. E. Ponting on the condition of the High Cross as he found it in 1894 which supplies detailed information about the restoration which was undertaken in that year for Sir Henry Hoare, Bt. Ponting's survey and recommendations indicate how extensively the stonework had decayed and been damaged by the iron dowels and cramps used when the Cross was re-erected at Stourhead, but fortunately during the subsequent renovation great care was taken to preserve as much of the original masonry as possible. The report itself (Wiltshire County Record Office, 383/944) is too long to publish in its entirety, but the extracts which follow indicate both the extent of the deterioration and Ponting's fastidious concern for the conservation of the monument.

The architect reported that the four shafts of the lower, or open, stage of the Cross had been entirely replaced when it was re-erected at Stourhead in the eighteenth century, but that the ogee canopies were original "but are much broken and decayed, two of the finials are altogether missing . . . and the other two are split and otherwise broken. I do not advise the renewal of the decayed surfaces, but only of the parts of the structure actually missing". Above, in the pedestal stage supporting the effigies, "twenty small mullion-shafts . . . are much damaged and split by the iron dowels and cramps. The terminals of the four angle pinnacles of the lower stage which should come up to this are missing. All the loose stones should be reset and the missing ones reinstated". At the level of the original statues, of "the four pinnacles which were connected with the part next above, by flying buttresses, two are entirely missing and there are only fragments of the other two, suspended by the iron ties. The four angle shafts are so badly split by the tie rod as to be useless for the purpose of carrying weight and the whole of the superincumbent stone work bears on the central shaft which is itself very much burst by the same cause and crushed by the weight . . . by great care in doing the work, this part might be repaired without the taking down of the whole of the upper part. The four effigies are in good condition with the exception of some small bits of detail which are unimportant".

The 1633 statues, however, had been severely damaged, and required extensive repair:

"Charles I — both hands and the cap of one knee are missing.

Henry VI — both legs missing below the knee.

James I — one arm and one leg missing, and the body very badly cracked.

Elizabeth — one hand and both feet missing, and one hand broken."

Above at the heraldic level, some of the cherubs were missing, and the terminal spirelet was "so badly split and perished that it must be almost entirely renewed". Ponting further recommended that "the old stonework should be preserved intact wherever sound, however small may be the fragments; all loose parts should be reset and all the old fragments which can be found should be restored to their original positions. Any renewals should be made with a faithful regard to the spirit of the old work . . . and *on no account* should old stonework be interfered with because it is weather-worn or decayed on the surface, so long as it is capable of fulfilling its purpose in supporting the fabric." His estimate for the cost of the work amounted to £450; the restoration was put in hand immediately, and was already well advanced when a report on it appeared in the *Bristol Times* for 27 October 1894.

The necessary renovation of the seventeenth century statuary was apparently carried out by Harry Hems of Exeter who had executed the corresponding figures for the replacement New Cross on College Green in 1888: a letter dated 16 April 1895 from Ponting among the Stourhead papers at Trowbridge refers to the sculptor in connection with the work, and there is no reason to doubt that he was responsible for replacing the various missing parts itemised in the condition survey and restoration proposals.



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## Notes

1. C. Morris (ed.), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, London, 1949, 238.
2. For the history of Stourhead see K. Woodbridge, *Landscape and Antiquity: Aspects of English Culture at Stourhead 1718 to 1838*, Oxford, 1970.
3. Woodbridge, 1970, 59.
4. The most reliable accounts of what occurred immediately prior to the removal of the High Cross to Stourhead may be found in W. Barrett, *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol*, Bristol 1789, and J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, 1893. In other respects, however, Barrett's description and history of the High Cross is generally inaccurate and, like most other eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts, includes some rather fanciful detail derived from chroniclers and annalists whose narrative is frequently as unreliable as it is retrospective.
5. Latimer, 1893, 186. A copy of the petition, together with the names of its twenty-eight signatories, is appended to the volume of *Common Council Proceedings* that contains the minutes of the 21 July meeting at which "the Representation of the Inhabitants of High Street and others of this City whose names are thereunto subscribed humbly offering to the consideration of this house the Removal of the High Cross from its present Situation as a publick nuisance was read in ye House and some debate arising thereon the Question was put—whether the High Cross should be pulled down or not—and the house being called over it was voted in the Affirmative by a great Majority and Mr. Chamberlain is ordered to cause the same to be forthwith pulled down and issue money for that purpose and that Mr. Chamberlain do dispose of the Images and Materials thereof in such a manner as shall be thought proper" (Bristol Record Office).
6. Barrett, 1789, 474.
7. R. C. Hoare, 'Hundred of Mere', *The History of Modern Wiltshire*.
8. Oil on canvas, 23 x 19½ inches, City Art Gallery, Bristol. The painting reproduces, with some minor alterations, an engraving dated 1737 by William Henry Toms after Robert West which was published in London in 1743.
9. Barrett, 1789, 474-5.
10. Latimer, 1893, 325.
11. Barrett, 1789, 475.
12. *The Bristol Memorialist*, June 1816, 127-8.
13. J. Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol*, Bristol, 1825, 281n. The recipient of the letter was Thomas Paty (1718-89), the Bristol builder, for whom see W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bristol*, London, 1952, 40-2, and R. Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851*, London, 1951.
14. K. Woodbridge, 'Henry Hoare's Paradise'. *Art Bulletin*, XLVII, March 1965 111, n259. "Harriott" was Henry Hoare's grand-daughter, the Hon. Henrietta Boyle, daughter of Susanna Hoare by her first marriage to Charles Boyle, Lord Dungarvan.
15. Hoare, 1822, 65.
16. C. E. Ponting, 'The Bristol High Cross at Stourhead, Wiltshire', *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarians Club*, III, 1896, 181. J. F. Nicholls and J. Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, Bristol, 1881, I, 182, describes the Cross as "now in a very dilapidated condition".
17. Originally, according to the description printed beneath the 1734 Buck engraving, King John and Charles I were placed facing north (Broad Street), Henry III and Henry VI faced east (Wine Street), the figure supposed to represent Edward IV and James I faced south (High Street), and Edward III and Queen Elizabeth faced west (Corn Street); as they now appear at Stourhead, the statues of Henry III and Edward III have been transposed.
18. Bristol Record Office, *Mayor's Audits* 1633-1636, 196-9 (9 March 1633—10 January 1634). 270-1 (8 February 1634—14 January 1635); J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century*, Bristol, 1900, 125.
19. J. Latimer, 1900, 125. In 1634 £42.04.02 was paid for gold leaf and colours sent from London to decorate the Cross and further payments were made in Bristol to William Fletcher, a painter, for labour and materials. In 1699 the Corporation again repaired the Cross, the work costing £57, with a further £61 paid to Robert Bayly, apothecary, "for Oyls, Gould and Colours" and 8s. "for ye use of a shop to grind colours in" (*Mayor's Audits*, 1698-9, 47); Latimer, 1900, 489.  
C. Pooley, *Notes on the Old Crosses of Gloucestershire*, London 1868, 7-8, reports that "In its present mutilated state, the Cross affords sufficient proof that originally, not the figures only, but the entire surface of the stonework was thus enriched, the figures having best preserved these remains of colouring. The colours were vermilion, blue and gold. The gilding may be traced on every part—on the ribs of the groining, &c.; but the vermilion being the most durable, has retained its rich hue, while the blue has faded to pale grey. The dresses of the figures were for the most part painted vermilion; the mantles, and such portions of dress, blue; the borders, and other subsidiary ornamental parts, being relieved with gold. The surface of painting has long fallen into decay, and now hangs in loose flakes." The painting by Samuel Scott (3) belonging to the Bristol City Art Gallery is the only surviving visual record which depicts the High Cross with any of its original decoration such as Celia Fiennes described when she visited Bristol.
20. Latimer, 1900, 230.
21. *Mayor's Audits*, 1660-1, 31 January 1661 Latimer, 1900, 295.
22. L. C. Smith (ed.), *The Maire of Bristowe Is Kalendar by Robert Ricart*. Camden Society, 1872, 51.
23. For example at Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, dating from the mid-fifteenth century.
24. The Winchester Cross is itself largely reconstructed, having been extensively restored by Gilbert Scott in 1865: *Victoria County History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, V, 1912, 6; N. Pevsner, *Buildings of England: Hampshire and Isle of Wight*, 1967, 714.
25. Smith (ed.), 1872, x.
26. Barrett, 1789, 473; Pooley, 1868, 4-5, quotes in full the passage from a manuscript Calendar but questions its authenticity. Walpole's opinion is from a letter to the antiquary, Samuel Lysons, September 17th, 1789; W. S. Lewis (ed), Horace Walpole's Correspondence, XV, 1952, 201.
27. F. B. Bickley (ed.), *The Little Red Book of Bristol*, Bristol, 1900, II, 182.
28. Smith (ed.), 1872, 48; Evans, 1825, 123-4.
29. Since Samuel and Nathaniel Buck seem to have been the first antiquaries to associate the name of Edward IV with one of the statues and ascribe its date to 1461 when they published their engraving of the High Cross in 1734 (4) there is no reason to accept the traditional identification as reliable; the metal plates placed beneath the sculptures to identify the subjects were added after the monument was removed to Stourhead.
30. The date may be adduced from the heraldic evidence of the coats of arms on two of the shields held by angels above the arched openings which form the lower stage of the structure. Originally the Iron Acton Cross comprised an open base from which rose a central shaft embellished with niches containing four statues, only the brackets and canopies now remaining, above which there was a terminal cross.
31. The chantry was erected over the Earl of Worcester's tomb by his widow who remarried Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and consequently the chapel is often referred to as the Warwick chantry. Originally the canopy was richly embellished with pinnacles: J. Evans, *English Art 1307-1461*, Oxford, 1949, 179-80.
32. In William Worcestre's *Itinerary*, 1470-80, a total of six crosses are recorded in Bristol: J. Dallaway, *Antiquities of Bristowe*, Bristol, 1834.
33. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, 1893, 353.
34. *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*, London, 1798 II. "Description of Strawberry Hill": the engraving appears opposite page 461. I am indebted to Mr. Francis Greenacre who drew my attention to the Strawberry Hill provenance of the Bristol painting.
35. Pooley, 1868, 9-10.
36. J. Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century*, Bristol, 1887, 308; *ibid.*, *The Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century*, 1887-1900, Bristol, 1902, 10. In 1848 the cost of erecting the new cross and supplying it with statuary was estimated at £630, but when in 1851 £450 had been spent on the monument a further £480 was still required to furnish it with the figures which it was designed to display. The funds, however, were not forthcoming and in 1863 the seven remaining blank niches were particularly noticed in a pamphlet on the history of Bristol's High Cross by Charles Pooley (*Notes on Bristol High Cross*, Bristol, 1863). The figure of Edward III was carved by John Thomas, a prominent Victorian sculptor who had executed some of the statuary decorating the rebuilt House of Lords. The remaining statues, freely imitating those on the original High Cross, were set up in December, 1889; they were the work of Harry Hems, a prolific if somewhat indifferently pedestrian carver (*Victorian Church Art*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971, 75). A useful account of the history of the new cross was printed in the *Bristol Times*, 27 October, 1894.
37. R. Winstone, *Bristol Today*, 1971 (4th edition), plates 82-4; *ibid.*, *Bristol's Earliest Photographs*, Bristol, 1970, plate 61.



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