

THE ARCHITECT OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.

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It is a common subject of regret that, while we have in every part of the kingdom works of art in stone second to none in the world, the names of the men who created them are lost. In the following paper I hope to be able to show that in Master Elias de Derham we recover the name of one these great men of old, one of the masters in the school which created for us our own distinctive Early English style. I shall certainly be able to show that socially he was a man of considerable eminence among the personages of the time, and artistically a leading authority among the great builders of the early part of the thirteenth century. The difficulty is to apportion to him his own part in the great works of the period, and my object in bringing forward his name in this paper is a hope that others who have far more knowledge and more opportunities of investigation than I possess, will have their attention drawn to it and add, out of their abundant stores, to the somewhat scanty memoir that I am able to offer.

The earliest date at which I have met with the name of Elias de Derham is in Rot. Chartarum I. p. 147, April 6, 6 John (1205), where he is described as one of the King's clerks, and Rector of Meauton.

In another of January 2, 1206, he is described as one of the Executors of the will of Archbishop Hubert Walter, and, he is ordered to pay over certain monies which had belonged to Savaric, the late Bishop of Bath. In 1206, April 4 (7 John), another writ in connection with this office of Executor of the Archbishop is addressed to him (Rot. Litt. Pat. p. 61). In the same year (Rot. Litt. Claus.) four writs are addressed to him, viz., on July 22,

¹ Read in the Architectural Section, at the Salisbury Meeting, August 5th, 1887.

23, 29, and August 13, as a royal officer; those of July 29, and August 13, speak of him as one of the custodians of the vacant Archbishopric, as also one of September 16, 1207. In July, 1207, he is with the king at Charterhouse in Somerset, where, in company with Bishop Joceline and others, he attests a charter of Philip de Lucy. (Rot. Litt. Pat., p. 82). I have also been told on good authority that he was the architect for the repairs of King John's palace at Westminster in the year 1209, but I have not as yet been able to verify the statement.

Elias de Derham has hitherto appeared as a royal official, and in personal attendance upon the king. The next entries show that later on he had attached himself to the opposite party. On May 4, in his 14th year (1212), the king gives him a safe conduct into England until June 24, under oath that no harm shall come to the King or realm by him or his companions.

The next mention of his name on Nov. 13, in the same year, shows that he had again left England. This fact comes out in an early will of Hugh de Wells, Bishop of Lincoln, a copy of which is among the muniments of Wells Cathedral. It was made by Bishop Hugh while he was living in exile with the other Bishops who had been driven out by the tyranny of John, at St. Martin's de Garenne, on St. Brice's Day, November 13, in the Bishop's third year, *i.e.* in A.D., 1212. In it Bishop Hugh appoints Master Elias de Derham to be co-executor together with his own brother Joceline, Bishop of Bath, and his name appears among the attesting witnesses of the will immediately after the name of Bishop Joceline, and in company with Peter de Cicester, afterwards Dean of Wells, and others.

This close relationship between the brother Bishops and Elias de Derham continued after their return from the exile. A charter, almost certainly of a later date than the return, is attested by him with the additional words "seneschal of Bishop Joceline." His name also occurs several times as a witness in Wells Charters at this date. (Wells Cathedral MSS. pp. 20, 23, 187.) He was taken into favour again by the king, possibly as early as in July, 1213. The document, however, upon which

this suggestion is founded, may bear another construction. (Rot. Litt. Claus. I p. 146.) But if his return to the King's service was not quite so early as 1213, it had clearly taken place by June in 1215. Two documents given at Runnymede on June 19 and June 21 in that year, leave no doubt upon the subject. (Rot. Litt. Pat., pp. 144, 180.^b) Between 1215 and 1220 I have not met with his name at all, but with the latter year he appears again, and now no longer as a royal clerk but as an architect, and that upon a work of great importance, the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury. The authority for this is Matthew Paris, who adds to his account of the translation of St. Thomas in A.D., 1220, (Hist. Min. II. page 241, Rolls Ed.) the statement that the shrine whither the body was removed, was the work of the incomparable artificers, Walter de Colchester, Sacrist of St. Albans, and Elias de Derham, Canon of Salisbury. The translation was the great event of the time. It had been in preparation for at least two years. Nothing that wealth and enthusiasm could suggest to make it a magnificent spectacle and enduring glory was spared; and if, as we should naturally expect, the first men of the day were employed upon the shrine, this would place Elias de Derham in the highest rank. We know that such was the position of Walter, of whom Walsingham says that he had never seen nor expected to see his equal, and here Matthew Paris treats Elias de Derham as his equal.

Other notices of about the same date which bring out both the high social position and the artistic eminence of Elias de Derham, are found in connection with Salisbury.

His name occurs no less than eleven times in the Osmund Register of Salisbury, as one of the Canons of the Cathedral, and upon one occasion the Bishop entrusts him with a certain charge, because he alone is faithful. Besides this the late Prebendary Jones says that there are "positive statements in the Book of Evidences among the Bishop's muniments, that he was the builder of the original house in the close called 'Aula Plumbea' or 'Leden-hall.' The document is entitled 'Scriptura de domibus de Leden-hall per Elias de Derham sumptuose constructis,' *i.e.*, a deed concerning the house called Leden-hall built at great expense by Elias de Derham."

Then as to the Cathedral, Leland gives a passage from an old Matyrology of Salisbury which speaks of Elias de Derham as 'rector,'¹ of the new fabric of the Church of Salisbury from its first foundation for twenty-five years.¹ To this Prebendary Jones adds, in his History of the Diocese, that by a sort of dim tradition he is believed by some to have been the first designer of the Cathedral.² He does not venture to give a decided opinion upon the subject nor to decide the exact meaning of the word 'rector,' but with such evidence as that which we have now before us, and more to follow, of his architectural powers, there seems every reason to take the word 'rector' in its usual sense, as meaning the chief person concerned, and not merely as the equivalent of 'magister operationum,' 'clerk of the works'; and to believe that the tradition which names Elias de Derham as the architect, is founded on the fact that he was the architect of this glorious building. It seems to me also that the fact that he was employed in some architectural capacity during the same years at Salisbury, Canterbury, Winchester, and that he accompanied Bp. Poore to Durham in the midst of it all (as we shall presently find he did) is quite inconsistent with the position of a mere Clerk of the Works, the reason for whose employment at all is that he should be in daily superintendence of the work of some particular building.

One more document belonging to this period is a Mandate of 1225 from King Henry III., to deliver to Master de Derham 13 large and straight grown oaks for the works at Salisbury Cathedral.³

For my next piece of evidence I am indebted to a paper by Mr. Smirke upon the King's Hall at Winchester, which was read before this Society and printed in the Winchester volume of 1845.

In that paper Mr. Smirke has shown by extracts from the Close Rolls and Liberate Rolls, that a great deal of

¹ "Helias de Berham (or Derham) Canonicus Sarum qui a prima fundatione Rector fuit novæ fabricæ ecclesiæ Sarum quinque et viginti annos." Leland Itin.

² Diocesan History of Salisbury p. 100.

³ Rot. Litt. Claus. vol. ii. p. 91. Mandatum est H. de Neville quod habere

faciat magistro Elie de Dereham xiii quercus longas et rectas in parvo parco domini regis de Odiham de dono domini regis ad vernas faciendas ad operationem ecclesie Sarr'. At Clarendon Dec. 30. Anno 10, H III.

work was going on at the Hall about the years 1230-1235, and that the architect employed was this Elias de Derham. He was then in close connection with the King, and indeed seems to have been in much the same relationship to that "eminent patron and student of architecture," as William of Wykeham was to King Edward III and his successors.

There is another passage which probably, I think, refers to this Elias in Gervase's *Acta Pontificum*. (*Rolls Series*, page 413). In the year 1239 the Archbishop of Canterbury personally, and in the presence of Master Elias de Durham, chose the site for the great church he was about to build at Canterbury. Why should the name of Elias de Durham be given in this connection, and only his, if it were not the Archbishop had called him in as the best authority upon the matter in hand? The name in Latin is indeed de *Durham*, not de *Derham*, but Durham and Derham are so much alike to the ear that the mistake might readily occur.¹

Such is the direct evidence; it is a much more difficult task if we pass on from these documentary records and try to trace out the handiwork of Elias de Derham in some of the buildings of the period where we might naturally expect to find them. This needs professional knowledge, skill, and acumen, to which I can make no claim. Besides such difficulties as arise from the changes and repairs of 650 years, there are allowances to be made for the variations to be expected in any great man's works. There may be a general likeness, and one general type to be recognised throughout them all, but I should suppose that there will very seldom be actual identity of detail in any two works of a master mind. He neither copies other men nor yet himself. But to decide how closely he will keep to any one pattern, or how quickly the forms will change under his hands, or what allowances should be made for personal and local influences, is a task far beyond my powers and opportunities of observation.

I do not therefore attempt to enter at all fully into this branch of the subject, but only quote a few observations of

¹ Anno 1239 ipse (Edmund Archieps.) elegit locum in quo Ecclesia Magna presente magistro Elia de Dunolmea quantitatis aedificabitur.

our recognised authorities which bear upon the point. We have found by documentary evidence that Elias de Derham was connected with Wells, Winchester, and Salisbury. The contemporary works at Wells, are the West Front of the Cathedral, parts of the Bishop's Palace, and some fragments of the Manor House at Wooky, all attributed to Bishop Joceline, the patron of Elias de Derham. But Mr. Smirke has noticed that there is much similarity between the King's Hall at Winchester, and those parts of Wells Palace, which are attributed to Bishop Joceline. The heads and the mullions of some of the windows in the Hall (he says) have a good deal of resemblance to those of one of the principal apartments in the Palace at Wells. We know that Elias de Derham was connected with both places, and distinctly as its architect with one of them.

The late Prebendary Jones tells us that Bishop Poore, founder of Salisbury Cathedral, on his translation to Durham took with him his friend Elias de Derham, and adds that there is a wonderful similitude between many portions of the Chapel of the Nine Altars there, and Salisbury Cathedral. This likeness may very possibly be due to this visit of Elias de Derham, for though Bishop Poore died before the the work was actually commenced at Durham, he had made great preparations in materials and money for it, and we should naturally expect that he would have also prepared the plans, in conjunction with the architectural friend he had brought from Salisbury. The actual architect, when the work did begin under Bishop Poore's successor, Bishop Nicholas de Farnham was Richard de Farinham, as I am informed by Canon Greenwell. The similarity of name seems to suggest relationship between the architect and his employer.

There is no such direct statement that I am aware of that Elias de Derham was ever at Lincoln, but probability is in favour of the idea, when we remember his connection with Bishop Hugh, and architectural evidence tends to corroborate it.

Mr. Irvine informs me that Sir Gilbert Scott found mouldings somewhat similar to the characteristic mouldings of Wells Cathedral in the South Transept at Lincoln, which he attributes to Bishop Hugh de Wells. Mr. Parker

also has pointed out that the vertical arrangement of crockets behind the detached marble shafts of the pillars at Lincoln, is a remarkable and uncommon feature which seems to have been in use for a very few years, and he adds that it occurs nowhere else except only in the west front of Wells Cathedral. He thinks that a close friendship between the Bishops of Lincoln and Bath may account for this, not knowing that they were brothers, and that the architect Elias de Derham was connected with both of them. (Parker's Rickman, p. 159, Note.) There was, I am told, a similar arrangement in the West Porches of St. Alban's, now destroyed. Besides these three I cannot hear of any other example of this peculiar arrangement. One more quotation may be made from Mr. Parker. Speaking of the circular window at Lincoln, he says, there is a window exactly similar to this at Laon, probably of the date A.D. 1220. (Parker's Rickman, p. 160, Note). May not this be a reminiscence of the exile of the Bishop and the architect Elias de Derham?

As to the birthplace and home of Master Elias de Derham, I venture to think that it is a mistake to suppose it is Durham, as suggested in the Salisbury Guide Book. Either Norfolk with its Dereham (for so the architect's name is spelt once or twice) or Gloucestershire with its Dyrham has a better claim to the honor.

There is something to be said on either side. On behalf of Gloucestershire, it may be said that the Manor of Dyrham is contiguous to Pucklechurch, which has always belonged to the Church in Somerset, and is close to the border of the diocese. From the year A.D. 1185 great works were going on in Somerset, at Glastonbury, and probably too at Wells, so that a young man of artistic tastes might well be drawn from so short a distance to these centres of architectural activity, and there find his education as an architect, to be carried on yet further during his years of exile with the Bishops. The fact too that several members of the same family were connected with the Wells Cathedral body tends to show that the family home was not very far away. As we have seen, Elias himself was the Bishop's seneschal. A Master Walter de Derham attests a Wells charter in A.D. 1235. A John de Derham is a Wells canon in A.D. 1243, and in A.D. 1245

a R. de Derham resigns a benefice in the diocese in favour of a John de Derham.

On the other hand Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury of whose will Elias de Derham was an executor, was a native of Dereham in Norfolk; and Matthew Paris says that Bishop Poore planned his Cathedral at Salisbury with the advice of noble artists brought from a distance, "Consilio nobilium artificium quos a remotis convocaverat!" (Chron. Mag., vi, 495).

As a family name de Derham is quite common both in the East and in the West.

A last testimony to the eminence of Elias de Derham in the eyes of his contemporaries is the record of his death among the few men of no rank or title whose death seemed to Matthew Paris worthy of record in the pages of history, A.D. 1245. "Ipso quoque tempore obiit Magister Elias de Derham canonicus Saresbiriensis cujus redditibus vacantibus manus rapaces injecit magister Martinus ad opus papæ." (Matt. Paris Chron. Mag. Roll. Ed., p. 418.)

Is it possible that we even yet have his portrait? The idea is suggested by an article of Mr. Irvine's in vol. xix, p. 15 of the Som. Archæol. Society's Proceedings, about Wells Cathedral.—

"Over what was the *great entrance* in one of the intersecting arches on the east side of the staircase buttress is a secular figure, sitting on a cushioned throne, dressed in simple costume and having no tonsure. This is the only figure which can undoubtedly be said to be coeval with the erection of the West Front, and carved by the hands of those who executed the rest of its foliage, every pane of which is of different design. Retired among which this one figure was placed in a position where it had escaped notice until the present restoration, when from its character and position it became evident that it was intended to commemorate a person in some special way connected with the erection of the structure."

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.

- Rot. Chartarum I. p. 147. J.d.g. &c. Sciatis nos intuitu Domini concessisse et presenti scripto confirmasse Deo et ecclesie Beate Marie de Meauton ad petitionem Magistri Elye de Derham clerici nostri, rectoris ejusdem ecclesie, quod omnes tenentes predictae ecclesie de Meauton liberi sint et quieti in perpetuum de sectis schirarum et hundredorum et de auxiliis vicomitis et omnium ballivorum et Ministorum suorum et de omnibus aliis que ad vicecomitem vel ballivos vel ministros suos pertinent. Quare volumus &c.
T. W. com. Sarr'. Saher de Quency, &c.
Apud Sutton vi die Aprilis Anno 6°.
- Rot. Litt. Claus. I. p. 42^b. Rex Magistro Elye de Derham, Alex. de Brancester et Johanni de Briwes. Mandamus vobis quod faciatis habere Johanni Cumin custodiam foreste de Mauling' sicut habuit tempore H. domini Cant. Arch.
T. me ipso apud Roff. 22 die Julii Anno 7°.
- P. 43^a. Rex Johanni de Brus, Magistro Elye. de Derham et Alex. de Brancester. Mandamus vobis quod faciatis habere Rogero de la Dune Constabulo turris London, saisinam terre que fuit Radulphi Rokeshve in H'ewes cum pertinentiis, quia dedimus ei custodiam terre ejusdem.
T. G. fil Petri. apud Windesor 23 die Julii, Anno 7°.
- 44^b. Rex Magistro Elye de Derham et sociis suis custodibus Archiepiscopatus Cant. Salutem. Sciatis quod dedimus Magistro Benedicto de Rames clerico nostro custodiam terre et heredis Rad. Leyr' in Wymeledon, &c.
T. me ipso apud Micheldevor 29 die Julii Anno 7°.
- 46^b. Preceptum Reginaldo de Cornhill pro Jacobo de Salvagio et Magistro Elya de Derham scilicet quod eis habere faciet omnia catalla de Wardis quas Arch. Cant. habuit in balliva sua die qua obiit 13 Aug. A°. 7°.
61. Rex Jacobo Salvagio et Magistro E de Derham &c. executoribus testamenti domini H. Cant: Arch: Mandamus vobis quod omni occasione et dilatione postpositis faciatis habere domino P. Winton per Manu' W. Archid: Tanton, et W. de Cornhill, e libras quas predictus H. quondam Cant: Arch: habuit die qua obiit de pecunia S. quondam Bath: Episcopi pro e libris quas prefatus P Wint. Eps. habere fecit de prestito per plegium suum eidem S. Bath: Epo. habere faciatis H. Archid. Well. et W. Archid. de Tanton, custodibus Episcopatus Bath: ad quietanda debita predicti Episcopi.
T. me ipso apud Clarendon 2 die Januar. Anno 7°.
92. Rex. Bar. &c. Comput. Magistro E de Derham et sociis suis exors. Ea que liberaverunt R de Cornhill per preceptam nostrum de fine que nobiscum fecerunt pro eodem Arch:
T. me ipso apud Herpet. 16 die Sept. Anno 9°.
per Ric. de Marisco.

146. Rex. W., thesaurario, G et R Camerariis &c. Liberate de thesaurario nostro Willelmo de Waleides senescallo Robt. fil. Walteri centum marcas ad opus ejusdem Roberti pro dampnis ei illatis. T. ut supra. Eustachius de Vesay habet litteras de centum libris Magistro Elye de Derham vel Johanni de Fereby liberandis ad opus Eustachii pro dampnis ei illatis. Apud Wynton, 21 Julij, Anno 15°.
- Rot. Litt. Pat. 1201, 1216, p. 61. Rex. Jacobo Salvac: et Magro Elye de Derham salt. Mandamus vobis quod liberetis Reginaldo de Cornhill mille et centum marcas de fine quem fecistis pro debitis domini H. quondam Archiepi. Cant. Et in hujus rei testimonium has litteras patentes vobis mittimus.
T. me ipso apud Dovre 4 die Aprilis, Anno 7°.
- p. 92. Anno Joh^s 14°. Rex omnibus. Sciatis quod recepimus in salvum conductum nostrum magistrum Elyam de Derham et suos qui cum eo venerint in veniendo ad nos in Anglia, et in morando, et in revertendo usque ad festum S Johannis, Bapt. June 24th, Anno r.n. 14°. prestito sacramento quod per ipsum vel suos malum nobis vel regno nostro non eveniet, &c.
T. me ipso apud Lameth, 4 die Maii Anno 14°.
- p. 144. Rex. W. de Wrotlam salt. Mandamus vobis quod de catallis mercatorum Flandriensium ubicumque inventa fuerint in Anglia tant: arestetis, unde restitui possiut Willelmo Hervic catalla sua que Flandrenses ei abstulerunt in potestate nostra
. . . liberetis dilecto nostro Magistro Elye de Derham ut per manum ipsius prefato Willelmo catalla sua restituantur. Tociens enim Comitissam Flandrensem pro eo rogavimus cum nobis super hoc fecerit, quod oportet quod ad hoc manum districtionis apponamus.
Apud Runemed, 21 June, Anno 17°.
- p. 180^b. A list of persons to whom letters patent had been sent to cause inquiry to be made into grievances connected with the forests. Item Magistro Elye de Derham, quatuor cartas.
et eidem duodecim brevia scilicet de Roteland, baronibus de quinque portubus, Berkesire, Stafforsire, Sussex, Devon, Norhamton, Surreya, Suhamton, Salop, Westmeriland, Buckingeham.
T. me ipso apud Runimed, 19 June Anno 17°.
- p. 78^b. Arnulph de Derham has letters of protection with others, going with Stephen Ridel over sea.
Jan. Anno 9°.
- 57 Master Gaufrid de Derham with others similarly.
Dec. 18, a° 7°.
82. Carta Philippi de Lucy quam fecit domino regi de mille marcis quas debet domino regi liberata in camera domini regis apud chartuse die Lune prox. auti festum S. Jacobi Apli Anno regni domini regi, 9°. Scilicet Magistro Ricardo de Marisco tunc clerico de camera, coram domino J Bathon epo, domino W de Gray cancellario suo, H Archid Well. Mgro Michaele Belet, Mgro Elya de Dierham et multis aliis.
(Charterhouse, Somerset) July.
- Item apud Oxon die Mercurii in festo S. Marie Magdalene liberate magistro (Elye) de Derham, sex carte.