

BUILDING AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,
FROM THE GREAT FIRE (1298) TO THE GREAT PLAGUE (1348).¹

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In 1297 a visitor to Westminster would have seen standing the lofty "new work" of Henry III, namely the apse, presbytery and quire joined on to the lower but not ignoble nave of the Confessor,² of which however (if the Dean's recent conjectural plan³ be correct) only two bays and a half remained together with the tower bay. He would also have seen Henry's chapter-house and the north-east angle of the cloister built in the same lofty style; but the rest of the site of the abbey was still covered by the old monastic buildings, which Mr. Lethaby thus describes⁴: "The greater part of the cloister was of sturdy Norman work, wood-roofed. The dormitory over its cellars and the refectory were long ranges of early Norman building, while the infirmary which backed close upon some of the palace buildings was of elegant transitional Norman."

THE GREAT FIRE.

It was on these monastic buildings that disaster fell in 1298. King Edward, returning from Flanders, had landed at Dover on the 14th day of March, and was on

¹ Read before the Institute, 4th October, 1910.

² Cf. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* (Rolls Series 57) iv. 427 "Eodem vero anno dominus rex . . . ecclesiam sancti Petri Westm' jussit ampliari et dirutis antiquis muris partis orientalis cum turri, praecepit novos videlicet decentiores suis sumptibus, subtilibus artificibus construi convocatis; et residuo, videlicet occidentali, operi coaptari."

³ *Archaeologia*, lxii, part i. I am inclined, however, to think that the Dean has not allowed enough length to the nave, and that Mr. Lethaby, in his plan on p. 99 of *Westminster Abbey and the King's*

Craftsmen, is nearer the truth. Two bays, or two and a half, would hardly have allowed the monks space enough to carry on their worship while the quire was being built (1258 to 1269, Lethaby, *loc. cit.* 163, 168); and when Litlington was beginning to rebuild the nave, he prepared enough stone for the length of three pillars, which would have brought them into the middle of the Dean's towers (cf. my *Nave of Westminster* in the *Proceedings of the Brit. Acad.* iv, where also the statement about the Norman nave on p. 6 should be corrected in accordance with the Dean's paper in *Archaeologia*).

⁴ *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen*, 198.

his way to Westminster, when on the 29th, the Saturday before Palm Sunday, about midday a chimney in the palace caught fire and the lesser hall was speedily burnt with its adjacent chambers. Unfortunately the wind carried the flames and sparks on to the roofs of the neighbouring monastery, which was totally burnt, with the exception of the church and chapter-house. The Westminster chronicler, Robert de Redyng, describes the catastrophe very briefly in the *Flores Historiarum* (iii, 104) : "When the king of England was approaching Westminster, on March 29th, a violent fire was kindled in the lesser hall of the palace, and when the flame reached the roof it was carried along by the wind and devoured the buildings of the neighbouring abbey."¹ The Worcester chronicler gives a more graphic and picturesque account² ; while a note in a calendar of St. Mary's, Southwark,³ specifies the time and also the amount of damage : "the dorter, the frater, the infirmary, and the celarium of the monks, and the hall of the abbot" were burnt. In the *Elogium Historiarum* (iii, 170) the fire is said to have happened about Christmas time, and in 1290 (? 1299). But the author of this part of the *Elogium*, a monk of Malmesbury, is elsewhere inaccurate about his dates ; and the date given by the other three authorities, 29th March, 1298, is settled by the Southwark calendar, which says that it was on the eve of Palm Sunday ; for in 1298 Palm Sunday fell upon 30th March.

This was a serious disaster for the convent. No doubt it had a connexion with the general rebuilding of the monastery which went on in the latter half of the fourteenth century. But that began fifty years later. Something had to be done at once, and it was a difficult task to find the money. As the fire had originated in the royal palace

¹ "Anno gratiae mcccviii^o accedente rege Angliae apud Westmonasterium iv kal. Aprilis, accensoque igne vehementi in minori aula palatii, ac flamma tecturam domus attingente ventoque agitata, abbatiae vicinae aedificia devoravit."

² Ann. Mon. iv. (Rolls series 36) p. 536. "[1298.] Quarto kal. Aprilis cum rex Edwardus veniret versus Londoniam caminum regis ignem pestiferum eructavit qui combussit aulam minorem et cameras circumstantes et ecclesiam Westmonasterii

invasit ; sed gratia divina per manus fortium ignis impetum reprimebat. Et occulto dei iudicio omnia alia aedificia monachorum praeter capitulum in carbonem et cineres convertebat."

³ Faust. A. 8. fo. 44b. "Quarto kal. April. anno domini m^occ^o nonagesimo octavo combusta fuit minor aula domini Regis apud Westm' et dormitorium et refectorium et infirmarium et cellar' monachorum et aula Abbatis in vigil. Palmarum circa horam sextam."

it might have seemed just that the king should refund the cost ; but there is no evidence of any royal contribution. Edward himself was in great need of money for his French and Scottish wars ; and the previous year he had been engaged in a quarrel with the clergy, who in obedience to the bull *Clericos laicis* had refused to grant him any subsidy. Moreover, on 8th May, 1298, within six weeks of the fire, the abbot and convent of Westminster bound themselves by a bond to certain foreign merchants to pay £250 towards the ransom of John de Saint John, then a prisoner in France, before 16th February, 1300.¹ This liberality may have won the king's favour for the convent, but it must have been a strain upon its resources ; and shortly afterwards the good relations between them were quite broken off by the unhappy and notorious robbery of the royal treasury in the chapel of the Pyx in the year 1303. The convent therefore had to repair the disaster out of its own resources. How it was done the chroniclers do not tell us. The Westminster chronicler, Robert of Reading, himself a monk at this time, preserves a tantalising silence. But the gap thus left by the chroniclers may in part be filled by the records of the abbey itself.

The earliest extant rolls of accounts of the various officers of the convent date from the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century ; and we are fortunate in possessing an infirmarer's roll and a treasurer's roll for 1297-8 (the latter in a fragmentary condition). Then we have treasurers' rolls from 24th February to 29th September 1303, from 29th September 1303 to 24th June 1304, and from 24th June 1304 to 24th June 1305 ; and again for 1307-8, and 1310-11. Some rolls touching the care of the manors given for queen Eleanor's anniversary throw some light on the history of the monastery, and there are two important fragments to be described below.

It would seem especially fortunate that we should possess so many treasurers' rolls, but their examination is disappointing in respect of this particular enquiry. The roll of 1297-8 (*Westm. Mun.* 19838) does contain a definite reference to the fire ; and with it we may undoubtedly

¹ *Mun.* 12886 ; see also Widmore, *Westminster Abbey*, 80.

connect the purchase of 20,000 tiles, and the repair of the conduit and of the dorter drain, matters of the greatest urgency. The extract is as follows :

[*Expn' necess'*]. Et xvid. in rantibus circa ignem per ii dies et noctes post Incendium. Et iis. vid. pro . . . Hampsted. Et xs. in carpent' locat' apud Hampsted. Et lvii. viiid. in xx^m tegul . . . emp' per mille iis. xd. Et xs. viiid. in portag' caria^g' et electione predictarum tegularum. Et ix. xd. in emendacione et scrutacione conducti per xvi dies. Et xd. in una cinera emp' pro mundacione fosse dormitorii et pro aliis diversis . . . Et xs. in mundacione fosse dormitorii.

Appended to the roll of 1304-5 is an important note " 80 tignorum dator' Thes' in bosco de Hamsted per conventum iis. ivd." What these were for we shall probably see later. There is also an item of 5s. spent "in porta abbacie versus molendinum reparand' et exaltand'."

Beyond these items there is no trace of any expenditure on, or contributions towards, the rebuilding of the abbey. We must remember, however, that the office of treasurer of the convent by no means corresponded to the office of a modern treasurer or bursar. The great obedientiaries controlled the finances of their own departments, and there was left only a definite and circumscribed sphere to the treasurer. In fact the treasurer was originally one of the *socii* or assistants of the sacrist. For one of these, the *revestiarius*, had charge of the vestry and its contents, including the vestments, sacred vessels, and other ornaments, which were indeed the treasure of the church. Then his office received an expansion : he was placed in charge of the kitchen rents, and, to help him, an assistant was given him. So we read in Ware's Customary :¹

Sed postquam revestiarius, adiuncto sibi socio, redditus coquinae primum incepit custodire, pro qua videlicet re a plebeis *thesaurarius* est appellatus, tam ipse quam reliquiarum custos ab abbate constitui, sicut et ceteri obedientiarii, in capitulo consueverunt.

From the Customary we also learn that the sacrist was responsible for the cost of repairing the roof of the church, the chapter-house, and the cloister as far as the door of the dorter (p. 49) ; and the cellarer for the rest of the

¹ Ed. Maunde Thompson, ii, 52.

cloister roof, and for the roof of the cellarium, frater, dorter, and necessary house, as well as for all the other buildings in the precincts pertaining to the celarium, together with the lavatory (p. 71). The rolls of these officers for 1297-8 are unfortunately lost; but the infirmarer's roll for that year (*Mun.* 19318) affords a good illustration of the "patching up in a temporary way," of which Mr. Lethaby speaks.¹

THE INFIRMARY.

The infirmary buildings must have been the first to catch fire, and their reparation was most necessary for the sake of the sick brethren. The damage here would seem to have been repaired within about four weeks, and the total cost was £4 9s. 2d; with 9s. 1½d. for furniture; i.e. not more than £80 of our money, and perhaps less. The sick brethren do not seem to have been greatly incommoded. For a time they had to live together in Robert Tynetot's chamber, which probably had stone walls and was first put in order, while their own "houses" of lath and plaster were being rebuilt. The account is as follows:

Exp' infirmar'. In reparacione domor' videl' in uno zendulator' et garcione eius per quatuor ebdomedas et quatuor dies. In servisia et coquina vs. iiiiid. In stipend' eorum iiiiis. vid. In reparacione camere Roberti Tynetot iiiiis. id. In novo furno post combustionem domorum iiiiis. iiiiid. In tribus hominibus allocat' per unam ebdomed' post combustionem Infirmar' ad mundand' Infirmar' et reparand' domos et muros et sepes iis. iiiiid. Item post residenciam infirmorum in camer' Rob' Tynet', in reparacione earundem domorum, in meremeo empt' vs. viiid. in 1000 de lathis de quercu iiiiis. vid. in 1000 lathis de fov' iis. iiiiid. cum cariagio, in 4000 de tegulis xiiis. prec' iiiiis. In cc [1^a manu cccc] de chaus' viiiis. In bordis ad hostia faciend' iiiiis. iiiiid. In shotbord ad fenestras et funerar' duarum coquinar' is. viiid. ob. In clavis diversi generis is. ixid. In stipend' duor' carpentar' per xiii dies et dim' ixid. qui ceperunt per diem iiiiid. In stipend' tegulator' ad tasch' pro aula et camer' vis. Et duabus coquinis ad tasch' vs. Et pro garderoba Infirmarii ad tasch' iiiiis. In stipend' hominis reparant' muros aule et camerarum per tres ebdomed' iiiiis. id. ob. qui cepit per diem iiiiid. In stipend' unius hominis reparant' muros de gardino et cortilagio et uno muro de novo facto iis. xid.

Summa iiiiilibr'. ix. s. iidenar.

¹ *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen*, 199.

This extract shows that the infirmary then comprised, besides the great chapel of St. Katharine, an *aula* or hall, one or more *camerae* (probably rooms with stone walls assigned to special persons, such as Robert Typetot), and various houses (*domos*) for the sick, built of lath and plaster and roofed with shingles. It also had two kitchens, a bakehouse, and a garderobe, these probably of stone and roofed with tiles. Lastly there was a garden and curtilage surrounded by a wall.

Nothing is said about the chapel. Its stone walls of course remained, as they do in small part to this day ; but probably its restoration was deferred until it could be done in a decent and substantial manner. Evidence as to this is given by another document in the archives (*Mun.* 6227), from which we learn that Henry of Bluntesdon, the king's almoner, archdeacon of Dorset, and warden of "God's House" at Southampton,¹ when drawing up his will at Hurley on 30th June, 1311, assigned a debt of £50, owed to him by the abbot and convent of Westminster, "*operi capelle beate Katerine in infirmitorio dicti monasterii construende.*" As a matter of fact, Henry of Bluntesdon did not die till 1316.

THE REFECTORY OR FRATER.

Among the abbey muniments are preserved two small fragments of accounts, nos. 6224 and 24508, written in an early fourteenth-century hand and measuring $9\frac{1}{2}$ by $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and 11 by 4 inches respectively. One is kept in the fabric box, the other in a different part of the collection : but they are in the same hand, and when examined appear to date from consecutive years. Various items in no. 24508 shew that these notes or memoranda belong to a treasurer : and as both of the documents are concerned with the roofing of the frater, they must first be printed in full :

[No. 24508]. In expn' apud Suaneschamp' die Mercurii et die Jovis in ebdomade pasche pro xx quercubus datis per dominum H. de Veer ad opus rectorii.

¹ See *Victoria County History of Hants*, ii, 203.

In pane cervisia pisce et carnibus et batillag' *vs. vid. ob.*

Item ballivo, servienti et warennar' dicti manerii de dono *xis. iid.*

Summa *xvis. viiid. ob.*

Item in expn' ibidem die Lune die Martis die Mercurii die Jovis die Veneris et die Sabbati post quindenam pasche pro dicto meremio prosternendo et talliando, in esculentis et poculentis, cum batillag' eundo et redeundo *xis. xd. ob.*

In stipend' decem carpentar' per quinque dies *xis. ix. ob.*

Item in stipend' vii carp' per vi dies *xiiis. viid.*

Summa *xxxviiiis. iiid.*

Summa t[otalis] *liiis. xid. ob.*

In ccc bord' ad co[operacionen] refectorii talliand' *vs. iiid.*

Item in d et x bord' talliand' ad idem *vs. iiid.*

Item in adunacione cespellorum *iid.* Item pro eodem *viid.*

Item in d vii bord' talliand' ad idem *vs. iiid.*

In una litera missa domino Hug' de Veer pro deliberacione quinque quercuum empt' in bosco de Svanech', per fratrem A. de Neuport *vid.*

Item in una litera missa dicto domino H. pro habenda via ad dictum meremium cariaand' *iiid.*

In uno pari cyrotecarum emp' pro Roberto Gladewine *vd.*

Summa *xviiiis. id.*

In caria' mer' de Svaneschampe *lxs.* Item pro eodem *xls.* Item de eodem *xxs.*

In c tingnis pro cumulo refectorii emp' *cs.* Item pro eodem. Item pro eodem.

Item pro cariagio eorumdem de Kingestone.

In expn' fratris R. de Waltham pro meremio visendo apud Svaneschamp et Kingeston' *xd.*

Lib' Ricardo Aquario perendinanti apud Westm' ad instanciam principis die assumptionis beate marie pro vadiis suis de septimana preterita *iis. ivd.* Item eidem R. pro ii septimana sequenti *iis. iiid.* Item eidem pro septimana tertia *iis. iiid.* Item eidem pro septimana quarta *iis. iiid.* Item eidem dominica prox' post Nativitatem beate marie *iis. iiid.* Item eidem tercio die Octobr' *viis.* pro tribus septimanis precedentibus.

Summa *xl. xis. vid.*

In vadiis Ricardi Aquarii ab octab' sancti Petri ad vincula usque in vig' omnium sanctorum per xii sept'. *xxiiiis.*

In feodo magistri R. de Glouc' de termino sancti Mich' *vis. viiid.*

Item lib' priori de mutuo *xl.*

In stipend' iii carpentar' pro meremio talliando ad l[o]giam carpentar' per duas septimanas *xs. viiid.*

In expn' Alex' de Abetot perendinantis apud Westmon' ad instanc' principis *xxs.* per manus fratris Guidonis.

[No. 6224]. . . duorum operar' *iis. iid. ob.*

Summa *xlixs. ix. ob.*

Die sabbati post festum sancti Bartholomei apostoli. Magistro Edmundo et xvi sociis suis et duobus secatoribus *ls. id.* In stipend' vi operar' per ii dies *iis. vd.*

Summa *liis. vid.*

Die sabbati in festo sancti Gregorii. Magistro Edmundo et xvi sociis suis et duobus secatoribus ls. viid. In stipend' iiii operar' per unum diem ix*d.* *ob.*

Summa lis. iiiid. *ob.*

Die sabbati proxima post festum Nativitatis beate Marie. Magistro Edmundo et xvi sociis suis et duobus secatoribus ls. id. In stipend' iiii operar'. iiii*s.* *vid.* In stipula empt' pro muris operiend' iiii*s.* In una cabula et duobus cordis empt' pro cumulo refectorii elevando xxxviii*s.* iiiid.

Summa iiiilb. xiii*s.* *xd.*

Die sabbati proxima post festum sancti Crucis. Magistro Edmundo et xvi sociis suis et duobus secatoribus ls. viid. In stipend' quinque operar' iiii*s.* iiiid. *q^a.*

Summa liiii*s.* *xd.* *q^a.*

Die sabbati proxima post festum sancti Mathei Apostoli. Magistro Edmundo et xviii sociis suis et duobus secatoribus lvs. *vid.* *ob.* In stipend' iiii operar' iiii*s.* viiid. In cc de visco xiiiid.

Summa lxs. iiiid. *ob.*

Die sabbati proxima post festum sancti Michaelis. Magistro Edmundo iis. Serlonii (*sic*) iiii*s.* iid. Roberto de Eye iiii*s.* iiiid. Johanni de Lodesworthe iiii*s.* Johanni de Sancto Albano iiii*s.* Johanni de Waltham iiii*s.* Roberto de Romeneie iiii*s.* Galfr' de Bixle iiii*s.* Johanni le Rok iis. *vid.* Thom' de Gaiwode iis. *xd.* Johanni de la Boure iis. *xd.* Simoni de Rothing' iis. *ixd.* Ricardo de Windelsore iis. *vid.* Henr' Waremewith iiii*s.* Willelmo de Bissopesgat' iiii*s.* Ricardo le Rok iis. Thom' de Assedon' xviii*d.* Alano de Horsham iis. *ixd.* Willelmo de Foresta iis. Roberto de Sutton' iis. *xd.* Duobus secatoribus iiii*s.* iid. In stipend' quinque operar' iiii*s.* iid. In stipend' fabri pro ccc ferri operandi viiii*s.* (*this item is crossed out*).

Summa lxi*s.* iiiid.

Die sabbati in vig' sancti Dionisii. Magistro Edmundo iis. Serloni iiii*s.* iid. Roberto de Eia iiii*s.* iiiid. J. de Lodesworth' iiii*s.* J. de sancto Albano iiii*s.* J. de Waltham iiii*s.* R. de Romeni' iiii*s.* G. de Buxle iiii*s.* W. de Bissopegat' iiii*s.* J. le Rok' iis. *vid.* T. de Gaiwod' iis. *xd.* J. de la boure iis. *xd.* R. de Sutton' iis. *xd.* S. de Rothing' iis. *ixd.* R. de Windelsore iis. *vid.* H. Waremewith' iiii*s.* A. de Horsham iis. *ixd.* R. le Rok' iis. W. de Foresta iis. Th. de Assedon' xviii*d.* Duobus secatoribus vs. iiii operar' iiii*s.* viiid. In ccc ferri empt' ix*s.* In stipend' fabri pro dicto ferro operando viiii*s.* In stipend' Magistri Roberti cementar' per iiii dies iiii*s.* In quinque circulis eneis pro cumulo refector' sublevando ponder' cviiib. xxxii*s.* iiiid. *ob.* In sex libr' unguenti et sepi ad opus carpent' emp' *vid.* In ccc clavis emp' *vid.* In uno senio misso episcopo Winton' per priorem et conventum xxs. Item Johann le [Rok' pro] roba sua, de conventionem xs.

Summa viilb. vis. *ob.*

Summa lxs. id.

Die sabbati in vigil' Natalis Domini. Magistro Edmundo iis. Serloni iiii*s.* iid. Roberto de Eya iis. *xd.* Johanni de Lodesworth iis. *ixd.*

Johanni de Waltham iis. ix^d. W. de Bissopesgate iis. ix^d. Galfrido de Bixle iis. x^d. Thome de Gaiwod' iis. viii^d. Johanni de la boure iis. viii^d. Roberto de Sutton' iis. viii^d. Johanni le Rok' iis. vi^d. Henr' Warmewith' iis. vii^d. Alano de Horsham iis. vii^d. Simon de Rothinge iis. vii^d. Roberto de Windelsore iis. viii^d. Ricardo le Rok' xxi^d. Johanni de Certeseia xx^d. In stipend' quinque operariorum iiis. ix^d. In oblatonibus et potura carpentar' in septimana Natalis Domini vs. Summa liiis. id.

Though these fragments are not dated, their dates can fortunately be fixed. In no. 24508 Richard Aquarius was apparently paid his wages on Sundays; and 15th August and 3rd October are mentioned as Sundays, so that the Sunday letter for the year was C. In no. 6229 Saturday was the pay day of the carpenters, and 24th December was a Saturday; so that the Sunday letter was B. Now the only pairs of consecutive years within our limits which had these Sunday letters respectively in the later months of the year are 1294-1295, 1305-1306, 1316-1317. Of these pairs 1305-1306 is the most suitable. It agrees with the mention of the prince of Wales (*ad instanciam principis*)¹; of Hugh de Vere, who was summoned to parliament from 21st September, 1299, to 3rd March, 1318²; of the monks Alexander de Newport, Richard de Waltham, and Guy (de Ashwell)³ who were now in full activity; of Robert Gladwin who is mentioned in a chamberlain's roll of 1291-2; and of Robert of Gloucester⁴ who was appointed official of bishop Giffard of Worcester in 1297. The date is clenched by some notices in a roll (*Mun.* 23632) which summarises accounts of moneys received from the manors of queen Eleanor for distribution amongst the poor: we read

Anno xxx^o (1301-2, Nov. to Nov.)

Et rem' ixlb. ixs. iid. qui expenduntur in operibus refectorii.

¹ Edward II was created prince of Wales 7th February, 1301; he was crowned 25th February, 1308.

² Nicolas, *Peerage*, ii, p. 662 (cf. i, p. 36).

³ None of these monks occur in the chamberlain's roll of 1316. Alexander of Newport was *custos capelle (b. Marie)* in 1278, and became prior of Hurley in 1305. He is mentioned in Henry of Bluntesdon's deed of 1311 quoted above, p. 264. Richard of Waltham was "over 60" in 1307 and had then been a monk over 44 years (*Mun.* 9497): he was therefore born about 1240 and was professed about 1263. The last

mention of him is in the infirmarer's roll of 1310-11. Guy of Ashwell occurs in the infirmarer's roll of 1297, he was *granator* in 1307 and 1310, and the last mention of him is in the account of queen Eleanor's manors for 1315-6.

⁴ Robert of Gloucester was the official of the bishop of Hereford in 1282. He was living in 1327-8, for in the treasurer's roll for that year we read *In procuracione R. de Gloucest' et aliis convenientibus in bostlar' in die electionis R. prioris iii s.* Who this prior R. was I have not yet been able to ascertain.

Anno xxxi^o (1302-3)

Et rem' ixs. id. qui expenduntur in operibus refectorii.

Anno xxxii^o (1303-4)

Et rem' vis. ix^d. qui expenduntur in operibus refectorii.

We may then conclude that the frater was being roofed in the latter half of the year 1306, that is more than eight years after the fire. This leaves an interval for serious rebuilding in stone, which is confirmed by the architecture of the work which remains. In the lower part of the wall we have still the original Norman work, and the corbels Mr. Lethaby would assign to Litlington, who must have done some work upon the building. But, to quote a letter from Mr. Lethaby to myself, "the windows *are* earlier than Litlington. I should have said 1310-20." While this work was in progress, at Easter, 1305, Hugh de Vere gave twenty oaks (towards the roof) from his park in Swanscomb in Kent. The convent purchased five more, and also a hundred beams at Kingston for the ridge of the roof. We must also remember that they had given eighty oaks out of their wood at Hampstead for some purpose (*supra* p. 262). Then from August to 29th December, 1306, we find Master Edmund the carpenter hard at work upon the roof, with from sixteen to nineteen fellow carpenters, two cutters, and from four to six labourers. The sum of the wages and expenses for ten weeks comes to £34 10s. 4½^d., which gives an average of £3 9s. 0½^d. a week.

THE DORMITORY OR DORTER.

The dorter must have been dealt with in much the same way as the frater. Before the roof was put on there was some reconstruction of the stone walls. Mr. Lethaby says¹ "The dormitory would be first repaired, and here we find some pretty two-light Edwardian windows, of about 1300, taking the place of the old Norman lights. Below in the ranges of cellars there are also some doorways of this time." A memorandum noted down in an almoner's roll endorsed anno xiii^o, which internal evidence shows to be the thirteenth year of Edward II, i.e. 1319-20, confirms this. For it shows that the work of roofing the dorter

¹ *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen*, 199.

and the cloister was still going on several years after the roofing of the frater. This at least is John de Bibury's note in the year 1320:

Et memorandum quod prostratae fuerunt apud Padynton per conventum pro dormitorio reficiendo xxxix quercus et de eschaetis eorundem nihil remansit in manerio. Item ibidem per priorem et conventum pro clauistro reficiendo vii quercus. Item ad opus domini regis ibidem per preceptum prioris et capituli vii quercus de melioribus unde nihil remansit in manerio.

This then is all that we learn about the immediate rebuilding of the abbey after the fire. Nothing has yet been found to tell us of the repair of the celarium or the abbot's hall. The next piece of information deals with the church itself and occurs in the year 1338, that is eighteen years later. Here then we may pause to consider how the convent met the financial strain. The monks had recourse to the familiar device of appropriating to their own uses the revenues of churches in their patronage. For this the consent of the bishop of the diocese was necessary; but bishops were now setting their faces against the appropriation of churches, and application had accordingly to be made to the pope. Now we find that two monks of Westminster, Alexander Pershore and William Chalk, were at Rome in the spring of 1299, together with a lawyer, Master Humphrey of St. Martin¹; and Widmore tells us (p. 80) that the pope gave them leave to appropriate two churches, namely, Mordon in Surrey and Longdon in Worcestershire.²

Mordon was quickly acquired.³ On 30th October,

¹ *Mun.* 9249 is the account of their expenses from 4th April when they were in Rome until their return to England. They left Rome on the Wednesday after Easter, 22nd April, and crossed the sea and reached Canterbury on the Sunday after Ascension Day, 31st May.

² The monks wished to appropriate four churches, adding to the above Sawbridge-worth in Herts. and Kelvedon in Essex.

³ The bishop of Winchester in his deed of appropriation gives his reason thus (*Westm. Domesday*, fo. 179b): "Lacrimosa vestra petitio nobis exhibita continebat quod, licet monasterium vestrum predictum olim a regibus Anglie fundatum copiosa rerum temporalium habundantia florere consuevisset, in eam tamen (proth dolor) paupertatis et egestatis extreme

pres[s]uram notorie prolapsam, tam ex dierum et hominum malicia quam ex incendio nuper ex palacio regali casualiter exorto, quod monasterium vestrum tam nobile quasi funditus destruxit, quod ex facultatibus domus vestre (nisi deus divine pietatis oculis vos respexerit ab alto) lapsus huius tam miserabilis non poterit aliquatenus reparari nec monasterium ipsum adicere ut resurgat. Nos igitur . . . considerantesque monasterium vestrum in loco publico et sollempni iuxta civitatem London' et iuxta regis palacium situatum ad quod frequenter conflunt hospicium pauperum et infirmorum innumerosa multitudo . . . ecclesiam de Mordon . . . in qua jus patronatus obtinetis ad relevacionem et reoperacionem lapsus monasterii vestri et ad uberiolem hospicium et infirmorum sustentacionem vobis . . . appropriamus."

1301, brother William de Arkesden, as representative of the convent, was inducted into the temporal possession of the rectory¹. But the revenues went to the support of hospitality instead of the rebuilding. Longdon was a more serious matter: in fact it was not until 1330 that the convent obtained a bull from pope John XXII², commanding the bishop of Worcester to appropriate the church to them. Even then the bishop, or bishops, for there was a change in the see, made difficulties; and the process, of which the records are preserved among the abbey muniments, was not completed until the year 1335. This date is important for us, as this appropriation supplied the nucleus (generally about £26 3s. 4d. a year) of an income for the building works of the convent, and so started the office of the New Work (*officium novi operis*), and the documents which tell us of the progress of the work are in the main account-rolls of this office. The earlier portion of this series of rolls has been summarised in Scott's *Gleanings from Westminster Abbey* (1863, pp. 255, *et seq.*), but in rather a cursory manner, which will justify a fuller treatment of the first two rolls here.³

REPAIR OF THE NAVE.

The first of these rolls is headed "Compotus fratrum S. de Berch[eston] et J. de Mordon facientium novum opus veteris ecclesie Westm' a festo sancti Michaelis arcangelii anno r.r. E. tercii post conquestum xv usque . . ." On the back it is endorsed "de a° xv^{mo} xvi^{mo} xvii^{mo}." The account begins at Michaelmas, 1341, but the latest

¹In 1319 the convent had to pay a fine of £40 under the statute of mortmain for having acted without the royal licence. In 1331 the bishop of Winchester issued an ordinance for the vicarage, assigning to the vicar an annual pension of 9 marks.

²The pope still refers to the fire of 1298 thus (*Mun.* 21256): "Sane petitio karissimi in Christo filii Edwardi regis Anglie illustris nobis exhibita continebat quod nonnullae domus consistentes infra septa monasterii Westmonasterii . . . iam dudum igne de palacio regis eidem monasterio contiguo procedente fuerunt incendio concremate, quodque ad reparacionem dictarum

domorum et aliorum edificiorum ecclesie dicti monasterii que maxima existunt, queve dilecti filii Abbas et Conventus ipsius monasterii reedificare inceperunt opere plurimum sumptuoso ad que perficienda et manutenend' hospitalitatem tam pauperum et infirmorum quam aliarum personarum ad dictum monasterium confluentium et alia pietatis opera inibi fieri consueta facultates eiusdem monasterii sufficere minime dinoscuntur."

³For more information about the *Novum Opus*, and for a list of the rolls, see my *Nave of Westminster*, pp. 4, 5, 64.

date mentioned is 24th June, 1343; and neither copy (for the account exists in duplicate, *Mun.* 23452, 23452*), was ever made up or finished.

The year 1341-2, however, is clearly not the first year of the account of the *novum opus*, for the account begins with a deficit from the preceding account of £14 9s. 6½d. Besides, the income from the church of Longdon had been secured to the convent in 1335. Now among the Longdon documents we find an acquittance (*Mun.* 21270) from the abbot (Thomas Henley) to "brother Simon de B., warden of Longdon church, for 20 marks due by reason of the said church"; and the date is 18th January, 1340.¹ This shows that Simon Bircheston was a receiver of moneys from Longdon church in January 1340. But it is probable that his wardenship had already begun in 1335, for on 6th December, 1337 he had succeeded Henry Bircheston as "warden of the manors of queen Eleanor." This was a very important office, dealing with the revenues of four manors; and his appointment to it shows that he was one of the leading monks at the time, so that his election to the abbacy in 1344 does not come as a surprise.²

John Mordon, who is to play an honourable part in the history of the *novum opus*, was a younger monk. He is not mentioned in the chamberlain's roll for 1328-9; and the rolls of queen Eleanor's manors, which give the names of the monks as they celebrated their first masses, and are extant from 1st December, 1334 to September, 1344, do not record his first mass. But as his name occurs in the convent list just before those who celebrated their first mass in 1334-5, it is probable that he did the same in the year 1333-4, and that he entered the convent soon after 1329. In 1335 he was *custos capelle b. Marie* (*Mun.* 17483); in 1339 he was made one of the two treasurers of queen Eleanor's manors; in 1341 we find him associated with Bircheston in the New Work, and he was the sole warden of that office from 1349 to 1365. In 1357 he became infirmarer, and he died in the infirmary in January, 1379.

¹ It is difficult to see why the church should owe the abbot 20 marks; if he was farming it, that arrangement soon ceased, for in 1341-2 it is being farmed by Richard de Cheryngton and Roger Basset, who pay

£40 for the first two years, and £34 18s. for the third.

² He was cellarer 1331-3, for which years we have his rolls: and he appears in the chamberlain's roll of 1328-9.

The heading of our roll shows that we are in a time of transition. Hitherto Henry's new work of the quire and eastern part of the church has been the *novum opus*, but now Bircheston and Mordon are *facientes novum opus veteris ecclesie*. These words do not agree well with a work of rebuilding but rather deal, to quote the title of the next roll, *circa reparaciones*. Indeed the question is settled for us. By great good fortune the account of Robert Curtlington, who was sacrist from 17th February to 29th September, 1338, has been preserved, and his building expenses (*custus operum*) run as follows:

[*Mun.* 19619]. In primis in i celatura nova facienda ultra magnum altare et in eadem depingenda in omnibus, ut patet per parcellas, lxvix. ijd. q^a et iiii bus' frumenti. Item in i intercluso faciendo inter novum opus et vetus tam in muris lapideis quam terreis, ut patet per parcellas, iiii li. iis. iijd. et ii bus' frumenti. Item pro coopertura australis ale de veteris ecclesie deponenda et de novo facienda, ut patet per parcellas, vi li. iis. vid. et i quar' vii bus' frumenti. Item pro camera ad capud chori deponenda et pro i camera ultra le pacdore pro sacrista et subsacrista, i camera ultra ostia gemellata, i camera ad posternam versus palacium Regis et i camera ad magnum ostium ecclesie in parte boriali pro servientibus ecclesie faciend', ut patet per parcellas, liix. id. et i quar' i bus' frumenti. Item pro coopertura veteris ecclesie ruinosa scaffaldanda cum clatibus ne malum eveniret per decasum alic[ui]us partis euisdem, ut patet per parcellas, xxviii. ijd. Item pro i nova fenestra in parte boriali veteris ecclesie iuxta ostia gemellata, ut patet per parcellas, xiiii. ijd. et i quar' frumenti. Item pro iiii scalis maioribus et ii scalis minor' de iiii ulmis de empt' faciend' vs. vid. et i bus' frumenti. Item pro singulis fenestris de vitro in superiori parte novi operis emendandis per circuitum in omnibus, ut patet per parcellas cix. ijd. ob.

This interesting extract shows us Robert Curtlington making a painted canopy or reredos at the high altar, and four chambers, for various purposes and in part to take the room of one which he had to take down 'at the head of the quire,' i.e. its west end. These chambers were situated at various doors of the church. Of these we can identify two, namely 'the postern gate towards the palace,' or Poet's Corner door, and the great door of the church in the north transept, which is still the main entrance. The other two are hard to identify. The chamber for the sacrist and subsacrist are beyond or above 'le pacdore,' and as the sextry stood outside the church on the north side of the quire, this may be the 'demon door.' But

what are the *ostia gemellata* or doubled doors? Are they two corresponding doors as in the rood-screen, or folding doors, or double doors as in the Pyx chapel? The phrase *ultra ostia gemellata* may indicate the shifting of the chamber at the head of the quire further westwards beyond the rood-screen. But noting the mention of a window in the north aisle "hard by the double doors," I am inclined to identify them with a great entrance on the north side of the nave. The chamber at the head of the quire was removed to make way for the *interclusum* between the old and the new church, which cost £4 2s. 3d. And the *interclusum* was built because of the ruinous state of the nave, the central roof of which was in such a condition as to be dangerous.

This gives us a definite date for the commencement of the restoration of the Confessor's nave, for it is clear that rebuilding was not then in question. Curtlington scaffolded the roofing of the central aisle (for 28s. 2d.), reroofed the south aisle at the expense of £6 3s. 6d. and made a new window in the north aisle (probably rendered necessary by his new chamber at the double doors) for 13s. 2d.

Curtlington then, in 1338, initiated the repair of the nave; and we may conclude that this was the work upon which Bircheston and Mordon, as wardens of the new work, were engaged in the years 1341 to 1343. As their previous rolls are missing we cannot tell when they began operations upon the nave; but, to return from this digression to their account roll for the years 1341-3 which we have already begun to describe, we find that the items of work for these two years are as follows. The masons' work was chiefly done by contract. Walter le Bole received £20, with 10s. for a robe, for mending and making four windows and one great pillar (*pro iiii fenestris et i magni peliri emendandis et faciendis ex certa causa*). This is a large sum. We may conclude that the windows were in the new Decorated style, and we wonder whether these four windows formed the conclusion to the task of remodelling the Norman windows of the nave throughout. Walter le Bole also received £3 *pro alutis faciendis*. Besides this eleven corbel stones (? for the new roof of the north aisle) were bought for

5s. 4d. and two masons spent about twenty-one days in making them and placing them in position (*pro foraminibus frangendis et dictis corbellis faciendis et ponendis*), 10s. 6d. Four stones were bought for capitals at 6d. each, and the capitals made at 8d. each; and a mason was hired for a day and a half to place the capitals and mend the columns for 7^½d. with 3d. for his boy (*pro eisdem capitibus ponendis et calumpnis emendandis*). The small cost of the capitals and of the repair of the columns suggests that they were in the windows or the triforium. The only other stone work done was by a mason hired for one week and two days, *pro bays fenestr' emendand'*, for which he received 3s. 4d. with two labourers who had 2s. 8d.

Three hundred and one quarters of iron were bought for making windows of the church, 11s. 4d. i.e. the four windows mentioned above, for a smith received 8s. 6d. *pro factur' ferur' iiij fenestr' fac'*.

Three carpenters were at work for four weeks after Michaelmas, 1341, at 2s. a week each, and two carpenters for the next two weeks. For four days two men were helping them to raise the timber; and at another time (*alia vice*) carpenters, with ten men and the abbey servants to help them at intervals in raising the timber, were at work for five weeks, namely four carpenters in the first week, three in the next two weeks, two in the fourth, one in the fifth week.

Next year, 1342, two carpenters worked from 19th October to 28th December, three from 28th December to 24th April, 1343, and one from 24th April to Pentecost, 22nd May.¹ For twenty days they had four men helping to raise the timber (*pro meremio sursum traendo*) at 2d. a day, and the abbey servants also helped. There were also two sawyers at work for fifty days and a half at 4d. each a day. The total expense of this work was £14 6s. 6d.

The materials are arranged thus: boards for the lower roof (*in bordis pro tecto inferiori*) 15s. 6d, with various nails (14s.) including 500 "bordnavl," 300 "spiknayl *pro cheveronibus retinendis et guttiris*," 5500 "roefnayl *pro tecto cooperiando*," and 200 "transennayl *pro contrislathis*"

¹ So 23452; 23452* has 26th May. But in 1343 Pentecost was 1st June; in 1344 however the east fell on 23rd May, and

the two last dates suit that year best. It seems as if the clerk who made up the account slipped a year by accident.

and a tiler worked for ten days in laying the laths (*pro lathis ponendis*, 5s.). Next 1100 laths were bought at Kingston (22s.); and four barrels (*doleis*) *pro lathis inde faciendis et ad stayand' cheveron'* 4s. 4d., with more nails; and two carpenters were employed for a week (4s.), and one for three days (1s.) *pro dictis lathis ponendis*. Two hundred trees were cut down at Westerham (18s. 11d.) and carried by Bottele and Lambheth to the belfry, i.e. the "belfrenhawe" (Sacrist 1346-7) where the timber was stored, the total expense being £6 2s. 0½d. Forty oaks were cut down at Hendon for scaffolding (*pro scaffoldes*) 1s.: timber was bought for the same (13s. 4d.), and fifty hurdles made at Hendon.

Lastly we have the important item of taking down the scaffold, which shows that the work was completed. Richard Atewode and his son John worked for one day *ad scaffold' deponend'* (8d.), with the assistance of three labourers (7d.), and the servants of the church (3d.). There was also one other *depositio scaffold'* which cost in all 8d. The amount of these items together with the bill for timber and carpenters' work certainly does not indicate a very extensive roof space. Probably the work of these years was only concerned with the north aisle, the south aisle having been reroofed in 1338, and the central aisle in the intervening years, 1338-1341.

The lead however was more costly. One plumber received 10s. with 10s. for a robe as arrears of his wages for the preceding year, Michaelmas 1340 to Michaelmas 1341. At intervals in 1341-3 were bought 6 charrs, 13 stone of lead (£19 2s. 8d.), 12 charrs (£25 4s. 1d.), and 9½ charrs (£20). The casting and laying was done by piece-work: for the first two lots the plumber received £4 for the third £1. The total amount of the lead bill came to £71 18s. 4d.

One interesting item yet remains; 3½ cwt. of lime was bought for whitewashing the church (*pro dealbacione murorum*): and a plasterer received £2 for plastering and whitewashing half the church (*ad plastrandam et dealbandam medietatem dicte ecclesie*). We may conjecture that this half was the northern half of the church, and that the southern half had been similarly treated after the renewal of the roof of the south aisle in 1338. In any case it would

appear that the restoration of the old church was complete, for the next roll of the *novum opus* deals, as we shall see, with something else. The total cost of the work from 1341 to 1343 comes to £148 18s. 0d.

THE CLOISTER.

The church having been put into repair, attention was next paid to the cloister; and so began a great work, namely the rebuilding of the cloister, which was to last until 1365. The then existing cloister had been built in the time of abbot Gilbert Crispin, 1085-1117,¹ and several fragments of this were found by Sir Gilbert Scott while restoring the outer wall of the cloister, enough to enable Mr. Lethaby recently to put together in the undercroft two or three arches of the colonnade facing the garth. This cloister was roofed with wood, and no doubt it had been injured by the fire of 1298. But in any case, if the "glorious work of Henry III" was to be carried on, the rest of the cloister would have to be rebuilt and vaulted with stone to correspond to the portion built by Henry, viz. from the church to the chapter-house in the east, and the part contiguous to the quire in the north cloister.

Our authority for the commencement of the work is an interesting roll (*Mun.* 23453) which runs from before Easter to 1st November, 1344. It deals only with money received from the abbot, *de dompno abbate pro claustro faciendo*, which shows that the work was initiated by abbot Henley; and there is no record of any money received from Longdon. The absence of a heading, the three balancings (at Easter, at Pentecost, and at 1st November), and the variation in handwriting, indicate that the roll was a current account kept by Simon Bircheston (v. *infra*).

Before Easter he had received twenty marks from the abbot, and this had been spent in the purchase of forty-eight barrels (*dolea*) of stone (46 at 5s. each and two at 6s. 8d. totalling £12 3s. 4d.) and in their transport from London to Westminster, leaving him with a balance of 11s. 8d. Further sums of £10 and £1 4s. 2½d. came from the abbot; and from the week after Easter week (beginning 11th April) until Pentecost, 23rd May, we have the weekly bill for wages and other expenses.

¹ *Westminster and the King's Craftsmen*, 103, 104.

Three masons and two marblers (*cementar' marmor'*) were employed every week; the masons receiving 1s. 8d. and the marblers 1s. 6d. a week each besides their 'livery' of food (*ultra* or *preter liberationem*). In the first week (and the first week only) we have a carpenter at work on the pentise in the cloister (*supra pentys in clauistro*), 2s. The mention of foundations in the fourth week would seem to show that the colonnade had been taken down for a certain distance, and that being the case a new temporary shelter or 'pentys' had to be put up. Materials were bought for it: 800 oak (3s. 4d.) and 200 beech laths (5d.) with 2000 "rofnail" and 1000 "wownail" *ad idem*; also five cartloads of clay (*luti*) *ad idem*; and a plasterer (*daubator*) with his servant was employed for three days (9d.). Then 4000 tiles were bought *pro clauistro* (13s. 4d.) with 4000 tilepins (4d.) and 50 spiknail: to place which a tiler and his servant laboured four days (2s.) and 6 days in the following week (3s.). To help these operations there were four men labouring and digging (*laborantium et fodientium*) for five days at 2d. a day each.

In the following weeks there was a similar though varying amount of labour. In the second week two boatloads of rag were bought (20s. 2d.) and one of chalk and flint (8s.); in the third week boards to make the mason's "forms" (*pro formis eorum faciend'*). In the fourth week, 2nd to 9th May, occurs the interesting entry already referred to: *Item in pane et cervisia datis cementar' et squaddoribus abbatis et aliis pluribus laborantibus die lune* [3rd May] *ut melius expedirent et festinarent propter aquam in fundamentis* 7½d. This week Adam de Witteneye, *cementarius*, worked for two days (6d.): and we have the first mention of bedders (*cementar' cubitor'*). Two of these worked for five days, i.e. after the Monday, at 5d. and 5½d. a day; in the fifth week they received 4s. 4d. and *non plus propter ascens' domini* (a holiday); in the sixth week a third was added. In each of the last three weeks boatloads of rag and chalk were bought, making four of rag (39s. 6d.) and three of chalk (15s.). This with the items *in potu* 2d., *in potationibus cementar' et laborant'* 4d., completes the record of expenses; and at Pentecost, 23rd May, the warden had a deficit of 3s. 6d.

The abbot gave another £6; and the work from Pentecost to All Saints (1st November) is summarised in

one paragraph. Five masons worked every week from 30th May¹ to 1st August, nine weeks (£3 12s. 0d.); six from 1st August to 1st November, thirteen weeks (£7 3s. 2d.). Between 30th May and August were bought one boatload of chalk (5s. 6d.) with five cwt. of lime, and 200 Caen stones, *lapi^d de Cam*, (26s. 8d.), 550 *lapi^d de Goyⁿ* (73s. 4d.), 50 *lapi^d de Gobet* (26s. 8d.). Then after a few smaller items the account ends with a large order of stone *in iii naviculis* (shiploads) weighing 101 dol^r at 4s. a dol. £20 4s. 0d. Here the roll ends, and on the back is recorded the final deficit £33 11s. 2d.

The reason why the account ended at 1st November is clear. On 29th October, 1344, abbot Henley died. Simon Bircheston was chosen to succeed him in the abbacy on 10th November. One of the rolls of the manors of queen Eleanor (*Mun.* 23691) gives the amounts of his deficits at his election, namely as warden of those manors £57 19s. 1½d, as warden of the new work £33 11s. 2d. This proves that the account we have been considering is his. His election to the abbacy would cause Bircheston to resign the wardenship of the new work, and John Mordon was left alone. Here unfortunately our information ceases; for the next account roll dates from Michaelmas, 1349. There is no doubt, however, that the work in the cloister went on under abbot Bircheston's supervision. But disaster was at hand. At Michaelmas, 1348, the great plague reached London, and before it was over the abbey lost twenty-six monks: last of all the abbot himself died on 15th May, 1349, at Hampstead. He left money to continue the work of the cloister (*in usum et utilitatem operis claustralis et locutorii*); and was buried in the east cloister, *ante introitum locutorii domus capitularis juxta ostium dormitorii*.² This would prove that the east cloister was the scene of the work we have been describing and that the southern part of it is (at least in great measure, if not wholly) the work of Simon Bircheston. Here we stop; for the great plague, by bringing Langham and Litlington to the front, opened a new and notable chapter in the building operations of Westminster Abbey.

¹ The MS. has xx^o; *lege* xxx^o.

² Flete, *Hist. of Westminster*, ed. Robinson, 127.