

ART. VIII.—*The Salkeld screen in Carlisle Cathedral: its date and motive.* By Canon C. M. L. BOUCH, F.S.A.

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WHEN I was preparing Mr C. G. Bulman's valuable paper on the Salkeld screen (CW2 lvi 112-127) for publication I made some discoveries which I thought were of interest. When I mentioned them to Mr Bulman he suggested that I should incorporate them in a paper of my own, rather than include them in his paper. Needless to say for the cultural and artistic aspect of Mr Bulman's work I have great admiration, but I venture to think that there is a possible alternative explanation for the erection of the screen.

The first part of my paper gives the results of my enquiries to ascertain the date of the screen: the second part deals with the question of the motives of the men who commissioned it.

I. THE DATE.

On the front of the screen—the side facing the choir of the cathedral—assuming that it faces as it did originally, the central position is occupied by the sacred monogram and the symbols of the passion. Below are the arms of the Deanery of Carlisle with Dean Lancelot Salkeld's initials prominently displayed at each side, with the addition on one side of the letters DK = Decanus Karleolensis, proving, as Mr Bulman has stated, that the screen must have been commissioned after Salkeld's appointment as Dean on 6 May 1541.

On what may be called the reverse side of the screen the main heraldic feature is the coat of arms of Henry VIII with supporters. On either side are shields displaying three ostrich feathers, often called the Prince of

Wales's feathers, although it is well known that they were not used exclusively by the eldest son of the Sovereign.

Charles Boutell in *English Heraldry*¹ says:

"It is certain that the Ostrich Feathers were held to be a *Royal Badge* from the time of their first appearance in the Heraldry of England about the middle of the 14th century; and that in that character they were adopted and borne by successive sovereigns, and by the princes, sometimes also by the princesses (as in the instance of a seal of Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII) of the Royal Houses, without any other distinction than some slight mark of cadency and without the slightest trace of any peculiar association with any one member of the Royal Family. From the time of the accession of the House of Stuart to the Crown of the United Kingdom, however, the coroneted plume of the three Ostrich Feathers appears to have been regarded, as it is at this present day, as the special Badge of the prince of Wales."

A good example of the more general use of the three ostrich feathers, in this case arising out of a coronet, can be seen over the gateway of Peterborough deanery, which is generally believed to date from about 1500. In this instance, the badge is supposed to be that of one of the Beaufort family—probably of Lady Margaret Beaufort, who was certainly a friend of Abbot Kirton, in whose time the gateway was put up.²

The screen cannot be earlier in date than 1541, but Edward VI was born in 1537, and it is a little difficult to see why, if there was so much rejoicing in Carlisle at the news of his birth, the Prior and his brethren waited four years before commemorating it.

We are therefore left with the problem that

(1) if the screen was planned soon after Edward's birth, then this was at the very time when the

¹ 9th ed., 240.

² An article in the *Birmingham Post* of 21 December 1953 by Mr Edmund Vale and *The Last Days of Peterborough Monastery*, ed. W. T. Mellows (Northants Record Society), xii p. x. I am indebted to the Dean of Peterborough and to Canon J. L. Cartwright for this reference and for help on this point.

canons were daily expecting the dissolution of their house and the surrender of their buildings and possessions into the king's hands.

- (2) If, on the other hand, the screen was planned after the re-foundation of the house by the king (and the letters on its south face prove that this was so) then the design cannot have been settled until nearly four years after the birth of the prince.

It was these difficulties of dating that made me consider a possible alternative motive: that the screen was planned or erected by Dean Salkeld in commemoration of the refounding of the cathedral by Henry VIII.

II. THE MOTIVE.

Mr Bulman has given us an admirable summary of dynastic history in England from 1399 to 1537, and he advances excellent reasons why the birth of Prince Edward in 1537 was received with joy. But was this the case in Carlisle? All the evidence suggests that the Tudors with their policy of centralisation were unpopular in the Catholic and feudal North. Mr S. T. Bindoff's statement: "In the history of England, Tudor rule meant the rule of the South over the North"³ sums up the reasons for their unpopularity.

In 1536 the Pilgrimage of Grace was only suppressed by Henry VIII breaking his word. Sixty-six men from Cumberland were hung in chains, to die slowly of thirst, hunger and exhaustion.

This was in October 1536, a year before the Prince was born. One can hardly suppose that the news of the birth of a male heir to the tyrant king was received with much enthusiasm in Carlisle, nor is it easy to imagine the prior and canons, daily awaiting news of the dissolution of their priory, employing their time in planning a memorial to mark the Prince's birth. It was scarcely the

³ *Tudor England*, 107.

time for Northern folk to rejoice that the Tudor dynasty was likely to endure.

After the suppression of the Pilgrimage of Grace the dissolution of the monasteries, in the defence of which the Pilgrims had risen, went on; the priory of Carlisle was suppressed on 9 January 1540 and four of the canons were pensioned off. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of the prior and remaining canons as the months went by and no announcement of their fate was made. Then in June 1541 came the news that the king had at last acted and with unusual generosity, for out of the dissolved priory he founded the Cathedral church of Carlisle, with a dean and four prebendaries, and endowed the new foundation not only with the possessions of the priory, but also with the endowments of the dissolved priory of Wetheral, and its fishing rights on the Eden.

Here surely was cause for gratitude and rejoicing. A new era had begun and the time was appropriate for a notable commemoration. I suggest that it took the form of a screen, with the initials of the new dean, and of his office. To mark the continuity of the new foundation with the old, the arms of the priory of Carlisle, henceforth to be those of the dean and chapter, were placed in the centre of the front of the screen. The Catholic faith must not be crowded out—the name of the church had changed, but that was all—“the old leaven was still there”⁴—so over all were placed the sacred monogram and the symbols of the Passion of Our Lord. Then on the reverse side of the screen the Royal arms were placed, as a token that the chapter acknowledged the king as head of the Church—for doubts on this question a lord chancellor and a bishop had lost their heads—and various royal badges: the ostrich feathers, the fleur de lys, the Tudor rose. On the scroll (to use Boutell’s word) of the three feathers there appear the mysterious letters G.S.P.E.

⁴ Canon James Wilson in *VCH Cumberland*, ii 149.

(Billings,⁵ however, read them as O.S.P.E) which Mr Bulman thought stands for "God Save Prince Edward".

The fact that the arms of the Dean and Chapter and the dean's initials, with various sacred emblems, are placed on the inner side of the screen, facing into the choir, while the Royal arms and badges are on the outer or aisle side, seems to suggest that the chief motive for the erection of the screen was religious rather than secular. Another pointer in the same direction may be that the initials L.S., D.K. on the inner side are so much larger than the mysterious letters on the outer side.

⁵ R. W. Billings, *Carlisle Cathedral* (1839).