

ENGLISH BRASS LECTERNS OF THE SEVENTEENTH
AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By C. C. OMAN

In the last volume of the *Journal*¹ the writer attempted to solve some of the problems connected with the brass lecterns in use in England before the Reformation. In the present paper attention is directed to those which were made in this country in the period between the spoliation of the monasteries and the beginning of the Oxford Movement.

It has already been shown that in 1536 a large number of brass lecterns were in use in English churches, nearly a hundred can be named without difficulty, and, to judge from the forty-four surviving examples, the majority were probably English work of comparatively recent manufacture. No systematic campaign against lecterns was attempted at any stage of the Reformation, but as Protestantism was introduced there seems to have been a strong tendency for churchwardens and other authorities to dispose of their lecterns, even though they might choose to replace them by desks of a less costly material.² At a comparatively early date those lecterns which were retained and which had previously served for the choir-books and the books of the Epistles and Gospels, began to be used for the newly-prescribed Bible—'an Egle of latten whiche ys to leye the byble on,' as it is expressed in the 1554 inventory of Havering church, Essex.³ Most of the lecterns in the monastic churches seem to have gone to the melting-pot, some of those

¹ *Medieval brass lecterns in England*, vol. lxxxvii, 1930, 117-144.

² The Edwardian and the Marian inventory of goods belonging to Long Melford Church, Suffolk, both mention a couple of brass lecterns, yet in the churchwarden's accounts for 1562 is the entry: 'Payde to Nicolas

Corder for taking down the Rode and making of ye lectorne iiis.,' Sir W. Parker, *History of Long Melford*, 1873, pp. 90, 102 and 110.

³ *Essex Archaeological Society's Transactions*, New Series, iii, 1885-9, 38.

belonging to parish churches had already disappeared before the making of the Edwardian inventories and others succumbed probably as late as the eighteenth century.

English church worship in the period under consideration did not necessitate the possession of a lectern, and the paucity of the later examples is largely explained by the fact that the supply exceeded the demand. A High-Churchman wishing to give a lectern to his church was sometimes able to obtain an unwanted mediaeval one from elsewhere.¹ All things considered it is rather surprising that the first record of a post-Reformation brass lectern should go back as far as 1586. In the account rolls of Durham Cathedral for that year is the entry—'payed and geauen to Wyll'm Foster of Yorck in rewarde in considerac'on of his paines in comynge for the makege of the eagle for the letterne of brass in the Quier, xiiis. iiid.'² This is fortunately supplemented by a reference in Robert Hegge's (d. 1629) *Legend of St. Cuthbert*—'Amongst the other Monuments of this church, the brasen Desk is not the least, which was the joynt guift of a Reverend Prebend (Robert Swift, 1562-99) of this Church, and his son, who added the Globe and the Eagle to the sumptuous Basis and Columne (the guift of his father) which was the twelfth part of a great Candlestick found hid in the Vault of the Church.'³ It is probable that this was looted by the Parliamentary soldiers in charge of the Scottish prisoners taken at Dunbar, and who are known to have been responsible for the disappearance of the pre-Reformation pelican lectern belonging to the cathedral.⁴ It is not merely the loss of a unique Elizabethan brass lectern which is to be regretted, as the candlestick mentioned by Hegge is fully described in the *Rites of Durham*, which makes it clear that it was a master-

¹ Such as the lecterns presented by Sir Baptist Hicks to Chipping Campden, and by Nicholas Ferrar to Little Gidding respectively. It is tempting to suppose that the latter may have been the one mentioned in the Dissolution Inventory of the neighbouring Sawtry Priory.

² *Surtees Society*, ciii, 1900, 73.

³ London, 1663, 89-90.

⁴ *Surtees Society*, vii, 1902, 13-14.

It would be interesting to know for what purpose the pelican lectern was used after the Reformation, since the new lectern was presumably used for the bible!

piece of twelfth-century art similar to the celebrated fragments which remain at Milan, Prag and Rheims.¹

Four brass lecterns remain as monuments of the High Church movement of the early Stewart times. The first is the eagle and globe at Wimborne Minster (Pl. i), which bear the arms of Wayte, the initials A.W., and the date 1623. The eagle, like those which follow to the end of the century, is much conventionalised and is quite a pleasing work. The pedestal on which it stands belongs to the middle of last century and I have not been able to discover the material of which its predecessor was made. Its donor was with all probability a certain Anthony Wayte (d. 1657), who is buried together with his wife, Jane, beneath a grave-stone not far distant from where the lectern stands.

The remaining Laudian lecterns are all the work of one founder who remains anonymous. They differ from each other only in the form of the feet which support the pedestal.

The first of the group was given by Accepted Frewen to Magdalen College, Oxford (Pl. ii, B), of which he was president. The college accounts shows that it was added to the chapel in 1633.² It is a fine bold piece of work, which has never received the attention it deserves from those who have written on this chapel. The pedestal is supported on three acanthus leaf scrolls. Next in point of date comes the example presented by John Vivian to Exeter College, Oxford, in 1637.³ It displays no unusual features, except that it has lost its original feet. The last of the lecterns of this group was given in 1638 by James Wathen, pin-maker, to St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol (Pl. ii, c).⁴ The feet, in the form of seated lions looking to left,

¹ *ibid.*, 10. A careful reading of the text tends to suggest that it resembled most closely the Rheims example.

² 'Solut. pro vectura aquilae aeneae, 1l. 11s. 6d.' J. Bloxam, *Register of the Presidents, etc., of St. Mary Magdalen College, Oxford, 1857*, xciii.

³ Engraved with the arms of the donor and: MR. JOHANNES VIVIAN STB HUIUS COLL. NUPER SOCIUS DEDIT 1637.

⁴ Engraved: THIS IS THE FREE GIFT OF IAMES WATHEN SENIOR OF THIS PARISH PINN MAKER ANNO DMNI 1638.



WIMBORNE MINSTER, 1623

C.C.O.



F.E.H.

A. KING'S LYNN, ST. NICHOLAS
(Mediaeval)



C.C.O.

B. MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD,
1633



F.E.H.

C. ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, BRISTOL,
1638

merit special attention. Alone amongst the lecterns under discussion this one retains this motif, which was used almost without exception on the mediaeval brass lecterns of English manufacture (see the example at St. Nicholas, Kings Lynn, Pl. ii, A). It is curious to note that all the other lions which support English seventeenth- and eighteenth-century lecterns are couchant, like those used by the mediaeval founders of Flanders and Germany.

As might be expected, no lecterns were produced during the upheavals of the middle of the seventeenth century but a revival took place soon after the Restoration. The first group consists of the examples in Queen's College Chapel, Oxford, and the cathedrals of Canterbury, Lincoln and Wells. The first three would readily be recognised as the work of the same craftsman, even if they did not bear the signature of William Borroughes with the dates 1662, 1663 and 1667 respectively. The Canterbury lectern¹ (Pl. iii, B), purchased to replace the one destroyed by Colonel Sandys's troopers in 1642, and the Lincoln example² (Pl. iii, C), the gift of John Goche, are identical in every respect. The Oxford lectern (Pl. iii, A), acquired under the bequest of John Pettie, a former fellow of the college who had died in 1653,³ is supported on four instead of three feet, and is shorter by one moulding in the upper part of the stem. This modification, which quite spoils the proportions, was doubtless due to a desire to conform to the less spacious surroundings of the old chapel. The 'queen of birds and the bird of the men of Queens' and the couchant lions are good renderings of their respective subjects but for two reasons the mouldings of the stem and base deserve closer attention. Firstly it will be noted that the designer was not uninfluenced by the work of the English founders of a hundred and fifty years before. A comparison with

¹Inscribed: GULIELMVS BORROGHES
LONDINI ME FECIT, 1663.

²Inscribed GULIELMVS BORROGHES
LONDINI ME FECIT 1667, and
JOHANNES GOCHÉ ARMIGER D.D.
ECCLES CATHED B. MARIAE LINCOLN
AN DOM 1667

³Inscribed: AQUILA REGINA AVIUM
ET AVIS REGINENSIVM IOHAN PETTIE;
SOCIUS COLL. MORIENS LEGAVIT ANNO
DOM. 1653; on the lower knop:
GULLIELMVS BORROGHES LONDINI ME
FECIT 1662.

the magnificent but unsigned lectern at Wells¹ (Pl. iv, B) is still more interesting, as it will be seen that from the globe to the bottom of the pedestal it is identical with the examples at Canterbury and Lincoln, so that there need be no hesitation in ascribing it also to Borroughes. An inscription on it records that was presented by Dr. Robert Creyghton, who was appointed dean after his return from fifteen years of exile with Charles II, but the presence of the arms of the see of Bath and Wells shows that it was made during his short episcopate from 1670 to 1672. There can be no doubt that the Wells lectern is supreme amongst the post-Reformation lecterns just as that at Kings College, Cambridge, surpasses all the mediaeval ones.

The little that is known of Borroughes is gleaned

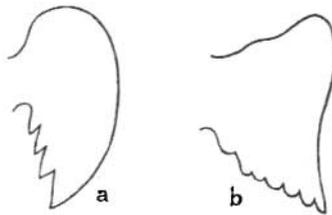


FIG. 1. A. ST. MARY-LE-PORT. B. YORK MINSTER

from the annals of the Founders' Company. In 1637 he was fined a pound for a breach of discipline, a casual mention of him occurs in 1653, whilst in 1672 he contributed the handsome sum of ten guineas towards the rebuilding of the Company's hall which had been destroyed by the Great Fire.²

A decade elapses before the next examples are

¹ Inscribed on the desk: DR. ROBT. CREYGHTON UPON HIS RETURNE FROM FIFTEEN YEARS' EXILE, WITH O'R SOVERAIGNE LORD KING CHARLES Y^E 2^D MADE DEANE OF WELLS, IN YE YEAR 1660 GAVE THIS BRAZEN DESKE WTH GOD'S HOLY WORDE THERON TO THE SAIDE CATHEDRAL CHURCH. The present lion feet seem to have been added during the last thirty years. They do not appear in the illustration in P. Dearnier, *The Cathedral Church of Wells*, 1898, p. 88.

² W. M. Williams, *Annals of the Worshipful Company of Founders of the City of London*, 1867, 96, 112 and 198. The fact that his name is spelt Burrowes, Burroughes and Burrows in these records need not disturb us. On the Canterbury and Lincoln lecterns he signed himself, Borroughes, but at Queens, Borroughes. In the Queens Long Roll he appears as Burroughes. (J. R. Magrath, *The Queens College*, 1926, ii, 20.)



C.C.O.

A. QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, 1662



J.C.

B. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL, 1663



S.S.

C. LINCOLN CATHEDRAL, 1667



F.S.
A. ST. MARY-LE-PORT, BRISTOL, 1683



F.E.H.
B. WELLS CATHEDRAL, 1670-2



C. YORK MINSTER, 1686

reached. In 1683 George Williamson, B.D., Sub-dean, presented an eagle lectern to Bristol Cathedral. It was sold as scrap metal in the year 1801 but was rescued by a certain Mr. Ady, who gave it to the church of St. Mary-le-Port¹ (Pl. iv, A). It is practically identical with the one presented by Thomas Cracroft, D.D., to York Minster in 1686² (Pl. iv, c), except that the wings of the eagles and the lion feet are not from the same models (see figs. A and B). Rather less successful than Boroughes' work, these lecterns are greatly superior to the feeble specimen presented in 1691 to Wadham College, Oxford (Pl. v, B), by Sir Thomas Lear, Bart., of Lindridge, Devon.³ The stem and base are quite well executed but the eagle, which crouches nervously on an ill-fitting globe, is obviously conscious that its wings are quite inadequate to support it in flight. The manner in which it is chased suggests fur rather than feathers.

The next recorded lectern was presented to Salisbury Cathedral in 1714.⁴ It cost £160 and was the work of Jacob Sutton, of London. No satisfactory illustration of it exists and its career was short, as it

¹ These transactions, which seem to have aroused considerable local feeling, may be briefly summarised as follows: In June, 1801, the lectern was sold by Dean Layard and the chapter with the pretext of making an addition to the sacramental plate. Mr. Ady, who regularly frequented the cathedral, not wishing to see it consigned to the melting-pot, then acquired it for the advanced price of £27. He next offered to allow the dean and chapter to repurchase the lectern at the original price, but this offer was refused. On September 2nd he had it put up for auction at the Exchange Coffee Rooms in the hope that it would find a purchaser who would present it to some church at home or abroad. In this he was disappointed, as there was no bid, and finally he decided to present it to the church of St. Mary-le-Port. In the advertisement of the sale it is mentioned that all the original inscription excepting the date had been erased but the would-be vendor had had it re-engraved. This, and the inscription subsequently added by him, read: EX DONO GEORGIJ

WILLIAMSON S : T : B : HUIUS ECCLESIAE
CATHEDRALIS BRISTOLL VICE DECANI
1683 and THIS EAGLE AND PEDESTAL
WEIGHING 692 lbs. WERE GRATUIT-
OUSLY PRESENTED DECEMBER 10TH
1804 BY WILLIAM ADY A NATIVE OF
ST. JAMES'S PARISH TO THIS CHURCH OF
ST. MARY LE PORT ON THE CONDITION
OF THEIR BEING PLACED IN THE
CHANCEL THERE TO REMAIN FOR EVER—
DEEBLE SCULPT. (*Bristol Past and
Present*, 1882, ii, 83-4; Mathew,
Bristol Guide, 1828, 118; Evans,
History of Bristol, 230 and note.)

² Inscribed: THO. CRACROFT, S.T.P.
AQUILAM HANC EX AERE CONFLATUM
IN USUM ET ORANTUM
CATHEDRALIS TEMPLI EBOR
DIVO PETRO SACRI
CONTULIT
MDCLXXXVI.

³ Engraved with the donor's arms
and: EX DONO THOMAE LEAR DE
LINDRIDGE IN COMITATU DEVONIAE
MILITIS ET BARONETTI. MDCLXXXI.

⁴ A description of that admirable
structure the cathedral of Salisbury,
1774, 29.

was sold by an order of the dean and chapter dated December 1, 1792, shortly after Wyatt's disastrous 'restoration' of Salisbury.¹ Sutton, however, was responsible for the lectern acquired for St. Paul's (Pl. v, A) in 1720 at the price of £241 15s. This is the first example to display a determined attempt on the part of the designer to treat the eagle naturalistically. As such it is superior to most contemporary continental efforts and to many modern ones but, unfortunately, the more realistically that an eagle is rendered the less suitable it becomes as a book-rest. The lion feet are not particularly effective but the pedestal has much of the beauty of the contemporary candlesticks.

Last in order comes the lectern presented in 1731 to Brasenose College, Oxford (Pl. vi), by Thomas Lee Dummer, to commemorate the taking of his M.A. degree.² Although at first sight the appearance of this lectern may seem entirely unfamiliar, a closer inspection reveals that in some particulars it resembles the examples presented to the cathedrals of Bristol and York in the years 1683 and 1686 respectively. The lion feet are either cast from the same wooden patterns used for the York example or from others made in imitation of them, and the same remark is probably true of the eagle, although it has a rather more prominent lump behind the beak and is much more elaborately chased. In 1734 it was sent up to London and on its return was fixed up as it is now, although it is clear that the stem has been assembled wrongly and that the eagle should stand on the globe.³

The Brasenose lectern appears to have been the last to have been made in this country for about a hundred years. Brass lecterns seem to have fallen into disfavour during the latter part of the Georgian period, and although we have only noted the

¹ Chapter Act Book. '1792, Dec. 1. Ordered that the brass Eagle be sold with the consent of Mrs. Wyndham, as likewise the two spare bells, and the money to be appropriate to the fabrick.'

² Engraved with the donor's arms and: D.D. THO. LEE DUMMER ARMIGER THOMAE DUMMER SWAYTHLING IN COM HANT ARMIGERI FILIVS UNICUS HUIUS

COLLEGII SUP. ORD. ET DOMUS CONVOCATIONIS CONSENSU GRADUS MAGISTRI IN ARTIBUS INSIGNIBUS A.D. MDCCXXXI.

³ It had taken the workmen three days to assemble in 1731, but when it was re-erected in 1734 it required fresh ironwork. E. W. Allfrey. *Brasenose Quatercentenary Monographs* iii, 1909, 29.



A. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, 1720

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C.C.O.

B. WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD, 1691

PLATE V.



BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD, 1731

actual loss of one example others remained unused for many years.

It does not seem inappropriate to make some remarks on the position in which these lecterns have stood at the various periods. The examples in college chapels seem to have stood always in the centre of the passage way and to have faced west. The Magdalen lectern does not appear in Ackerman's view of the chapel in 1814, so that it is possible that it remained in seclusion for some years.

Of the lecterns in parish churches, the St. Mary Redcliffe example seems, as far as I can trace, to have remain unchanged at the entrance of the chancel. It would seem to have fallen into disuse for some time in the first half of the 19th century.¹ The Wimborne Minster lectern also does not seem to have altered its position. It appears at any rate on the south side in N. Whittuck's engraving of the 'Nave of Wimborne Minster,' published by H. Herbert, of Wimborne, in 1839.

The cathedral lecterns will be taken in the order of their manufacture. The Canterbury lectern in 1726 was standing in the centre of the choir facing south.² It remained there until the middle of the century but was relegated to the cathedral library sometime before 1772.³ It re-emerged in the nineteenth century to take up its place in the choir once more, but this time facing west.

The Lincoln example was standing in the middle of the choir facing west at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴ Subsequently it was moved to a position east of the choir stalls but now it stands at the west of the choir and faces east.

I have not traced the Wells lectern beyond the middle of last century, when it was standing, presumably unused, in the north transept.⁴ It has now stood at

¹ It was certainly in its present position when W. Barrett wrote his *History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol*, 1789, 579. The phrase used by Chilcott in his *History of Bristol*, c. 1840, 125, seems to indicate that it was not then in use.

² C. Wild, *Illustration of the Archi-*

tecture and Sculpture of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, 1819, Pl. x.

³ J. Wickham Legg and W. St. John Hope, *Inventories of Christ Church, Canterbury*, 1902, 272.

⁴ R. J. King, *English Cathedrals*. 1861, i, 242.

the east end of the nave for a considerable time. I can discover no indication as to where the St. Mary-le-Port lectern stood whilst it was in the choir of Bristol cathedral. In the early nineteenth century the York lectern was standing in the gangway between the choir-stalls on the north side.¹ It was afterwards moved into the centre of the choir and faced west, but has lately been moved into the nave and fitted with an amplifier. Although the only illustration of the Salisbury lectern is on too small a scale to permit any conclusions to be drawn as to its appearance, it seems to have stood in the middle of the choir facing south.² The St. Paul's lectern stood facing west, surrounded by a low iron screen in the middle of the choir near the pulpit,³ until it was moved to its present position beside the north-east pier of the dome in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In conclusion I should like to express my gratitude to all those who have aided me in the preparation of this study. More especially I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following—Mr. F. C. Eeles, who has once more allowed me to draw on his store of ecclesiological knowledge, the Reverend F. Sumner (F.S.), who has not only provided the photograph of the St. Mary-le-Port lectern but also the documentation of its history, and Canon Fletcher, of Salisbury, for information regarding the Salisbury Cathedral and Wimborne Minster examples. For the photographs of the St. Mary Redcliffe and Wells Cathedral lecterns I am indebted to Mr. F. H. Crossley, F.S.A. (F.H.C.) and Mr. F. E. Howard, F.S.A. (F.E.H.), whilst those of the Canterbury and Lincoln examples are by Messrs. J. Charlton (J.C.) of the Mercery Lane, Canterbury, and Messrs. S. Smith (SS.) of Steephill, Lincoln. For the loan of the block of the Brasenose lectern I am indebted to the authorities of that college.

¹ See a water-colour of 1810 reproduced in A. Clutton-Brock, *Cathedral Church of York*, 1899, 115.

² *The Inside of Salisbury Cathedral*,

by James Biddlecombe, engraved by I. S. Miller, Feb. 1st, 1754.

³ *London and its environs described*, 1761, v, 146, also an engraving by T. Bowles of about the same date.

MIEVEAL BRASS LECTERNS IN ENGLAND

(Vol. lxxxvii, 1930, pp. 117-149.)

A review of this article in the *Bulletin des Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*, Brussels, November 1931, 170-4. In it M. Marcel Laurent gives a general acceptance to the conclusions arrived at, whilst reserving judgment on the question of the possible intervention of Dinantais working in England.

ADDENDA and CORRIGENDA.

- p. 119, l. 5 for 'choir-books' read 'Gospel and Epistle books.'
 l. 28 for 'thirteenth' read 'twelfth.'
 note 2 read 'De rebus in administratione sua gestis.'
- Pl. ii, A The lectern from Bornival is now in the Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels.
- p. 125, l. 31 Dr. G. van Doorslaer of Malines suggests that the Windsor lectern is a product of his native city on the ground of resemblances to the pelican lectern in the church of St. Bavon at Haarlem. In addition to the existing lectern, St. George's once possessed a combined candlestick and lectern as is shown by the entry in the accounts for 1490-1:—'Et solut. pro reparacione lectrini sive candelabri de auricalco in novo coro ad manus Magistri Vaughan iiii li.' (W. St. John Hope, *Windsor Castle*, 1913, 398).
- p. 127, l. 13 The writer was unable to visit the lectern at Thorverton, Devon, before the article had already passed its final proof. On inspection it proved to be a modern casting from one of the originals of this group. The total number of brass lecterns in this country surviving from the Middle Ages is therefore reduced to 44.
- Pl. x, Pl. xi, for GROUP I read GROUP III.
- p. 132, l. 23; for 'octagonal' read 'hexagonal.' The King's College
 p. 134, l. 17 lectern alone has octagonal mouldings.
- p. 146, l. 10 The repair to the stem of the Newcastle lectern was executed in 1731 at the cost of £1 1s. od. by William Packer (Churchwardens' accounts), a Bristol founder who had settled in Newcastle about six years before (*Newcastle Courant*, 20, ii, 1725).
- p. 146, l. 36 The following additional references to brass lecterns in sixteenth-century inventories have been noted by the writer in Fotheringhay (*Archaeologia*, lxxviii, 1916, 50); London, St. Christopher-le-Stocks (*ibid.*, xlv, 1880, 123); Ipswich, Holy Trinity Priory and Ixworth Priory (*Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, viii, 1894, 91, 109); Long Melford (*vide supra*, 218).
- p. 148, l. 31 The fate of the two Westminster Abbey lecterns seems to have been settled on January 13, 1549, when the Chapter ordered them to be sold with other brass and bell-metal objects 'because they be monuments of Idolatry and Superstition' (J. Armitage Robinson, *Westminster Abbey Manuscripts*, 13).