

A CONTRACT TO REBUILD THE CHANCEL OF SANDON
CHURCH, HERTFORDSHIRE

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In 1348, the dean and chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral Church decided to rebuild the chancel of Sandon. The manor in the north-east of Hertfordshire belonged to St. Paul's before the Norman Conquest; it was not appropriated to one of the thirty prebends, but was included in the corporate property of the dean and chapter.¹ They also had the great tithes of the parish, which were assessed for taxation in 1291 at twenty-two marks (£14 13s. 4d.); but the provision for the vicar from small tithes and offerings was under ten marks.² In a visitation made on behalf of the dean and chapter in 1297, it was noted that the chancel roof was in need of repair (*male co-opertum*) and the chancel was very dark (*nimis obscurum*).³ There is no other record until 1348, when two canons of St. Paul's, Alan of Hothom and John of Barnet, sealed a contract on behalf of the dean and chapter, with a mason, Thomas of Rickling, who probably took his name from the village in north-west Essex. It is possible that there were signs of a dangerous settlement, for Thomas of Rickling undertook to demolish the walls of the chancel at his own expense and to make good any defect in the foundations, and then rebuild the walls with the old material on the old foundations. The height of the walls was defined, and the number and proportions of the new buttresses which were to be of good white stone, with skews of stone from the well-known quarries at Barnack. The new chancel was planned to admit plenty of light; the east window was

¹ *The Domesday of St. Paul's*, ed. W. H. Hale, pp. iii, iv. (Camden Society, vol. 69).

² *Taxation of Pope Nicholas*, p. 37 (Record Commission). cf. W. E. Lunt, *The Valuation of Norwich*,

p. 293, *Visitations of Churches belonging to St. Paul's Cathedral*, ed. W. Sparrow Simpson, p. 49 (Camden Society, New Series, vol. lv.).

³ *Visitations of Churches*, p. 48.

to be of three lights, which are called *dayes*, the north and south walls were each to have two windows, and these windows were to have two lights with the same tracery as the east window. There was to be a suitable priest's door in the south wall. Thomas of Rickling undertook to rebuild the chancel for twenty marks, which at the value of money in 1914, may be reckoned at £266 13s. 4d. It was a cheap contract for the dean and chapter, since it fell below the assessment of the great tithes for one year. It appears to have been executed faithfully by Thomas of Rickling, or his immediate heirs.¹

The contract was noted by Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte in his Report for the Historical Manuscripts Commission. Such contracts must have been numerous in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the documents in which they are recorded are now so rare that it is worth while to print this one.

Indentura de cancello faciendū apud Sandon.²

Hec indentura facta inter magistros Alanum de Hothom et Johannem de Barnet canonicos [ecclesie] sancti Pauli London' nomine dominorum decani et capituli ecclesie supradicte convenientes ex parte una et Thomam Rykeling' de . . . cementarium ex altera testatur quod inter dictas partes sic convenit, videlicet quod dictus Thomas sumptibus suis propriis faciet muros [cancelli] ecclesie de Sandon usque ad fundamentum eorum penitus demoliri, et si quem defectum post demolicionem dictorum murorum repererit [. . . dicto] hujusmodi defectum faciet congrue reparari ac super antiquum fundamentum dicti cancelli novos muros videlicet duos lat[er]ales muros sep]temdecim pedum computando altitudinem a fundamento supradicto et unum murum in capite orientali altitudinis convenientis [. . . muris] predictis. Faciet eciam in dicto capite orientali unam fenestram tria diversoria que Dayes dicuntur habentem fabricē. . . . In quolibet angulo capitali dicti cancelli faciet unum botras latitudinis quinque pedum in fundamento spiscitudinis pedis et di[midii alti]tudinis convenientis, et faciet scuves dictorum botras de lapide lapidiane de Bernaco, residuum vero de bona alba pu. . . . Item faciet in quolibet muro laterali duas fenestras similes fabricē et forme dicte capitalis fenestre, quarum quelibet habebit duo diversoria que Dayes nuncupantur, et in quolibet

¹ *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire.* (Royal Commission, 1910, p. 198.) *Victoria County Histories, Hertfordshire*, iii, 274.

² Box A 38, No. 1264, MSS. Dean & Chapter. I wish to thank the Dean of St. Paul's for kindly giving me access to the Sandon documents. A deep brown stain on the document has made some words illegible.

muro laterali unum botras latitudinis quatuorque pedum et spiscitudinis pedis et dimidii et altitudinis competentis. Faciet eciam ex parte australi unum hostium competens in altitudine et latitudine. Pro isto . . . sic ut predicatur suis sumptibus adimplendo habebit dictus Thomas totam materiam lapideam dicti cancelli et viginti marc[as sterl]ingorum sibi successive per particulas prout circa construccionem dicti cancelli operatus fuerit persolvendas. Ad quod quidem opus in forma . . . bene et fideliter adimplendum dictus Thomas obligat se heredes et executores suos et omnia bona sua et nichilominus ad [eandem constru]cionem in forma predicta quatenus ipsum concernit (?) fideliter observandum corporale prestitit juramentum. In quorum testimonium . . . sigilla sua huic indenture alternatim apposuerunt. Datum apud Sandon predictam (*sic*) xj die mensis julii anno domini millesimo ccc^{mo} quadagesimo octavo.