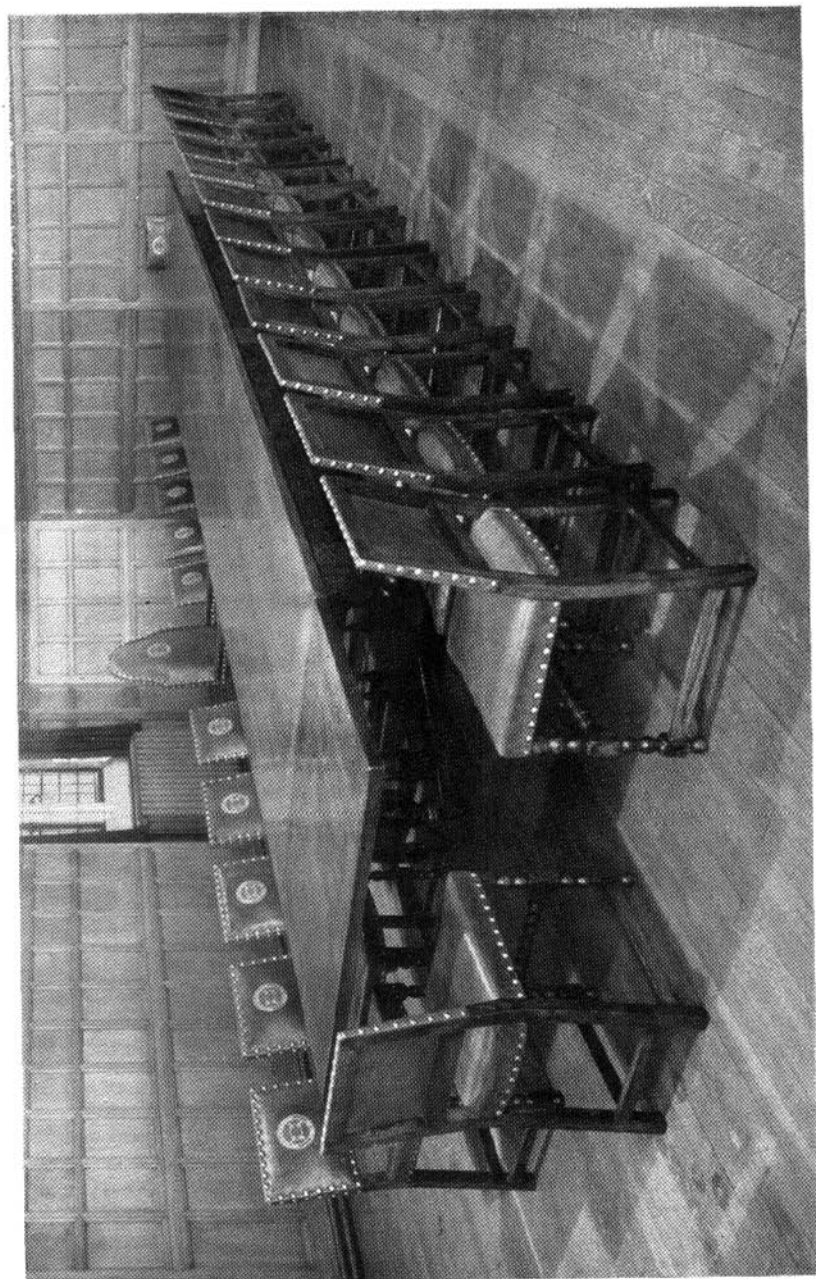
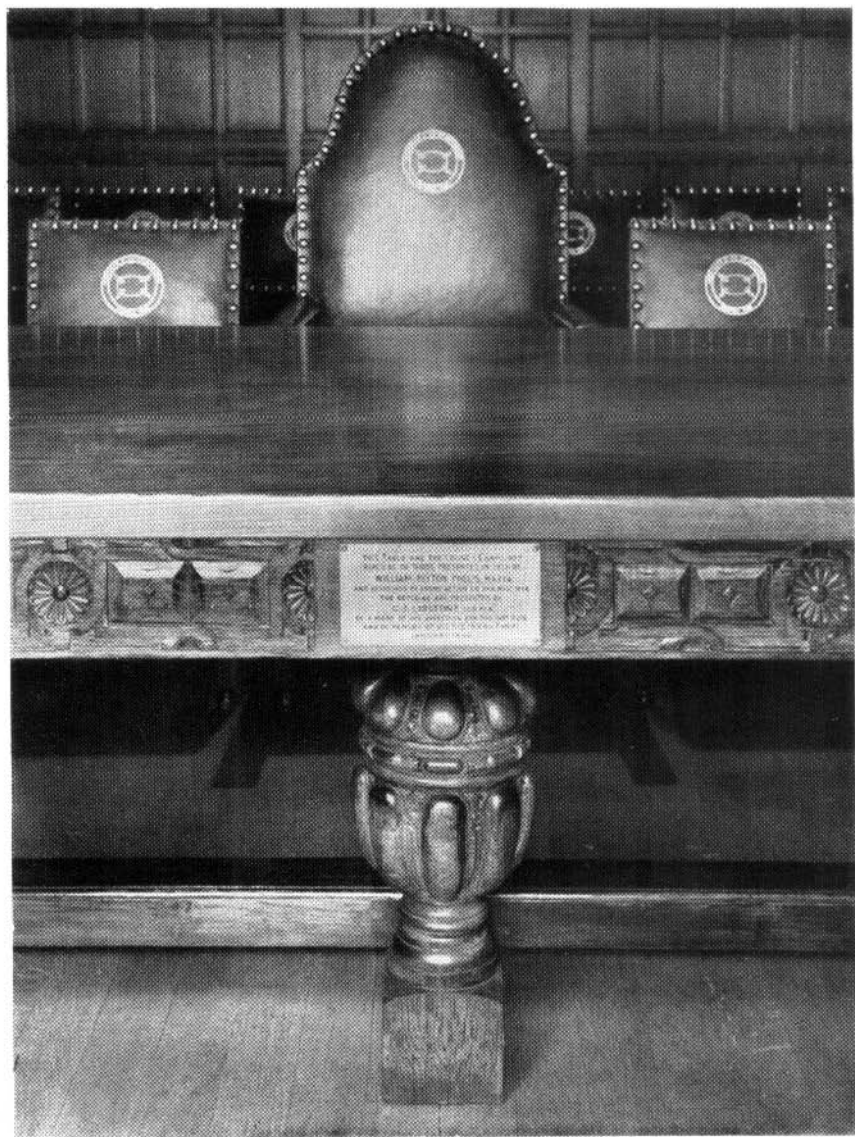


*The Table and Chairs*



*The Table, with the Extensions, and Chairs as in use*



*The Table, showing the Inscribed Plate*

## MR LIDSTONE'S GIFT

It was recorded in *J.I.A.* Vol. LXXII, p. 446, that Mr Lidstone was making to The Institute a gift of a Council Table and Chairs to replace the tragic loss that occurred when Staple Inn Hall was destroyed in 1944. The statement showed that, despite the difficulties of the time, the work was in progress and the new President's Chair completed. By the donor's express desire, this Chair was used at the Annual General Meeting in 1946 and symbolic continuity was emphasized in the fact that the President who had been the last to sit in the original 'Phelps' chair was the first to take his place in its successor.

Since that notable occasion, more than two and a half years have passed in which difficulty has long continued of procuring proper material. By the untiring effort of Mr Alex. D. Narramore, maker of the 'Phelps' Table and Chairs, suitable timber and hides were found and, under his supervision, skilled craftsmen have completed the great task.

The 'Phelps' gift (described and illustrated in *J.I.A.* Vol. LXIV, p. 12 and frontispiece) comprised a Council Table, a President's Chair and twenty-four other Chairs. Of them all, after every possible effort at expert reconstruction, there remained only two of the twenty-four chairs and a few fragments. With Mr Lidstone's approval, it was decided that the two salvaged chairs should be set apart, so that his gift has involved the replacement of all the original articles. The Council felt that the opportunity should be taken of making two relatively small supplements, namely the provision of sufficient chairs for its full membership (of thirty) and the addition to the Table of removable extensions at each end that would be needed when a meeting was very fully attended. It was recognized that this second supplement must be such as would not mar in the slightest degree the character and appearance of the Table in its primary purpose of representing a replacement by Mr Lidstone of Mr Phelps's original gift. Accordingly, it was resolved that the extensions should not be made unless this essential condition could be secured. Mr Narramore devoted much thought to the matter and, by his experience and skill, was able to produce a design that fulfilled the Council's condition and accomplished its practical intention.

Thus, the Institute has become the possessor of a new Council Table, a President's Chair and thirty other Chairs and, as Mr Lidstone said on learning of the completion of his incomparable gift, 'Finis coronat opus'. But possession of such treasures, without a fitting home in which to place and to use them, raised a serious problem. It was feared that the only course would be to store the articles in some warehouse, and that they should so remain for long was felt to be most undesirable. Happily, through the unfailing kindness of the Prudential Assurance Company, Ltd., accommodation has been granted in its Head Office at Holborn Bars and a great load of anxiety has been lifted from the shoulders of the Council, which has expressed warm thanks to the Institute's benefactors. It is hoped that members of the Institute will have the opportunity to view the Table and Chairs at the Annual General Meeting of 1949.

Meanwhile, photographs have been taken of which reproductions appear in this number of the *Journal*.

It is essential and appropriate to emphasize here the twofold aspect of

*Mr Lidstone's Gift*

Mr Lidstone's gift—his filial affection for the Institute of which for so long he has been a most distinguished member, and his personal commemoration of friendship with Mr Phelps, the donor of the Table and Chairs that were destroyed. Both intertwined strands of purpose are recorded fittingly by the inscription on the simple plate borne by the Table:

This Table and the Council Chairs are  
replicas of those presented in 1932 by  
WILLIAM PEYTON PHELPS, M.A., F.I.A.,  
and destroyed by enemy action on 24th Aug<sup>t</sup> 1944.  
The replicas are presented by  
G. J. LIDSTONE, LL.D., F.I.A.  
as a mark of his affection for the Institute  
and in memory of his old friend Phelps  
January 1946.

The following notes upon the new Table and Chairs have been compiled from material supplied by Mr Narramore, who has received from the Council a resolution of cordial appreciation for his work and service.

The Table has been constructed in accordance with the period that it represents, c. 1650, and is the same in detail as the original. The carving on the frieze was reproduced from remains of the old design, which itself was a copy of the plaster frieze in Staple Inn Hall.

The carved bulbous legs (now made slightly larger than those of the former table, because of the extra length involved by the extensions) were turned and carved from oak beams at least three hundred years old.

The licence for the timber to make the table was not granted until almost a year had passed, and another year was spent before timber of suitable length and quality was found. The oak came from the well-known merchants, Messrs William Oliver and Sons, who have supplied much timber for the new House of Commons. Even so, the material was only three-parts seasoned and the kiln process was employed to bring the moisture-content down to the proper proportion of 12½%.

Having regard to the great weight of the table-top, the extensions could not be made with simple slide movements. Therefore, the slides have been reinforced with iron angle plates, that are concealed (when not in use) under the top. In use, the extensions of the table-surface are placed on the withdrawn slides and are fixed by metal pins through the slides and guides. At full length, the table measures 22 feet.

The chairs were copied from examples of the Cromwellian period and are covered with full-grained cow-hide, of the best quality obtainable, supplied by The Bridge of Weir Leather Company.

The chairs, like their predecessors, bear the Staple Inn emblem and the die from which the stampings were produced is in the possession of the Institute.

The Council, and the members in General Meeting, had already tried to express their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Mr Lidstone. Record of this appears in *J.I.A.* Vol. LXXII, p. 446, and in the *Year Book* for 1946-47, p. 225. It was made clear that when the Institute had a new home, it would contain a feature commemorative of the great work and influence of Mr Lid-

stone. That resolve is yet unfulfilled and may remain so for a long period—but it will be accomplished. Meanwhile, the actual completion of the gift and its housing in Holborn Bars demanded special note. At the Council Meeting, 10 January 1949, the President was unanimously asked to convey to Mr Lidstone the Council's greetings and its very deep and renewed thanks. Even so, it was felt that something more was fitting and indeed requisite to mark the unique beauty of Mr Lidstone's purpose and action—something that would be for Mr Lidstone himself a constantly present reminder of Phelps and of The Institute. There was one such thing; the Council asked him to accept it and, after due reflexion, he agreed. So, one of the two salved 'Phelps' chairs has been presented to Mr Lidstone. It bears a small plate inscribed with terse simplicity that means so much:

To G. J. Lidstone, LL.D., F.I.A.,  
from The Institute of Actuaries,  
in gratitude and greeting.

January 1949.

The other 'Phelps' chair, which will remain with The Institute, carries a plate reading:

This Chair and another like it are the restored  
relics of the gift made to the Institute in 1932

by WILLIAM PEYTON PHELPS, M.A., F.I.A.

The Council Table and the other Chairs were lost  
with the Hall of Staple Inn on 24th. Aug<sup>t</sup> 1944

January 1946