The Mortuary Chapels of Lichfield Cathedral.

PAPER READ IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL, JULY 27TH,
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THE term "Mortuary Chapels" has been adopted as the title of this paper, inasmuch as it is the name by which that portion of the Lady Chapel that it is intended to restore to the memory of the late Bishop Selwyn is usually distinguished, and is not to be understood as expressing the concurrence of the writer in the accuracy of the term. These structures, whatever be their right designation, are three in number, and consist of small vaulted chambers built between the buttresses on the south side of the chapel of Our Lady. The chamber nearest to the east has an area of 8 ft. 8 in., by 5 ft. 9 in., and has a doorway communicating with the interior of the cathedral. The central one is the largest, being 13 ft. by 5 ft. 9 in., and can only be gained by a square-headed doorway from the east chamber, which passes through the intervening buttress, having a thickness of 3 ft. 3 in. The chamber to the west is gained by another small doorway out of the Lady Chapel, and has an area which almost exactly corresponds with that of the east chamber. From this room a low doorway in the west wall gives access to a flight of stone steps that leads down to three crypts or vaults, below the three chambers. The floor of these crypts is on solid rock, and level with the foundations of the fabric itself. A narrow gangway round the intervening buttresses gives access to the central and east crypts. That these crypts and the superincumbent chambers formed

part of the original design of the Lady Chapel cannot be for a moment doubted, as the stones from which the vaulting of the crypts spring are a component part of the masonry of the main wall. The roofs of the three chambers are nicely groined with stone ribs and bosses, and the floor of the central one is still partly covered with encaustic tiles of a simple yellow and black glaze, arranged alternately in a lozenge pattern. In proceeding to the exterior of the Lady Chapel, it will be found that these chambers are surmounted by sharply-pitched gables, which have originally covered richly ornamented sepulchral recesses. Their cuspings must have been something after the fashion of the canopied external tomb to the east of the south transept entrance of this cathedral. The front stones of these recesses have been all removed, probably in the course of last century, owing to their being much decayed. At the same time, or at all events not earlier than the seventeenth century, the windows of the two side chambers were cut down so as to form doorways communicating with the exterior of the building. It seems likely that the doorway nearest the east was the first thus treated. I have carefully looked over all the known engravings of Lichfield Cathedral, beginning with the illustrations to Fuller's *Church History* and Dugdale's *Monasticon*, as well as several private drawings and views of an early date, but of those which give a south view, none are executed with sufficient minuteness or accuracy to determine the condition of these recesses. It was not until I came to an engraving of Snape's, of the year 1781, that any view giving details of this part of the fabric was found, and there the doorway of the eastern chamber is shown in its present condition, and also the two windows over the central recess. After that date there are several views, including the accurate plate in Britton's *History* (1836), that give all the recesses as they now are. Fortunately the cinquefoil head of the two-light window of the west chamber still remains, so that this and its fellow can be restored precisely as it was originally constructed. The two plainer two-light windows of the central chamber are yet *in situ*, though the mullions have been renewed at a later date.

Below these two windows is a stone coffined recess, measuring internally 6 ft. 3 in. long, by 2 ft. broad and 18 in. deep, and I am told that undoubted traces have been found of its having once been occupied by a lead coffin. This receptacle forms a component part of the design; the front of it is panelled after the same pattern that prevails on the walls of the Lady Chapel just below the battlements. It is also evident, from a careful inspection of the recesses that flank the central one, that these also have each had their coffined receptacles, ornamented in the same way as that which now remains. These would be removed when the outer doorways were constructed.

Sepulchral recesses in the outer walls are not of nearly so frequent occurrence as those in inner walls, but several instances may be noticed in Derbyshire churches *e. g.*, North Winfield, South Normanton, Church Broughton, and Sawley, where there are sepulchral recesses in the south chancel walls, all of the fourteenth century. In the case at Sawley, the effigy (which has been recently most wrongfully displaced) is probably that of a Prebend and Treasurer of this Cathedral, who seems to have rebuilt the chancel. At Crich the first chaplain of the chantry of SS. Nicholas and Katharine, founded in 1350, was buried in an outer recess in the north wall, that aisle having been rebuilt by the founder, who himself occupies a niche on the inner side of the same wall. Whenever evidence can be obtained about such recesses, it is almost invariably made manifest that they were intended for founders or co-founders of the structure. If the date of the Lady Chapel can be determined with precision, we also obtain the date of these three chambers with their outer tombs, for, as has been already remarked, they are a component part of the fabric itself.

It has hitherto been stated in all the numerous works treating on our English Cathedrals, as well as in the histories, guides, and more critical surveys of Lichfield in particular, that the Lady Chapel was begun by that fearless and munificent prelate, Walter de Langton, who ruled over this see from 1296 to 1321, but that his death occurring before its completion, it was finished by funds left by him for that purpose. But on looking

for the original authority on which these statements are based, the *Chronicon Lichfeldense* (Cott. MSS. Vesp. E. 16) compiled in the days of Langton's successor—we do not find that this statement is precisely substantiated. It records that Langton surrounded the close with a stone wall; that he prepared a most costly shrine for S. Chad; that he rebuilt the castle of Eccleshall and the manor house of Heywood; that he presented to the high altar a chalice and two cruets of purest gold, a gold cross set with precious stones and worth £200, and many vestments of inestimable value; that he constructed a great bridge over the Minster Pool; that he gave the vicars a residence in the close, presented them with a large silver cup, and endowed them with a pension of 20s. out of the rectory of the church of Tibshelf in Derbyshire; and that he founded (*fundavit*) the Lady Chapel, and left by his will sufficient money for its complete construction. The expression "founded," when compared with numerous instances of the foundations of chantries, does not necessarily imply more than that the royal license was obtained for the alienation of certain properties, and pledges given for the finding of certain sums of money; so that a chantry, for instance, has often been said to have been founded several years before the building was commenced. The style of architecture of the beautiful Lady Chapel, which has been justly described by Britton as "one of the finest and most elegant examples of ecclesiastical architecture in England," and which a later historian, Rev. Mackenzie Walcott, speaks of "as the gem of the cathedral"—certainly approximates more to 1350 than to 1300 (the date assigned to it in Parker's Glossary, etc., etc.), and the notion that even the material foundations had scarcely been laid in Langton's time is remarkably corroborated by the register of the Chapter.

The registers now in the possession of the Chapter do not begin till 1380, but there is an earlier volume of chapter records in the Bodleian Library (Ashm. MSS. 794) that covers the period of which we are treating. This volume was probably removed from the muniment room by that not too scrupulous antiquary, Elias Ashmole. It is there recorded that

Bishop Langton, who held the office of Lord Treasurer, died in London on November 9th, 1321 (not Nov. 16th, as stated in the *Anglia Sacra*). Certain obsequies are recorded as observed at Lichfield by the capitular body, reinforced by twenty monks from Coventry (the other capitular body of the see), who made a procession, preceded by a cross and chanting a Litany, from the Cathedral to S. Chad's Church and back again. In September, 1323, there is an entry of agreement between the Chapter and Bishop Langton's executors, by which it was arranged that the Chapter and the executors were to halve the costs concerning the finding of a quarry (*circa lapidicinum inveniendam*) and of the raising of stone *pro fabrica capellæ*. Also that when it should become necessary to dig out a new quarry, it should be quarried and dug out in the names of Master Gilbert and his co-executors, to whom restitution should be afterwards made by the custodians of the Cathedral fabric. From this it appears that the very selection of a quarry for the Lady Chapel was not determined on until two years after the Bishop's decease. The same source tells us that in September, 1334, Edward II. gave a bond to the Chapter for payment of 257 marks, 9 shillings, held by him on loan from the late Bishop for the purpose of the Scotch wars, being, in conjunction with 904 marks, the amount bequeathed by the Bishop to the Chapter for the Lady Chapel. The King assigns for payment the feefarms of Oxford, Shrewsbury, Nottingham, and Bridgnorth. Another entry, in September, 1335, shows that the works were still in progress. Canon Blount states in Chapter his readiness to restore to Gilbert le Bruere, as Langton's executor, a cup which had been left in his possession and the land of the quarry of Godputte, but asks that something should be assigned to him for the diligent care he has given to the (building of the) Chapel. The Chapter orders 40s. to be paid him by Gilbert le Bruere on the arrival of John de Langton (brother of the Bishop), his co-executor.

Gilbert le Bruere held the prebendal stall of Wolsey, in this cathedral, from 1314 to 1331, when he exchanged it for

Ruiton, which he held till 1340. After that date his connection with Lichfield ceased. He held the prebendary of Dunnington, York, in 1324; in 1328, and again in 1353, he is mentioned as Archdeacon of Eley. He succeeded to the Deanery of S. Paul's in 1336, and died, holding that office, on November 3rd, 1353. The chapel of S. Catharine, in that cathedral, which he had rebuilt, and wherein he had founded a chantry, received his remains.

I take it, then, that the very foundation of these chambers we are now considering could not have been begun until after the decision of the Chapter in 1323; and the outer walls, at the slow rate of building then customary, would not be sufficiently high to allow of the completion of the outer tombs for another ten or twenty years. These outer tombs were very probably intended as the resting places of the executors of the munificent Bishop (though not eventually, at all events in the case of Bruere, thus used), and none of them could have been designed, as sometimes conjectured, for the Bishop himself.

When the corpse of Langton was brought from London, it was in the first instance deposited beneath the high altar of the Lady Chapel. This must not be understood as meaning the present Lady Chapel, but the previous one of Early English workmanship, whose eastern wall would about correspond with the seventh or last piers of the present Presbytery, and whose outer wall would probably not be taken down until the newly-extended Lady Chapel had been nearly or quite completed. Bishop Roger de Norbury removed the bones of his predecessors to a magnificent tomb on the south side of the high altar, between the fifth and sixth piers of the Presbytery. Dugdale, in his Visitation of 1662, took a careful drawing of this monument, which is now at the College of Arms, and it has been reproduced in Shaw's Staffordshire. The canopy of the tomb was subsequently destroyed, and only the effigy in Purbeck marble now remains, resting on the pavement of the south choir aisle.

These three chambers, to which I am trying to confine my

attention, have been generally spoken of as chantry or mortuary chapels, but there is no necessity whatever to connect them with the pannelled coffins below their windows, and they certainly seem to me to be considerably too small for the necessary altar ritual. They do not show any trace whatever of any altar, or of a piscina drain, though surely the latter would certainly have been constructed had this been the intention of their builders, seeing that they are so close to the outer wall. I have heard the recess in the west wall of the central chamber spoken of as if it was part of the original work, but it has a very recent origin, having been cut out in connection with the placing of a warming apparatus in the vaults below, an operation which in several ways disfigured the roof and other parts of these chambers. It may also be mentioned that these vaults are said to have been used as dungeons in Harwood's *Lichfield*, but he does not give his authority. A legend that once reached my ears spoke of some Parliamentary spies, who had been detected within the close, being kept in durance in these diminutive vaults whilst the Cathedral was besieged during the Commonwealth. But such use, if it ever occurred, would be only provisional, and was not originally intended.

Another argument against the use of the chambers themselves, or any one of them, as chantry chapels, is that the sites can all be assigned elsewhere in the fabric for all the known chantries Bishop Langton himself endowed two chantries in this cathedral, which continued here down to the days of the Reformation, one in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and one for the soul of King Edward, but the masses of both these chantries were celebrated at the chief altar of the Lady Chapel. Although neither of these chantries had any connection, so far as the actual Celebrations were concerned, with these chambers, I am inclined to think that they afford the clue for explaining their use. Special chantries often had their special vestries or sacristies assigned to them, or built for that special object. Numerous instances in proof of this might be given, but as I am addressing a Derbyshire Society, I will content myself with saying that the founders of the Kniveton Chantry in Ashborne

parish church (whose Masses were said at the high altar), built a vestry—the doorway to which seems to have been recently discovered in the north chancel wall—to contain the vestments of the chaplain, and the coffer wherein the endowment deeds were deposited; and I may also add that when Dean Heywood was building a new chapel in connection with this Cathedral, in 1474, he added a strong room for evidences and valuables (Cantaria S. Blasii, vol. ii., f. 27, Chapter MSS.). The general sacristry of the Cathedral, built in the 13th century, was probably not one whit too large for the wealth of vestments and ornaments, &c., pertaining to the high and other subsidiary altars; and what is more likely than that the executors of Bishop Langton, when so materially increasing the size of the fabric, should provide small rooms for such purposes. I therefore think that I have given some good reasons for supposing that the east and central chambers may have been for the reception of the endowment charters of the priest of Our Lady and the vestments and other valuables pertaining to the Mary Altar, whilst the western one, with its separate door, may have served in a similar way for the chantry of less importance connected with the memory of King Edward.

It should also be noted, as a minute confirmation of my view, that the free admission of air was considered advisable for the contents of these chambers, as the windows or shutters were fixed on hinges.

In putting these notes together, I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Right Rev. Bishop Hobhouse, and to Mr. Irving, the courteous clerk of the works.

It may not be out of place to add that this Lady Chapel seems to have been specially appropriated to early services. It was here that the Matin Mass was ordered to be said at five a.m., by Bishop Heyworth's statutes (1420–1447), matins having been said at midnight, and then the Holy Sacrifice was to continue to be celebrated by the different chaplains at their respective altars, hour by hour, until ten o'clock, when High Mass was sung at the high altar. By Bishop Hacket's statutes an early service was to be said here, at six a.m. daily, for the

convenience of small tradesmen, labourers, and servants; and matins are now said here, at an early hour, by the students of Lichfield Theological College.

It ought not to be for me to add any humble words of mine in connection with the scheme of restoring these chambers, and their outer sepulchral adjuncts, in memory of the late Bishop, but there certainly seems a singular beauty and appropriateness in the proposed plan. I trust I shall not be thought officious in venturing to hope that the scheme may include an outer effigy of stone to rest beneath the central sepulchral recess, and to suggest that the side recesses might be reserved for the day—may it be very far distant—when God shall call away those coadjutor bishops who so ably strengthened his hands in both those dioceses over which the late Bishop was called to preside. This corner of the Cathedral is redolent of the memories of the finest of Lichfield's Bishops, and it has been well chosen as the most suitable spot for the memorial of the last of that noble bederoll who has joined the Church Triumphant. S. Chad, Bishop Langton, Bishop Hacket, and Bishop Selwyn seem to be the four most polished corners of the temple of this grand historic diocese of the Catholic Church (from which we of Derbyshire appear, alas! to be destined to be cut off): "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" to the courts above—but it adds to our pleasurable reminiscences of their holy lives, to reflect that, so far also as their mortal remains are concerned, it can be truly said that "in death they were not divided."

N.B.—Since these notes were put together, Bishop Hobhouse found a most interesting entry of the year 1338, in the old Chapter Register at the Bodleian. Canon Patrick, at that time, was granted, at his own petition, the middle of the three outer tombs on the south side of the Lady Chapel, on condition that he should be mindful of the fabric in his will. This entry proves that the Lady Chapel was not then finished, but completed so far as the tombs were concerned. Robert Patrick was Archdeacon of Stafford, 1322-3, Prebendary of Pipa-Parva, 1313-1324, and Prebendary of Gaia-Minor, 1324-32. His

name continues to appear with the names of Canons present in Chapter till 1340, but there is no entry of his death. So that it is not yet known whether he really was interred in the centre tomb. Could he subsequently have been Canon of any other Chapter?

P.S.—I have also had the opportunity of going carefully through the transcript of the old Chapter Register that belongs to the Salt Library, Stafford, and the following excerpts throw additional light on the subjects discussed in the paper read before the Society.

1323, August 20th. Walter de Langton is spoken of as "*promotor capelle b̄e Marie v̄gis jux' eccl̄ia Lich'*." In this same entry, as well as in one or two other places, the co-executors of Canon Bruere are mentioned, showing, that although only Bruere and John de Langton are named, there certainly were three, thus corroborating the view that the three recesses were originally designed for the Bishop's executors.

1323, September 10th. Canon Bruere is instructed by the Chapter to travel to London to obtain from the King the money due for building the Lady Chapel.

1323, October 4th. Canon Bruere receives for this purpose, as from the King, £20 from the Bailiff of Oxford, £8 11s. from the Bailiff of Nottingham, and £15 from the Bailiff of Salop.

1326. Canon Brüere is again instructed to journey to London, to see after the payment of the royal rents towards building the chapel.

1330. The Bailiff of Bridgnorth pays £3 1s. 8d., as rental for the same purpose, to the Chapter. There are various similar entries under other years from the Bailiffs of the four towns of Oxford, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, and Bridgnorth.

1331. It is stated that the total amount received towards the works of the Lady Chapel up to that date, from the rentals assigned by the King in exchange for the sum of £860 13s. 3d., had reached to £321 8s. 4d.

1333. The chantry *pro aiabus Regum* was then served by

Canon Robert Patrick, at the altar of S. John. This chantry, founded by Bishop Langton, was removed, on its completion, to the Lady Chapel. This entry throws light on the subsequent one of 1338, quoted above by Bishop Hobhouse, as it shows a special connection between Patrick and the foundations of Walter de Langton, and gives a reason why application was made by him for the central tomb. It should be noted that that application was not made until after Canon Bruere, for whom I consider it was originally designed, had removed from Lichfield, and accepted the Deanery of S. Paul's.

1336. William de Heywood and Robert Aylbrick admitted as custodians of the fabric of the chapel of the Blessed Mary, and sworn to make an annual return of expenditure on the feast of S. Michael.