



Festivities at Lacock

Lacock is famed for festivities! A genial spirit seems to hang about the fine old sequestered spot on the banks of the Avon, where the developments of an advanced civilisation are found blended with the remains of antiquity. Happy in promoting happiness, successful in all enterprises, the good folks have acquired a reputation second to none in Wiltshire! The wise man says, "there is a time to laugh and a time to weep," and surely Lacock, falling in with so great an authority, is often practically urging upon us that life is not intended to be one monotonous round of care and labour. We have not now, however to picture one of those social gatherings which are so dependent for success on unity of action among its promoters; we have before us individual enterprise and individual hospitality, displayed in the person of Mr Edwin Eyres, the happy proprietor of the Ray mill. The success he had achieved led him to rebuild this mill on a more extensive and commodious scale: the superstructure having been erected and covered in under the combined workmanship of Mr Charles Banks and Mr John Gale of Lacock, and Mr J. P. Berry of Melksham, Mr Eyres called together the employees and a few of his friends to rejoice with him in the good old-fashioned custom of a "roof-rearing". Under the cooling shade of a broad spreading tent which had been erected behind the house, between 60 and 70 sat down to enjoy the smoking hot viands of a good old English fare, served up after the good old English style. The worthy Host, presiding at the head of the table, welcomed one and all right heartily, and, with the ready assistance of his two vice-presidents (Mr Gale and Mr Berry), was enabled to carve out a bounteous supply to meet the pressing demands of appetite, for the comfort and happiness of their guests. Ample justice having been done to everything, and many a cup of good strong beer been quaffed, the presiding Host called upon his friends to replenish their cups and drink the loyal toasts. The appeal to Loyalty found a hearty response, and the toasts were drunk with many cheers.

Mr Berry then proposed the health of Mr Eyres, coupling with it that of Mrs. And Miss Eyres, and in doing so adverted to the great antiquity of the mill and to the successful and honourable course of Mr Eyres' predecessor, of whom the present structure might serve as a memorial. He congratulated Mr Eyres on the success he had achieved, and particularly on this erection having been carried up without the slightest accident or hindrance, and trusted that the prosperity which had attended his old friend Mr Eyres hitherto would continue, and that he and Mrs and Miss Eyres might have health to enjoy their beautiful home. He further congratulated the tradesmen and workpeople upon the ample means and enterprise of their worthy host, who while he would have his work done well, was always ready to pay for it when done. The healths were drunk with the utmost enthusiasm.

Mr Eyres in returning thanks, alluded to the remark just made as to the antiquity of the mill, which was borne out by the fact that mention was made of a mill on the same spot in Domesday Book. He admitted that it was a lucky spot, and he enjoyed it. He expressed himself highly satisfied with the work that had been recently executed and with the decorum observed by all the workpeople. And further he bore testimony to the faithfulness of his own mill servants, many of whom had been there for a long period – some 20 and some as many as 30 years. Mr Eyres concluded his very kind and appropriate remarks by proposing the health of the tradesmen and workpeople.

Mr Gale in responding referred to his long connection with Ray Mill, he having been in the habit of going to and fro from a boy, and done a great deal of work there. In the course of many interesting observations he remarked that scarcely any of the old mill was now visible.

One of Mr Eyres' workpeople also returned thanks, gratefully acknowledging that the present as well as the former were good masters.

Mrs Barton, sen., having put in an appearance, her health was enthusiastically drunk, after which some capital songs were sung by Mr John and Mr Albert Barton, Mr Gale, Mr J Forden, Mr Berry, and others, thus bringing a very enjoyable evening to a pleasant close.

Since Mr Eyres has been the fortunate purchaser of the Ray Mills Estate, he has erected a very handsome and gentlemanly residence, on an elevated spot near the mill, which, with its pretty flower garden, conservatory, croquet ground, and approach by carriage road, through some of his rich meadow land, adorned by sundry rare trees, now forms an exceedingly pretty place. The new mill, which is double the size of the old one, is erected on the site of the old Ray Mill, which is supposed to be the oldest in Wiltshire. The mill in question possesses first-rate water power, and is considered the most powerful in the country.

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