

DESCRIPTION OF A CHAMBER,

FORMERLY

Adjoining the Jesus Chapel of the Cathedral.

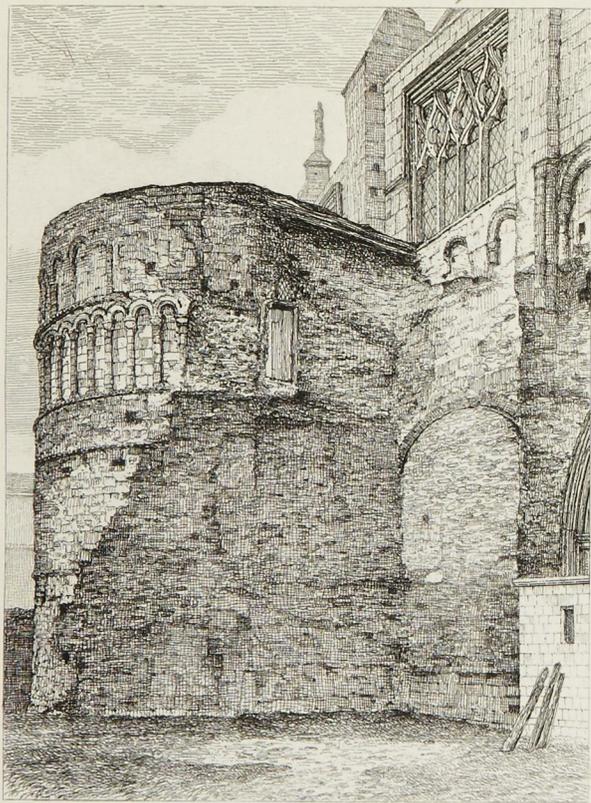
COMMUNICATED BY

MR. JOHN L'ESTRANGE.

ALTHOUGH the Cathedral Church of Norwich has engaged the attention and employed the pens of so many, able antiquaries included, there are yet several points to which attention may be directed with advantage, and concerning which something may be said without merely repeating the subject of previous observations.

Upon reference to Blomefield's Ground Plan of the Cathedral, it will be observed that he has delineated on the exterior of the north aisle of the chancel the foundations of two rectangular chapels, the easternmost of which was opposite to the Consistory court, forming as it were an eastern transept. These chapels he conjectures, but apparently upon very slight grounds, to have been respectively dedicated to St. Stephen and St. Sithe, and for the sake of distinction I will, for the present at least, adopt these dedications.

The fine decorated arch of entrance to St. Stephen's chapel (the one opposite the Consistory court) remains, and the pitch of the acutely-pointed roof is plainly to be traced on the exterior wall; but of St. Sithe's (the chapel to the



Etched by H. Ninham.

SITUATION OF THE SANCTUARY CHAMBER, NORWICH CATHEDRAL.

west of St. Stephen's) no trace is to be discovered, and indeed there never was, nor could have been, a chapel at this spot. A casual glance will carry conviction with it on this point, whilst a more careful examination will disclose that there really was a second building here, but that, instead of being on the west side of St. Stephen's, it was on the east of it, the Jesus chapel forming its eastern wall. Fortunately, for the present purpose at least, no restoration has taken place at this point, and I am therefore able, with a tolerable degree of certainty, to point out what the principal features of this structure were. In the first place, it was not on the ground level of St. Stephen's chapel, but was a chamber carried on a vault, the pavement of it being about ten feet above the present ground line. Access to it was obtained externally by a staircase at the north-west corner of the Jesus chapel, and internally under the arch¹ in the chancel in which Bishop Bathurst's statue is placed, and over a gallery still remaining in the north aisle.

Having mentioned this gallery, which has been a source of numerous conjectures on the part of those writers on the cathedral who, electing to think for themselves, have not blindly followed in Blomefield's footsteps, I should like to say a few words concerning it myself.

It is a somewhat clumsy vault of two bays, of the Decorated period, carried on short columns, which on the south side are stilted on a plinth. There is an east view of it in Britton's "Norwich Cathedral," pl. xiv., and P. Browne, writing in 1807, states that "the parapets on the east and west ends of it were taken down in the late improvements."

¹ I cannot ascertain the precise period at which this arch was first blocked up. In a large plan and elevation of the choir and chancel, drawn in 1756, it is shewn filled up with a plain partition reaching to within a foot of the spring of the arch. This was replaced by the present more pretentious screen at the same time, as I am informed by Mr. Subscrierist Allwood, that the arches of the apse were filled up; and this P. Browne, writing in 1785, stated to have been lately done.

Various uses have been assigned to this structure: one calls it the Confessionary on the strength of a quatrefoil opening² into the chancel; whilst another, apparently on the same ground, supposes it to have been the place where refractory monks, not allowed to enter choir, were permitted to attend divine service. These would merely assign a use to the space beneath the vault, which need not have been erected for either of these purposes. But suggestions are not wanting as to the use of the vault itself. One writer thinks it may have been a gallery for a pair of organs to assist at the services in the choir and the Jesus chapel; and he adds in confirmation of this, that the old singing school was kept in the aisle near here, a place which could have had no recommendation had not the organs been near. Another suggests that it may have been the habitation of a hermit; and adds, "Henry III. is recorded to have confessed to the Anchorite, who dwelt in the aisle of Westminster Abbey." Both these suggestions, emanating from distinguished antiquaries, are deserving of respect; but upon mature consideration I cannot accept either of them. There are several other conjectures, of which the one nearest the mark is, that it was a bridge or gallery to a chapel. To this use, as already mentioned, no doubt it was applied; but to suppose that it was erected for such a purpose only, would be to attribute considerable clumsiness to the architect.

The building of this gallery preceded that of the chamber-chapel, which was made a chamber solely because the gallery prevented access to it from the pavement of the aisle. For what purpose then, it may be asked, was this vault erected? Having rejected the suggestions of others, it may reasonably be expected that I should offer one of my own, and it is my intention to do so. But first let us explore this gallery, to

² Mr. Harrod conjectures this opening to have been for the purpose of watching from the aisle the light at the Easter Sepulchre, which he has shewn to have occupied the arch on the other side.

which access now can be obtained only by a ladder from the aisle. We find ourselves on a clay-paved platform $24\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $14\frac{1}{2}$ ft., the greatest length being from east to west. It is about 10 ft. above the pavement of the aisle, 5 ft. above that of the chancel, and is $13\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high. The first thing that strikes one is the entrance to the chamber. It is unnecessary perhaps to remark that each bay of the aisle consists of four arches, three of which are open, whilst the fourth, being solid, with the exception of a window, forms the external wall. The wall at this spot has been entirely removed, and part even of the western jamb of the wall-arch itself; whilst the semicircular arch has been splayed to permit the introduction of a low perpendicular one. It is now blocked up at 2 ft. 10 in. with a thin and comparatively modern wall. On the south side we have merely the modern filling up of the arch (formerly opening into the chancel) projecting half a foot or so on to the gallery. There is a ring in the roof, as in several other places in the aisle, and the traces of the parapets mentioned by P. Browne are very distinct; but there is nothing to throw any light upon the purpose for which it was used or erected, beyond the fact that the arch on the north was an entrance to some room.

Blomefield informs us that William Bateman, who was bishop from 1343 to 1354, "gave to the High Altar of his Cathedral Church two Images of the *Holy Trinity*, one of great Value, very large, in a Tabernacle or Shrine of Massy Silver, Gilt, the other a small one, with Reliques, of 20 Pounds weight." (Vol. ii., p. 363, fol. ed.) Further on (p. 508) he states, "the Imago Principalis, the Principal Image, or Image of the Holy Trinity," was placed on the rood-loft. But this is contradicted by a passage in the ordinances of St. George's Company,³ from which it appears that the Fraternity of St. George was begun in 1324, "in the Cathedral Church, *afor*n the *heie Awter*, AFORN THE

³ Norfolk Archæology, vol. iii., p. 316.

TRINITE, on the south syde in Norwych." From this it is clear that the image of the Holy Trinity was near the high altar, and indeed we know that the "Imago principalis," or image of the saint to whom the church was dedicated, was invariably placed near the high altar, and generally on its north side. Assuming, then, that the high altar stood in the chord of the apse, as shewn by Blomefield, or further back in the presbytery, as indicated in Mr Harrod's excellent plan, I would ask, where near the high altar is a more likely situation to be found for the image of the Holy Trinity than on this gallery? ⁴ the architecture of which, moreover, is of the period of Bishop Bateman's donation, 1343—1354.

Having thus stated what I believe to have been the original object of this vault, I should like to enter into some particulars concerning this celebrated image, an account of which would not form the least interesting chapter in a History of the Cathedral. It is time, however, to return to the structure between the Jesus chapel and that of St. Stephen, or rather to those indications of it still remaining, the more important of which it may be as well to point out, that my readers may judge for themselves whether the conclusions already arrived at with reference to it be correct. The etching on the opposite page will materially assist in this. The perpendicular arch of entrance and the weather line of a lean-to roof are plainly to be seen in the wall of the aisle. The line of tiles 10 ft. from the ground, remains of the pavement, preserved only by reason of the wall with which the arch is blocked up having been built on them, cannot be made out in the etching, but a white speck may be noticed, which is a fragment of a step, the east end of the chamber at about $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the east wall being raised about half a foot. It will be noticed that the west side of

⁴ It is worth mentioning, that the principal boss in the chancel roof, built *circa* 1480, opposite this vault, is a representation of the Holy Trinity. May there not have been some significance in this?

the Jesus chapel has been stripped of its ashlar work to within a foot of its base. From the pavement of the chamber upwards, not only has the ashlar work been removed, but the original segmental outline of the chapel has been destroyed in order to gain space and make the east wall of the chamber straight.⁵ A shallow rectangular recess about ten feet in length has also been cut in the wall, and is strongly suggestive of the reredos of an altar. The slanting manner in which the stone facing of the chapel has been removed at the north-west corner indicates the situation of the external staircase previously mentioned; the projecting piece of masonry immediately beneath is part of the staircase itself, whilst some square holes in the wall above, as if for joists, would lead to the supposition that it had a wooden roof. The north wall of this chamber may be traced blocking up two arches of the arcade in the second stage of the Jesus chapel, a little above and to the north of the rectangular recess just noticed. A more careful examination of the walls would disclose other facts which are here passed over, for to descend further into particulars would be merely tiresome without advantage.

In 1551, Alexander Chapman, of Norwich, had a lease granted him for ninety-nine years, at an annual rental of 6s. 8d., of certain premises in the Close described as follows: "All that *chamber* within the precyncte of the Cathedrall churche aforesaide, *sometyme called the SANCTUARYE MENS CHAMBER*, with other the edifieing and appurtenances of the same chamber, which one Francis Altemere, priest, and after that — Parker, priest, lately had, occupied, and enjoyed, with the lytell garden thereunto adjoyninge, and one other garden called 'Our Ladie's garden,' on the *north syde of the chapell* called our *Ladie's chapelle*, and also two

⁵ The circular buttress at the junction of the Jesus chapel with the aisle has also been cut away, as its bulk would have made a sad encroachment in a room little more than 15 ft. square.

olde chapells next adjoyninge to the said chamber, whereof one was called *Saynt Andrew's chapelle*, and the other *saynt Anne's chapell*."

There is no difficulty in identifying these premises. The chamber to which it has been the object of this paper to draw attention, was the "Sanctuary Men's Chamber;" the chapel next to it, which has hitherto been designated as St. Stephen's, was St. Andrew's; whilst the apsidal chapel, which still remains on the east side of the north transept, called by Blomefield "the Sexterie, or an ancient Vestry," is St. Anne's.⁶

It may perhaps be objected that the two chapels thus appropriated to SS. Andrew and Anne do not correspond with the description in the lease, only one being "next adjoining" to the said chamber; but there is documentary evidence to shew that St. Andrew's and St. Anne's chapels were not contiguous. It is by no means clear, at least to me, what was the precise object to which a Sanctuary Men's Chamber was applied. Was it the dwelling of the keeper of the sanctuary, mentioned by Blomefield among the lay officers of the convent? or was it the place where those who took sanctuary were lodged? Whichever it may have been, I should hardly suppose that this chamber was originally built for either. The floor being raised at the east end and the shallow recess in the wall are strongly suggestive of an altar, which it does not seem likely would be found in a "Sanctuary Men's Chamber." Perhaps it was built in the palmy days of the convent, as I shall presently shew that it was, for a chapel; and when, upon the decrease of the voluntary oblations, which took place about the middle of

⁶ St. Anne's, or Berney's chapel, from John de Berney who was buried in it in 1374, is placed on Blomefield's Plan of the Cathedral in the chancel, between the 17th and 18th columns. Britton, in his plan, follows Blomefield's, but through a typographical mistake has canonized Berney, making it St. Berney's chapel.

the fifteenth century, it could be no longer maintained as such, it was converted to the use indicated by the name it bore in the lease of 1551. And at that time it is possible that the external staircase was constructed. Or, perhaps, as we know that the sacrist accounted for the rent of the "chamber of the enclosed priest," this may have been a hermit's cell or anchorage, in which case one could understand both the altar and the external staircase.

A tolerably accurate conclusion as to the date of the erection of this chamber-chapel, or Sanctuary Men's Chamber, as I suppose for the future it must be called, might be arrived at from the existing buildings; but fortunately there is documentary evidence which renders the attempt unnecessary.

1404. "Item in the expenses of making a house *neat* the chapel of *St. Andrew*, beside and gifts of the confraternity, £4. 12s. 11½*d.*"⁷

The lease before referred to contains a covenant by the lessors, "to permitt and suffer the said Alexander, his executors and assigns, to alter and transpose the saide chamber and two chappelles before graunted, and to make them meyte and convenyent for hys or their purpose, and also to enclose the same two chappelles from the said Cathedrall churche with honest and sufficient walles."

In *St. Anne's* chapel, which is now in a most desolate and mutilated condition, the alterations consisted in breaking through the north wall to effect an entrance from the garden, and making a chamber of the upper part of the chapel, the ascent to which was on the same side as the entrance. Just over the present doorway on the south side is an Elizabethan fire-place, recessed in the massive Norman wall, the hearth of which was about nine feet above the ground floor, the exterior wall being cut away to make a chimney.

⁷ Comp. ff'ris Thome Heuyngnam, Sacrist' Norwic', 1404.—Coll. P.L.N.N.

This chapel, which is vaulted like the aisles, had originally a chamber over its present flat roof, as may be seen from a large Norman arch, and the weather line of its roof on the transept wall. It is probable that it was dilapidated before 1551, as no notice is taken of it in the lease of that date referred to above. There is also the mark of a second roof, including within it the present three-light Perpendicular window, which was probably the east window of the chamber. It retains more painted quarries than any of the other windows in the church: they are the same in pattern as those in the windows of the Triforium of the nave.

At what period St. Anne's chapel ceased to be occupied as a dwelling and St. Andrew's and the "Sanctuary Men's Chamber" were demolished, is entirely matter for conjecture. It may have been during the Decanate of Dr. Gardiner, (1573—1589) about which time several of the conventual buildings, including "Our Ladye's Chapel," were pulled down, not only to save the cost of repairing them, but also with an eye to some pecuniary advantage.

I cannot conclude these remarks without acknowledging my obligations to Mr. Jeckell, who obligingly gave me the benefit of a personal examination of the buildings and many valuable hints; and to my friend Mr. J. P. Sturgess and other gentlemen for suggestions which I have adopted.