

# PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

20 OCT. 1905—28 MAY 1906.

WITH

**Communications**

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XLVII.

BEING No. 3 OF THE ELEVENTH VOLUME.

(FIFTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



**Cambridge :**

DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.; MACMILLAN & BOWES.

LONDON : G. BELL AND SONS.

1907

*Price Ten Shillings net.*

ments of earlier Palaeolithic type, and appear to have been shaped by alternate blows on either side of the edge, but as these were the only examples found, they must be classed with "uncertain implements," and not given the undue value too often bestowed on such questionable forms.

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Monday, 7 May, 1906.

W. M. FAWCETT, M.A., Vice-President, in the Chair.

JOHN WILLIS CLARK, M.A., Trinity College, read the following paper :

NOTE ON THE LIBRARY OF THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF *LA CHAISE DIEU* IN AUVERGNE.

The origin of the monastery of La Chaise Dieu (Maison de Dieu—Casa Dei) may be referred to the year 1043, when Robert, a monk of noble birth, left a monastic community in Brioude, with two attendants, and betook himself to a spot in the wild highlands between Clermont Ferrand and Le Puy, about 30 miles north of the latter town, where he and his community could carry out without fear of interruption the two great objects of the monastic life, prayer and work. The site of the House is at a height of 3553 feet above the sea-level (a height nearly equal to that of Snowdon), and the country is still sparsely populated, with vast open fields, intersected by the roughest of mountain-roads. Notwithstanding these natural disadvantages, perhaps in consequence of them, the House grew and flourished, and became one of the richest and most celebrated in France.

I have no intention of tracing the history of La Chaise Dieu, which I visited 16 September, 1905, or of describing its buildings more minutely than is necessary for the right understanding of that part of it to which I wish to draw special attention, viz. the Library. I will therefore merely record that the great development of its buildings was due to the generosity of Pope Clement VI, who had been a monk there ;

and that in 1344, two years after his election, he began to rebuild the church at his own expense. His work was pushed forward with great activity, and in six years the church was completed, with the exception of the three westernmost bays of the nave and the west front, which were added by another pope, Gregory XI, between 1370 and 1378. The portions erected by each pope can be readily distinguished by his arms on the keystones of the vault.

A distinguished French archeologist, M. Maurice Faucon<sup>1</sup>, has been so fortunate as to discover, in the archives of the Vatican, a small account-book, in which the money spent by Clement VI is set down, with many particulars of the outlay. This precious volume tells us, among other things, that the architect was Hugues Morel, probably one of those employed at the papal court at Avignon; and that the total spent was 375,000 fr. This sum, reduced to the present value of money, is 1,875,000 fr., or £75,000 English. The material is a grey stone, and the style severe, with small windows and an almost total absence of ornament—characteristics which are admirably suited to the rigorous climate of the locality. The church, as completed by Gregory XI, is 249 feet long, by 78 feet broad, and 59 feet high.

Clement VI died at Avignon, 6 December, 1352; and he was buried, by his own particular wish, in the church of La Chaise Dieu; where his tomb and effigy, sadly mutilated, may still be seen in the centre of the monastic choir. His recumbent effigy, of white marble, reposes on an altar-tomb of black marble, which was originally decorated with the effigies of 44 persons, relatives or friends, whose names have been preserved to us in one of the documents lately discovered in the Vatican. The whole was executed during the life-time of the pope, and under his direction.

The stalls, by their style, may be referred to the first quarter of the fifteenth century; but no precise record of their construction has been preserved.

<sup>1</sup> *Documents inédits sur l'église de la Chaise-Dieu*, in *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, Année 1883. *Section Archéologie*, pp. 383—443.

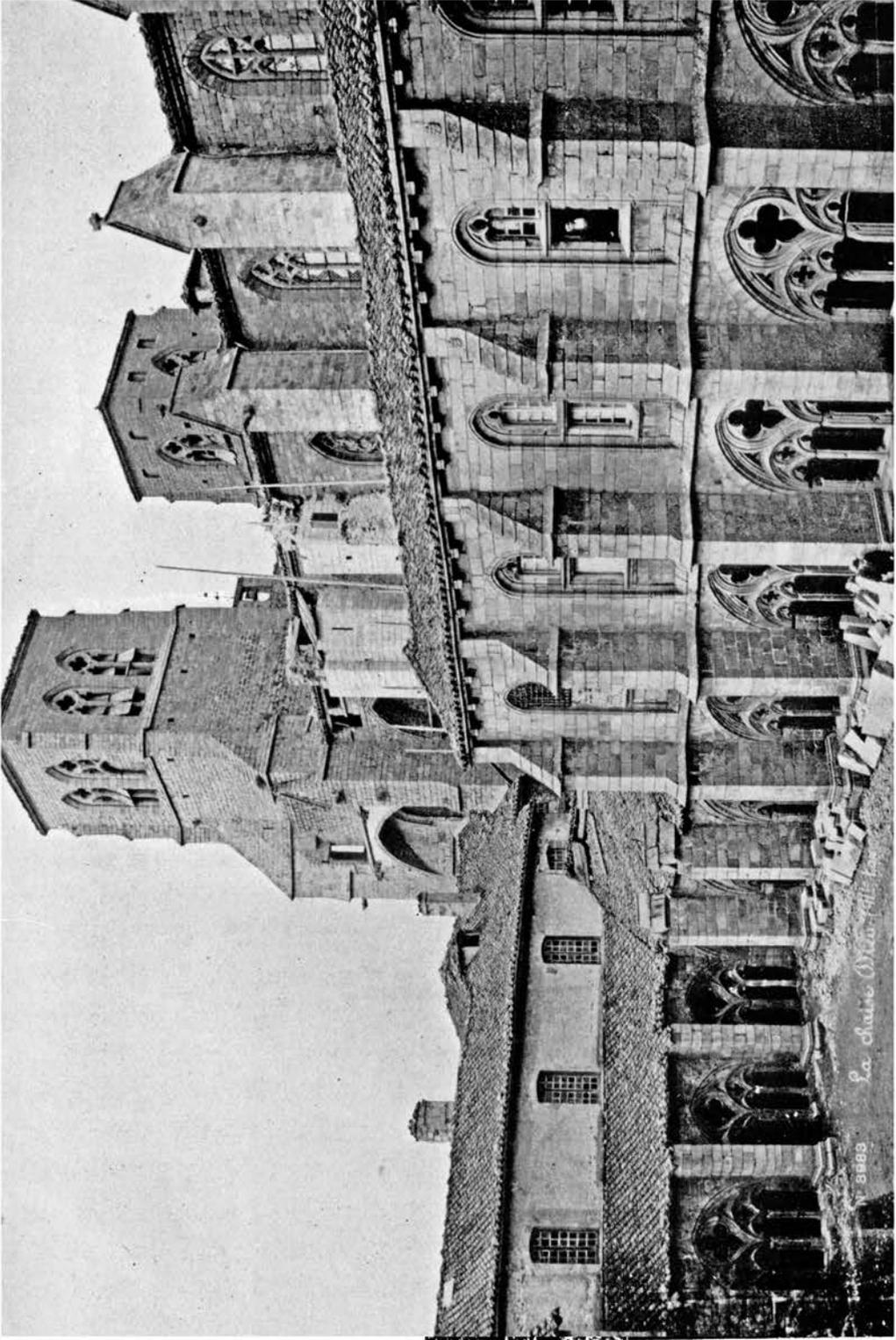
The tapestries—about which we are shortly to hear more—are fortunately dated. They were hung up in the choir, above the stalls, on the feast of S. Robert, the founder, 17 April, 1518, by Jacques de Sénectaire, the last of the regular abbats. After him the abbacy was conferred on distinguished ecclesiastics *in commendam*, residence not being obligatory, and the decline of the House began.

I now pass to the conventual buildings<sup>1</sup>. The fortifications of the abbey—eminently necessary in so lonely a situation—were built by Abbat André de Chanac between 1378 and 1420. In these I include the lofty tower at the S.E. angle of the apse—a splendid specimen of civil architecture, and a real fortress which it would have required a siege to reduce. It is always called *La Tour Clementine*, though it was not begun until 26 years after the death of Pope Clement VI. Besides this tower, many fragments of the wall of enceinte, with its towers, and one of the gates, still remain. Ruined as these are, they form a most instructive series, and throw a flood of light upon those now distant days when a monastery had to be prepared against material as well as spiritual enemies.

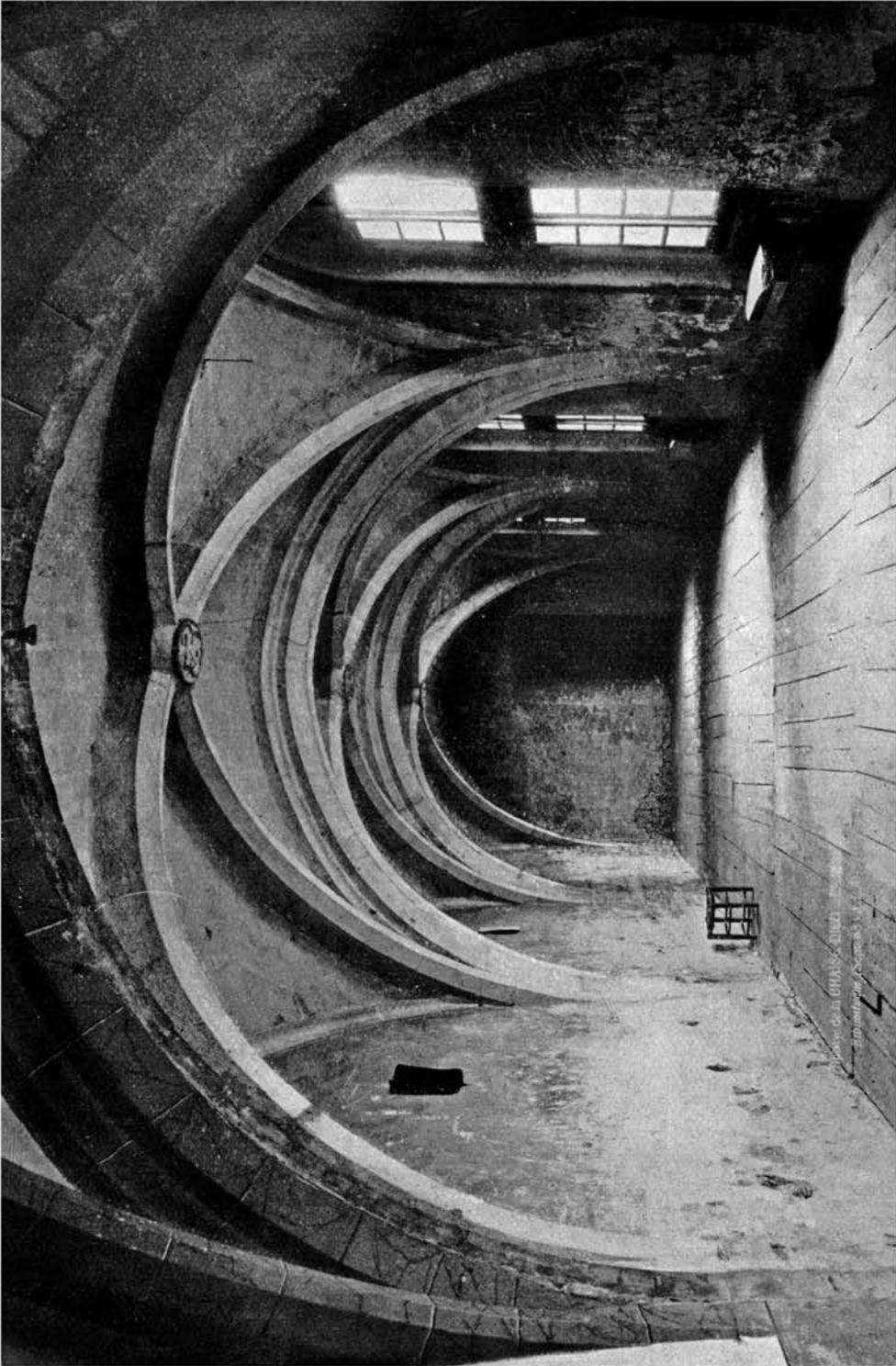
Abbat de Chanac is also credited with the building of the north pane of the cloister with the library over it—which, on the evidence of the buttresses—was built at the same time (Plate XXXIX). The cloister stands at a certain distance from the church, instead of abutting against it, as is more usual. This position is probably due to the fact that before the cloister was planned, a sacristy had been already built against the south wall. The library is entered through a door at the east end, approached from the staircase which doubtless led to the dorter and other monastic buildings. This staircase is part of the buildings rebuilt in the eighteenth century, but there is no reason to doubt that it replaces an older one which served the same purpose.

The library (Plate XL) is about 85 ft. long by 15 ft. 9 in. wide; but the former measurement must be received with caution, as it is now subdivided into a number of small rooms,

<sup>1</sup> There is a bird's-eye view of the monastery in the *Monasticon gallicanum*. 4to. Paris, 1882. Pl. 27.



North pane of Cloister at La Chaise Dieu, with Library above it.



Interior of the Library at La Chaise Dieu.

used for official purposes by the mayor of the town; and though I succeeded in entering all of them, I found it impossible to make an accurate ground plan in the time at my disposal. My measurement was therefore taken from the outside. Each bay has a window of a single light, divided by a transom. I examined carefully the north wall, both inside and outside, but I could find no trace of windows; and the same may be said of the west gable. The roof has a plain quadripartite vault—like those used in the church and elsewhere.

An interesting peculiarity should be noticed. Each window has one stone seat, placed against the east jamb; so that a reader would find the light falling conveniently on his work, whether he were reading or writing, from the left side.

It is stated that the library contained 5853 volumes when the House was suppressed; and further, that a number of these are in the parochial and communal libraries at Brioude. I can only hope that this is the case; but in the catalogue of the MSS in the public library (*Bibliothèque communale*) of Brioude I find only seven MSS enumerated, none of which came from *La Chaise Dieu*.

This library deserves special attention as being—so far as I know—the only specially monastic library over a cloister which has survived to our time. The Cathedrals of Salisbury and Wells have, I am aware, libraries over a cloister; but in the first place they are not monastic, and, secondly, the east cloister was chosen, where light could be obtained on both sides. Usually, when a cloister is so placed with reference to an aisle that the outer wall of the latter becomes the inner wall of the former, the library rises above the aisle roof, and windows can be placed in the wall on that side as well as on the other which is turned towards the cloister-garth. An exception was once to be seen at Grönendaal in Flanders, where the library extended along the whole side of the church, which was devoid of aisles; and, as at *La Chaise Dieu*, it must have had a blank wall along that side. Other examples can probably be easily discovered. How then were these libraries fitted up? In the present state of our knowledge I can only

reply that I do not know. An ancient catalogue would give us some information, but, until one is found, we can only conjecture. I am inclined to think that the lectern-system would be adopted; and that the MSS reposed on sloping desks—to which they were probably chained.

Dr MONTAGUE RHODES JAMES, Provost of King's College, read the following paper:

## THE TAPESTRIES AT AIX-EN-PROVENCE AND AT LA CHAISE DIEU.

### 1. *Aix-en-Provence.*

All the guide-books make mention of certain tapestries which are preserved partly in the choir of the Cathedral, and partly in the Archbishop's palace, at Aix-en-Provence. The French guide-books and monographs (such as that of Jubainville) tell the same story of their origin. They were purchased, it is said, in Paris, in the year 1656, by a Canon of the Cathedral, named De Mimata, for the sum of 1200 crowns; they came from St Paul's Cathedral, and were sold by order of the Commonwealth authorities.

It is always interesting to trace portions of the furniture of our cathedrals which have made their way abroad; but our chances of doing this are few. Most of us know the great copper candlesticks in the church of St Bavon at Ghent, which were presented to St Paul's Cathedral by Henry VIII. Others have seen the Paschal candlestick of the thirteenth century at Milan, which is very probably of English make, and perhaps came from Durham. Many foreign treasuries preserve vestments of *opus Anglicanum*, some of which, very likely, were taken across the water at the Dissolution, though doubtless most were exported at the time of their manufacture. But the list of English church furniture now to be seen in continental churches is not a long one.

The existence, and reputed history, of the Aix tapestries were important factors in inducing me to visit the old capital of Provence two years ago, and on that occasion I was able to

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