



AN OLD ORFORD LANTERN.

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BY GEORGE E. CRISP.

This curiosity, exhibited at the evening meeting held at Ipswich, February 26th, 1889, and now preserved in the Museum, is hexagonal in shape, 12 inches in height, and 31 inches in circumference. In each of its six sides are two round lights, made of the bottoms of glass tumblers. Inside two candle-stands remain, proving that double lights were used in it. It is rude and quaint in design, and bears evidence of home-made construction. One of the old glass eyes is replaced by a modern one. Attached to the lantern is a piece of the old plaited rope by which it was carried. When I first obtained this lantern I believed it to be an old one used on the Orford Lantern Marshes, previous to the building of the present lighthouses; but after making enquiries and investigations concerning it, I find that prior to 1684, beacons for the guidance of seamen trading along the coast were burnt as follows. Two upon the site where the Low Lighthouse stood, and two upon the fields to the west of the town of Orford, even now known as the Beacon Fields. The first mentioned beacons were discontinued in 1704, when a lighthouse of timber (locally known as the Wooden Lantern) was erected in their place. In the year 1739 the Timber Light was superseded by a brick and stone structure, which was designated the Low Lighthouse. This building, after many vicissitudes, was demolished last year. Respecting the last mentioned beacons, the Earl, afterwards Marquis of Hertford, having stopped the burning of them upon his property, a second lighthouse—now standing—and known as the High Lighthouse, was erected in 1792. The true history of the Lantern, I believe to be this, that it is a ship's lantern, in use at the latter part of the last century. These old ships' lanterns were generally home-made by the village smith, and frequently contained two, if not three, candle-holders.

Mr. G. E. Crisp has had the accompanying woodcut specially prepared to illustrate this curious lantern, and members are indebted to him for his generosity.