

NOTE ON THE HASTINGS CORPORATION RELICS
OF CORONATIONS OF THE KINGS AND QUEENS
OF ENGLAND.

*Read at the Annual Meeting of the Hastings Museum Association,
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PROBABLY the oldest relic of the services of Barons of the Port of Hastings, at the Coronation of the Kings and Queens of England, now in the town, is the portion of the canopy formerly used as a cloth on the pulpit and reading desk of All Saints Church. It was part of the canopy held over Queen Anne at her Coronation, and is of scarlet cloth with yellow fringe. The following letters are worked in yellow on the front :

A(NNE) R(EGINA)
INAVGVRAT
AP(RIL) MDCCII
A(NNO)

It seems probable that this lettering, if not also the yellow fringe, was added to the cloth at a subsequent date. The piece of the canopy is the plainest material of any recorded canopy used at the Coronation of an English Sovereign.

The pulpit of the Church of Saint Clement's, Hastings, was formerly covered with a material of flowered silver tissue, with a gold fringe at the bottom and a silver fringe at the top, which formed part of the canopy held over King George I. at his Coronation. ("Gents. Mag.," Vol. LVI., page 650.)

The canopy of George III. was of gold-brocaded tissue, with bullion fringe seven inches deep, lined with

silver tissue and silver fringe, supported by silver staves. The bells were of silver-gilt, "of the usual hand-bell size."

There were formerly two brass chandeliers in the church of Saint Clement; one was presented by the Hastings Barons and the other by the inhabitants of the town, as the following extract from the Vestry book explains:

"In testimony of gratitude to our benefactors, and for the information of posterity: We, the minister and churchwardens of the parish of Saint Clements, in the town and port of Hastings, in the County of Sussex, do hereby acknowledge that the Chandelier, next to the pulpit in this church, was the gift of Edward Milward Esq. (then Mayor of the Corporation) and the other barons of this port, who supported the canopies at the coronation, September, the 22nd 1761, being the produce of their silver staves, the said canopy bearers' perquisite; and that the other was the gift of the principal inhabitants of this parish, by voluntary contributions, made the 26th day of March 1726."

W. WILLIAMS, Rector,

ROBERT CRAMP
ROBERT POLLARD } Church-wardens,

Dated

St. Clements Church
June the 22nd 1762.

The following names and inscriptions are engraved on the chandelier presented by the Barons:

Edward Milward
William Ashburnham
John Pelham

Luke Spencer
Richard Redcoat
Rose Fuller Esq^{rs}

"Barons of this port, who supported the canopies at the coronation of King George III. and Queen Charlotte September 22nd 1761."

I discovered these two chandeliers in an old chest in the tower of All Saints Church in the year 1882. Both had been taken to pieces. Many years before they had been offered for sale to Messrs. Alderton & Co.'s foundry as old metal, but fortunately not bought, because the brass was of too pale a colour for their commercial purposes. I put one of these chandeliers together and drew the attention of our Honorary Secretary (Mr. W. V. Crake) to them, and he has since obtained the loan for the Hastings Museum of the engraved portion of that one presented by the Barons. Both are of handsome design,

and it may be hoped that they may be reconstructed and fitted with the electric light, in which form they would prove handsome and appropriate ornaments to the Museum.

Among other relics preserved with the insignia of the Corporation is a large silver punch-bowl, presented by the Barons who attended the Coronation of King George the Second and Queen Caroline, A.D. 1727.

It weighs 164-ozs. 18-dwts. and holds about 4 gallons. The following inscription is engraven on one side :

“This silver bowl was presented to the corporation of Hastings (the Premier Cinque Port) by the gentlemen whose names are hereon inscribed ; who had the honour to be unanimously elected y^e barons of the said town, to support y^e canopy over their sacred Royal Majesties King George y^e 2nd and Queen Caroline, at y^e solemnity of their inauguration at Westminster, the eleventh day of October, 1727 ; and y^e same was made out of their shares and dividends of the silver &c. belonging to the said canopys.”

On the opposite side :

Canopy Bearers to the King.

Sir William Ashburnham, Bart.
Thomas Pelham of Stanmer, Esq.
Edward Dyne, Esq.

Canopy Bearers to the Queen.

The Hon. Tho^s Townsend Esq.
James Pelham Esq^{re}
John Collier Esq^{re}

Between the inscriptions on one side the King is represented sitting in his Coronation robes, with the crown, sceptre and orb ; and, on the opposite side, the Queen sitting in her Coronation chair and robed, holding a sceptre and orb. With respect to this bowl, Moss remarks (or rather Mr. William Herbert, late librarian of the Guildhall, London, who wrote Moss' "Handbook to Hastings," 1824):

“As punch is now disused, and has long ceased to be a fashionable liquor, and the corporation preferring wine at their public festivals, a frame work of wood has been made to fit the inside of the bowl, to hold decanters ; by this means it still forms a handsome appendage at their dinners, and constitutes a grand centre ornament to the table.”

The bowl is now preserved in the Hastings Museum.

The following minute as to the election of these Barons¹ is preserved among the town records :

¹ They were all elected generally, without any assignment to which canopies, and agreed among themselves.

“Hasting—At an assembly of the mayor, jurats, and commonalty, of the said town and port, held at the Common Hall, the 23rd September, 1727; the following gentlemen were elected barons for the 1st port To support the canopies over their Majestys’ King George the second and Queen Caroline at their Coronation, appointed for the 4th of October, 1727 and then by proclamation deferred till Wednesday the 11th of the said month; and the said gentlemen attended the service, and were at the whole expense of their robes &c. without any charge to the corporation, besides a handsome treat given at the time of their election of twenty guineas.” (Names as above.)

At the meeting of the Sussex Archæological Society at Hastings (15th August, 1862), the Countess of Waldegrave exhibited three silver-gilt bells, belonging respectively to the canopies borne by the Hastings Barons of the Cinque Ports at the Coronation of George II., III. and IV. The first belonged to John Collier, Esq., 1727 (the tablet to whose memory in St. Clement’s Church attests the fact of his bearing the canopy), the second to Edward Milward, Esq., 1760, and the third to his son Edward Milward, Esq., 1821. These relics were said to be remarkable, as being instances in which the Barons at three successive Coronations belonged to the same family.

The Reverend W. C. Sayer Milward, the present representative of the above family, and Sir A. Ashburnham Clement have great claims to be elected to the service of bearing the canopy at the Coronation of King Edward VII., should the Barons of the Cinque Ports be called upon for their services as of old.

All lovers of these ancient customs will be glad to hear that, besides the action adopted by the Sussex Archæological Society, the Registrar of the Cinque Ports is moving in the matter of the establishment of the Barons’ claim.