

The Lovekyns and the Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston upon Thames

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The Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston upon Thames, founded in 1309 by Edward Lovekyn, is a rare example of a free-standing medieval chantry chapel. Its history was traced in a major article in the Collections by Major Alfred Heales in 1883, but no explanation was offered there for the founder's decision to locate his building in its unusual position outside the town by the side of a road. The suggestion is made here that Lovekyn may have contributed to the cost of repairing that road and that he chose to place the chapel close to it to prompt prayers of thanksgiving for his soul. The article also considers the architectural form of the chapel, arguing that it belongs to the 'palace chapel' type which can be traced in England to the years after the Conquest and on the Continent to the early 11th century. The remarkable and very detailed ordinances for which John Lovekyn, the founder's son, obtained approval in 1355 are explained in terms of Lovekyn's concern to guard against possible dereliction of their duties by the chaplains in the absence of supervision by an established body such as a town council. The article offers qualified support for the argument that the Lovekyn Chapel was the site of a grammar school in the town between the 14th century and the Reformation. The article concludes by offering an outline account of the restorations of the chapel in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The year 2009 saw the 700th anniversary of the foundation of the Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston upon Thames. The occasion was marked by the celebration of a mass in the chapel for only the third time since the dissolution of the chantries by Edward VI's government in 1547.¹ The chapel provides a rare and remarkable example of a free-standing chantry building. Usually such structures were incorporated within, or added to the sides of, existing church fabrics. The chapel's history was reconstructed in detail in an article in the *Collections* over a century ago by the public notary, Volunteer reservist, antiquary and ecclesiologist, Major Alfred Heales FSA (1827–98).² Heales' work was of a very high scholarly standard, and as an account of the chapel's foundation and historical development will probably never be surpassed.³ It had the additional merit of reproducing, as appendices, key documents for the chapel's history, including the younger Lovekyn's ordinances defining the chaplains' duties, drawn up in the 1350s. Its weakness was that, like the majority of such writings on local history of that time, it was essentially antiquarian in conception, confining itself to description and reconstruction and making little attempt to evaluate the subject-matter in the context of the larger developments of the age. It is possible to gain fresh insights into both the history and the architectural character of the chapel by attempting an examination which takes these broader perspectives into account while also looking in some detail at the key figures in the story – the Lovekyns themselves. Two successive heads of the family were responsible for the chapel's foundation and subsequent re-endowment: Edward Lovekyn (d. 1310), the beneficiary of the letters patent granted in 1309, and his son by his second marriage, John, who augmented the endowment in the 1350s and gave us the chapel in its present form. Both men were significant figures in the history of Kingston upon Thames, and the latter in particular was someone whose personality and religious tastes can still be felt across the centuries.

¹ The two previous occasions were 24 July 1995 and 22 July 1996.

² Heales 1883b.

³ Heales followed in his father's footsteps as a public notary. He travelled extensively in Europe and North America. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1860 and was a Vice-President of the Surrey Archaeological Society from 1893. He published extensively on the churches of Surrey and Middlesex. The major work of his later years was Heales 1898. He lived most of his life at Stoke Newington, but moved in the late 1870s to Streatham. A short obituary of him appears in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 17, 423–4.

The general thinking behind the foundation of the Lovekyn Chapel is clear enough. What Edward Lovekyn was doing was establishing an institution that would act as a storehouse of prayer for the benefit of his soul and the souls of those named by him. For centuries it had been the semi-official teaching of the Church that the sufferings of the soul in purgatory could be eased by the prayers and masses of the living faithful. In the period to the 12th century the offering of such intercession had generally been organised by those powerhouses of prayer – the monasteries – whose inmates interceded collectively for their houses' benefactors, those buried in the house, and all the faithful departed. From the 13th century, however, as the patron class diversified and the demand strengthened for less standardised types of provision, those who could afford it took to endowing chaplains to say prayers specifically for their own souls and the souls of those named by them. It was these individual foundations that went by the name 'chantries'. In its simplest form, a chantry could be no more than an occasion – the regular celebration by a chaplain of masses for a named individual at a side altar in a church – and the celebration could be fixed term or perpetual. The very grandest chantry foundations, however, those supported by substantial endowments, could have a physical existence as chapels built onto the sides of churches, or within churches as stone cages. A small number of chantries, such as Edward Lovekyn's at Kingston, had a physical existence as free-standing chapels quite unconnected with other churches. Edward Lovekyn's is one of the very few chantry chapels in this category to survive.

Edward's plans for establishing a chantry chapel came at the end of a long and successful career in business. He was born in 1239 into a family of Kingston butchers and victuallers. His father, John, owned property in Kyroune's Lane, Kingston, and was an elector of jurors in the town.⁴ Edward himself succeeded to the Kyroune's Lane property and added to the family's portfolio of interests by acquiring tenements in Bridgefoot in Bridge Street, Kingston. Edward took a prominent role in Kingston affairs and served as bailiff of the town in 1277 and 1284. However, as his business empire grew, and perhaps as a result of taking advantage of Kingston's position as a river port, he became increasingly involved in trade in London. He became a citizen of London in 1292, enrolled in the Fishmongers' Guild, and acquired property in Billingsgate, the fishmongers' area of the city. His reputation as a victualler was such that he was engaged as a provider of foodstuffs for the banquet accompanying Edward I's betrothal to his second wife, Margaret of France in 1299.⁵ In 1308 he was engaged as a supplier of foodstuffs a second time for a royal occasion, the coronation of Edward II.⁶

It was in part as a result of his involvement with Edward I's officers that Lovekyn was afforded the opportunity to found his chantry at Kingston. When he was awarded the mortmain licence for his chapel in 1309, it was in part to discharge the king's very considerable debt to him. For his services as a royal caterer Lovekyn was owed the massive sum of 1000 marks.⁷ The Exchequer, which was already heavily indebted as a result of expenditure on the Scottish wars, resorted to a variety of means to honour its obligations to him.⁸ In 1300, the fee farm of Kingston, which was collected by the crown, was assigned to him in partial payment of the sum.⁹ Very quickly, however, Lovekyn found that he could not collect the farm, because Kingston had been assigned to the queen as part of her dower lands.¹⁰ Two years later he was accordingly given a charge on the tax of a tenth paid by the neighbouring abbey of Chertsey up to a limit of £240.¹¹ Again Lovekyn ran into difficulties,

⁴ Ward & Evans 2000, 1, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

⁶ Devon 1837, 121.

⁷ BL: Lansdowne MS 226, f 30r, which transcribes a letter from William Greenfield, archbishop of York, to John Droxford, keeper of the wardrobe, making arrangements for the repayment.

⁸ The story is conveniently summarised by A F Leach in 'Schools' in *VCH*, 2, 157.

⁹ *CalPR*, 1292–1301, 510.

¹⁰ Manning & Bray, 1804–14, 1, 350.

¹¹ *CalPR*, 1301–7, 593–4.



Fig 1 View of the Lovekyn Chapel from the south-west in 2010. (Photograph: author)

this time because the abbot, a stickler for formalities, refused to pay without authority under the great seal. Letters patent under that seal were issued on 29 November 1303 to attest this authority. A further patent was issued on 11 April 1307 authorising Lovekyn to collect another £240 assigned on the revenues of the duchy of Aquitaine.¹² This last patent, however, was apparently not acted on because Edward I died in July, and the letters became void. Further letters confirming the patent were issued by the new king, Edward II, on 16 July 1309, and it was on the day after this that the episcopal licence for the chantry was granted.¹³ It accordingly seems likely that Lovekyn's negotiations for the recovery of his debt were intimately connected with his evolving plans for the foundation of the chapel. Not only is it unlikely that those plans could have been fully carried through had he not recovered a large part of that debt; it seems that he actually used the debt as a way of securing – and perhaps speeding – royal endorsement of his scheme.

The date on which Edward II granted the licence sanctioning alienation of lands to the chapel is the date traditionally accepted as that of the chapel's foundation. This is 11 June

¹² Heales 1883b, 256n.

¹³ Goodman, 1940, 379.

1309. The licence granted Edward permission to assign 10 acres of land, 1 acre of meadow and 5 marks of rent in Kingston to a certain chaplain to celebrate mass daily in the chapel of St Mary Magdalen in Kingston for the souls of all the faithful departed.¹⁴ The bishop's letters of a month later awarded him authority to appoint the chaplain, and made the customary stipulations safeguarding the rights of the mother church in the town, in this case the parish church of All Saints. The first chaplain, Ralph de Stanley, was appointed on 23 March 1310. Like more than a few others who founded chantries, Edward made his preparations only just in time. On 27 July in the same year he died.¹⁵ His will does not survive, and so it is not known for certain where he was buried. Given his roots in Kingston, however, he is most likely to have been laid to rest in All Saints church.¹⁶

Edward left behind two sons, Robert and John. Robert appears to have mounted a rearguard action against his father's plans, perhaps because of fear of loss of income to himself. Shortly after his father's death it was alleged that he was withholding the proposed endowments for the chapel, and in 1312 he was excommunicated by the bishop of Winchester. The bishop's dispute with Robert dragged on for more than a decade until 1327, when the archbishop of Canterbury, Walter Reynolds, sent him a letter ordering him to prevent Robert diverting rental income away from the chantry 'by reason of which the sustenance of the chaplain celebrating divine service there has ceased'.¹⁷ Whether or not Robert took any notice of these threats is not known. Within three years he was dead, and thereafter the chaplains appear to have been secure in the enjoyment of their lands.

A notable feature of Edward's chapel was its dedication to St Mary Magdalen, the notorious female sinner of the Gospels and the first person to whom Christ revealed himself after his resurrection. It might be supposed that a male founder would have favoured a male patron – St John the Baptist perhaps, a popular dedicatee in the Middle Ages, or a name saint such as St Edward King and Martyr. It is at least possible that Lovekyn's choice of St Mary Magdalen reflected the influence of his second wife, Isabel, who could have suggested a female dedicatee. In the later Middle Ages, however, the Magdalen's cult was a fairly widespread one, appealing to men as much as to women.¹⁸ In the 15th century two colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were to be founded and named in her honour. It is perhaps more likely that the choice of dedication was Lovekyn's own and that it had its roots in his response to her association with repentant sinners and with the contemplative life. It is not entirely a coincidence that the piety of Edward's son John was to show a strong preoccupation with personal sinfulness. Such may have been a characteristic inherited by the son from the father.

As noteworthy as Lovekyn's choice of patron was his conception of a stand-alone chapel. Most late medieval perpetual chantries were established within existing church fabrics. In virtually every major church in England by the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries there were dozens, in some cases hundreds, of chantry foundations. As the demand grew for side altars at which these masses could be celebrated, so chancel or presbytery aisles were extended and transeptal chapels added to provide the necessary accommodation. Many urban churches had chapels built onto them associated with guilds whose chaplains celebrated intercessory masses for the benefit of deceased guild members. Stand-alone chapels of the kind that Lovekyn founded at Kingston were very rare. Perhaps the best known extant example is the chapel of St John at Buckingham, a foundation originally associated with a leper hospital.¹⁹ An example on a country estate is that at Noseley (Leicestershire), founded around 1300 by

¹⁴ *CalPR*, 1307–13, 162.

¹⁵ *CalFR*, 1307–19, 53.

¹⁶ It may be significant that, whereas Lovekyn does not figure in the London letter books of Edward I's reign, he twice held office in Kingston in that period. He also witnessed deeds at Kingston: TNA: E 326/191; KuTBA: KC2/1/13.

¹⁷ Heales 1883b, 258–9.

¹⁸ Farmer 1978, 292–3. Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester (d. 1397), one of Edward III's sons, was a devotee of the cult of the saint: Catto 1981, 50.

¹⁹ *VCHBucks*, 3, 474.

Roger Martival, later bishop of Salisbury.²⁰ At Canterbury there are the fragmentary remains of the chantry of Hamon Doge, founded on the outskirts of the city in 1264 by the official to the archdeacon of Canterbury, and associated with a chantry in St Paul's church.²¹ The Lovekyn chapel is probably the sole complete example of such a chapel still remaining in southern England. For some reason, Edward Lovekyn, like these other founders, rejected the obvious course of establishing his chantry in his local parish church. All Saints, Kingston, which was being rebuilt around 1300, was already a sizeable building with aisles and transepts, offering plenty of space for altars and side chapels.²² The building could easily have served his needs. So why did he go to the expense of establishing a chapel of his own?

One possible explanation is that around the time that he was he was planning his chantry foundation a convenient site for a stand-alone chapel became available. This was the site of the town's former leper colony.²³ In or shortly before 1316, according to an entry in the Surrey escheator's account of ten years later, the Kingston leper house was demolished, the lepers themselves expelled, and the buildings they occupied pulled down and sold off.²⁴ In the Middle Ages leper hospitals were almost invariably placed outside, or on the edge of, towns so that the lepers would not spread their disfiguring disease. It is not inconceivable that Lovekyn's chapel occupies the site of the former hospital referred to in the account, and that Lovekyn himself had become aware of its possible availability some time before its final demolition. If the chapel did in fact occupy the leper colony site, then an immediate explanation is offered for two otherwise puzzling references that occur some time later. These are John Leland's erroneous statement in the 1530s that the chapel had a hospital attached to it and Bishop Tanner's reference to the chapel as a hospital, perhaps derived from Leland's work, in his *Notitia Monastica* of 1695.²⁵ Against the possibility that the chapel was founded on the leper site, however, must be set the telling fact that there is strong evidence for the lepers' house actually being sited somewhere else in Kingston. Thirty years after the lepers' departure, on 16 November 1348, Edward III made a grant to one William Voirdire and his wife of a tenement in Kingston described specifically as that occupied by the lepers and which the lepers were said to have vacated.²⁶ If the leper house had been in the king's hands for 30 years and was then the subject of a grant to a lessee, it could hardly have been the site used by Lovekyn for his chapel. The idea of a leper connection is further undermined by the bishop of Winchester's licence for the appointment of a chaplain, issued in 1309, which refers to the chapel as 'lately built', indicating that its construction must have pre-dated the lepers' departure. Whatever considerations led Lovekyn to conceive of a free-standing chapel, they could hardly have included the ready availability of an out-of-town site. Leland's and Tanner's suggestions that a hospital had been attached to the chapel may have had their origins in confusion with the leper site. Equally, however, they could have been rooted in an awareness that the Latin word *hospitium* (hospital) had been used as a synonym

²⁰ Nichols 1795–1815, ii, 739.

²¹ Hasted 1778–99, 4, 668; Tatton-Brown 1997, 133.

²² The western part of the fabric had already reached its present length by the 12th century: the west portal of a large Norman church was discovered in c 1865 but then destroyed. That the building was partly rebuilt and enlarged in the 13th century is indicated by a piece of moulding of that date in the east respond of the north chancel chapel. For the building history of the church, see Cherry & Pevsner 1983, 311–2.

²³ For the suggestion that the chapel may have occupied the site of the former leper colony, see *VCH*, 2, 125n (article on the Lovekyn Chapel by J C Cox).

²⁴ TNA: E 357/1, m 25, the account of William Weston, escheator, for 1325–6. The sum of 10 shillings was received from the tenement because: 'idem escheator ex officio suo tenementum illud cepit in manu Regis pro eo quod predicti leprosi tenementum illud totaliter relinquerunt et domos ibidem existententes prostraverunt et asportaverunt per decem annos elapses et amplius [...].' This may be translated as: 'the same escheator by virtue of his office took the tenement into the king's hand because the aforesaid lepers had completely abandoned the tenement and they had overthrown and carried off the buildings ten years before and more [...].'

²⁵ Toulmin-Smith, iv, 86; Tanner 1744, 543. Tanner cites Leland in his brief note on the chapel.

²⁶ *CalFR*, 1347–56, 99–100.

for 'chantry foundation' in early letters relating to the chapel in the Winchester episcopal registers.²⁷

In that case, what considerations did influence Edward Lovekyn's conception? The choice of the chapel site, alongside what is now Old London Road, affords the essential clue. It points to the likelihood of a connection between the chapel and the road. In the Middle Ages, as today, London Road was a highly important thoroughfare, one of a network of routes linking London with the western and south-western counties. Eastwards out of Kingston, it led through Norbiton, over the northern flanks of Wimbledon Common, on through Putney and into London over London Bridge. In Kingston itself the road split, one route continuing south-west along the line of the modern A3 and A31 through Guildford to Winchester and the south coast, the other crossing the river bridge and going into mid-Surrey, Hampshire and the West Country.²⁸ What made possible the latter route was the existence of an easily fordable crossing of the Thames at Kingston. By the late 12th century at the latest the so-called 'great bridge' over the river had been built, the first bridge over the Thames upstream from London. With this, Kingston's success as a trading and commercial centre was assured.²⁹ Lovekyn's decision to build his chapel by this busy route suggests that he could have been a regular traveller along it himself. More than that, it suggests that he had actually contributed to the cost of its upkeep. The good repair in which a number of England's main arterial roads were maintained in the Middle Ages owed much to the generosity of those who used them. Not uncommonly, merchants, traders, lawyers, and others who were regular wayfarers and had an interest in good-quality roads left bequests in their wills for their repair. In 1506 John Ryver, like Lovekyn a Londoner with Kingston connections, left money for amending 'the foul and feeble highways about London and Kingston'.³⁰ References to road repairs are sometimes found on the tomb epitaphs of those who had left money for them to be carried out. At Cirencester (Gloucestershire) Robert Pagge's responsibility for local road repairs is proclaimed on his brass of 1440, and so too at Northleach (Gloucestershire) is Thomas Fortey's on his brass of seven years later.³¹ It is to this background that Edward Lovekyn's choice of site for his chantry chapel should probably be seen. As a merchant with interests in London and thus as a regular user of the Norbiton road, he had probably set aside money for its upkeep. It is not inconceivable that he had actually paved it. By building the chapel where he did, and so drawing attention to his involvement in road repairs, he encouraged prayers of thanksgiving from chaplains and passers-by for his soul.

The practice of eliciting intercessory prayer for the benefit of those who had been responsible for improvements to local communications is most clearly illustrated by the building of bridge chapels. The building of such chapels had been undertaken in the East as early as the reign of the emperor Justinian (529–65). In England the existence of such buildings is attested in written sources from at least the 12th century. By the beginning of the 1500s well over a hundred bridge chapels are known to have been built, and there were probably more.³² Two of the most famous were the Lady Chapel on the Avon Bridge at Bristol, and St William's Chapel on the Ouse Bridge at York. Both were recorded in the 16th century by Leland. Today, the three most impressive and widely known survivors are the chapels on the bridges at St Ives (Huntingdonshire) and Rotherham and Wakefield (Yorkshire). Also of note is the chapel at one end of the bridge over the Medway at Rochester (Kent), erected by John, Lord Cobham, when he rebuilt the bridge after its destruction in the early 1380s. The main purpose of these chapels was to serve as places where masses and prayers could be said for the souls of those who had paid for the building or repair of the bridge structures. The names of the benefactors would be displayed within the chapel, either

²⁷ For example, in Goodman 1940, 563.

²⁸ Hindle 1998, 31; Stenton 1970, 241.

²⁹ Andrews 2004, 173.

³⁰ Heales 1883a, 115.

³¹ Saul 2009, 364.

³² For bridge chapels, see Harrison 2004, 199.

in an obit or prayer roll, or on a board on the wall. Leland found such a list – a table, as he called it – in the chapel at Rochester. There was little difference between these chapels and the chapels of charitable institutions such as hospitals, almshouses and schools. They were all essentially storehouses of prayer for those who had set aside the money to pay for them.

Unfortunately, there is far less evidence for the construction of chapels by the sides of roads than on the backs of bridges. Road-building and road-repair tended to be activities dispersed across a larger patron class than bridge-building, attracting donations from many of middling or lesser means who wanted to perform some work for the benefit of their souls but who could not afford to build a chapel. In north Wiltshire in the 1470s it was an elderly widow, Maud Heath, who paid for a 4½-mile causeway across low-lying land to allow people to reach Chippenham dry-shod.³³ In the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, as has been seen, it was the wool merchant Robert Pagge who had helped pay for essential repairs to the roads in his locality some 35 years earlier. Sometimes the carrying out of road repairs might be set as an act of penance by friars and confessors. Margaret, Duchess of Norfolk's, account book of the 1390s records an outlay for precisely that purpose.³⁴ Although benefactors generally took care to ensure that their work was remembered, this remembrance was generally arranged on tomb epitaphs and not in the more physical form of creating roadside chapels.³⁵

There is at least one example of such a chapel to place beside the Lovekyn Chapel, and this is the former Chapel of Our Lady, outside the village of Great Horkesley (Essex), near Colchester.³⁶ Largely intact still today, it is a modest structure, set close by the Colchester road, combining a chapel and a priest's house. Constructed of diapered brick, it consists of a house of two storeys, the upper one projecting into the chapel and the latter rising to the roof. The entire structure was originally thatched, the thatch later being replaced by tiles. The chapel was apparently founded in 1491 by John Falcon, a local benefactor who was responsible for other good works, among them the giving of a croft to the parish 'to keep a drinking for the poor'.³⁷ It was dissolved at the Reformation, when it was found to be worth £5, and turned into a private dwelling house, which it remains. Most probably other roadside chapels, when dissolved, fell quickly into decay or were demolished, there being no further use for them. The Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston was saved because its site became the home of a grammar school. Although a rare survival today, the chapel is an example of a kind of institution which was probably once quite common.

While the foundation of the Lovekyn Chapel is relatively well documented, the early history of its institutional life is obscure. Little can be established with certainty beyond the succession of the chaplains who served the chapel, and these men are little more than names to us. John de Fre is known to have been instituted in 1326, Peter de Lincoln in 1331, Stephen de Stoke Goldington shortly after Peter, and then Robert de Feckenham and John de Witham in quick succession in 1335 and 1337.³⁸ One episode, however, indicates that the chapel's position was by no means secure. In July 1347 the chaplain, Walter Cooke, who had been instituted in 1344, was reported to be non-resident and altogether neglecting his duties. The bishop of Winchester sent a mandate instructing his local official, the dean of Ewell, to compel him to return, reside in person, and diligently perform Divine Service.³⁹ Cooke's withdrawal suggests that the chantry's endowments, never substantial to begin with, had by this time so far declined in value that it was impossible any longer for the chaplains to live on them. If this was the case, the problem could only have been aggravated by the disaster shortly to come. In 1348 and 1349 the Black Death swept across England, carrying off between one-third and one-half of the population. The rate of mortality was particularly high in the towns, where

³³ Hindle 1998, 45.

³⁴ Catto 1981, 50.

³⁵ In Gloucestershire another example is provided by Thomas Fortey's brass at Northleach.

³⁶ Bettley & Pevsner 2007, 411.

³⁷ EssexAS 1898, 281–3.

³⁸ Heales 1883b, 298–9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

the densely packed, unhygienic surroundings created conditions in which the plague bacillus could easily flourish. All over England urban tenements were deprived of their tenants, and rural landholdings of their agriculturalists. The great landed estates, which formed the endowment of so many churches and charitable institutions, lost much of their value. By the time the plague had passed in late 1349 the financial position of the Lovekyn Chapel must have become precarious. The endowment, barely sufficient to support the officiating chaplain before the Black Death, was probably inadequate for the purpose after that. The very future of the chapel hung in the balance. It is to this background that the re-endowment of the chapel, undertaken by Edward's son John in the 1350s, has to be seen. John's importance in the history of the chapel is such that he may fairly be regarded as its second founder.

John Lovekyn was a still richer and more significant urban tradesman than his father; he certainly cut a much bigger figure in mercantile and civic circles in the City. While it seems that his father's interests had been divided fairly equally between Kingston and the City, his own were concentrated much more firmly in the latter. However, like so many who made their fortunes in the capital, he did not forget his roots.

John Lovekyn was probably his father's only son by his second marriage to Isabel, the daughter of Adam Pikeman, a London fishmonger. Like his father, he was a fishmonger and a victualler.⁴⁰ He carried on an extensive trade in salted or stockfish, corn, wheat, oats, beans, herrings and sea coal. In 1358, as a London citizen, he claimed the right to bring down a freight of sea coal from Newcastle to London free of custom. He appears to have been active in supplying Edward III's armies abroad. It was probably in this capacity that he travelled with Edward III and his forces to the Low Countries in 1338. In 1360 he supplied the king's men on their great march across northern and eastern France from Calais, past Reims, to Brétigny. He also supported the king financially. He contributed to collective loans made by the City to the crown in 1340 and 1346, and he made individual loans ranging in value from £100 to £200 between 1356 and 1365. His importance in the City was reflected in his frequent appointment to office. He served as sheriff of the City in 1342. On no fewer than four occasions – in 1344, 1346, 1348 and 1365 – he was elected one of the City's representatives in parliament. He also served four times as Lord Mayor, in 1348, 1358, 1365 and 1366. He owed his third mayoral term to direct royal intervention on the dismissal of Adam Bury, who was discharged from office on the king's order. Lovekyn also served in various other civic offices, among them warden of London Bridge (1342–50), auditor of the bridge accounts (1351) and supervisor of the City's supply of ships to the royal fleet (1359). On his arrival in London, he had lived in the parish of St Mary-at-Hill. Later, however, he moved to the parish of St Michael, Crooked Lane, an area later to be closely associated with the Fishmongers. He occupied a large mansion off what is now Upper Thames Street overlooking the river. After his death, this property was to pass to his apprentice and successor William Walworth, and after him to Henry Preston, another fishmonger, who left it to the Fishmongers as their hall.

For all his prominence in London society, however, John Lovekyn never lost sight of his family's interests back in Kingston. He inherited property there, in the Bridgefoot area. In his testament he left the substantial bequest of £40 to Kingston parish church. He showed the same interest as his father had in communications in and out of the town. In his testament he likewise left the sum of £10 for the repair of the river bridge.⁴¹ London and Kingston were close enough to each other, a mere 9 miles apart, for him to maintain a foot in both camps.

⁴⁰ The fullest account of his career is now Matthew & Harrison 2004, 34, 510–11 (by C Welch, revised by R L Axworthy). Among the older literature, Heales 1890, 341–70, is still useful.

⁴¹ For these bequests, see KuTBA: KB21/3/1, an agreement by the bailiffs, Alexander Bykenore and Andrew Kyngeswode, and burgesses of the town relating to the will (strictly, testament) of John Lovekyn, c 1390. The will made by Lovekyn which was enrolled in the Court of Husting contains no legacies of personal property, being purely a settlement of his lands and tenements in the City of London: Sharpe 1889–90, ii, 117–18.

The strength of John's commitment to the Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston is attested by the long series of measures that he took in the early 1350s to secure its future. He both substantially added to the chapel's endowment and regularised the way of life of its chaplains. In the wake of the Black Death, his most immediate concern was financial; his father's chapel had to be saved from extinction. Accordingly, on 1 October 1352 he obtained a licence from the king allowing him to acquire land and rents for the chapel up to an annual value of £12 per annum.⁴² By 1355, when he submitted his schemes to the bishop of Winchester for approval, he had bought up all the lands and rents that he needed. As laid out in the charter which he issued on 3 May that year, these consisted of: nine messuages, ten shops, a mill, 125 acres of land, 10 acres of meadow, 120 acres of pasture, and 35 shillings of annual rent, all in Kingston, and two messuages of the total yearly value of £4, in Lovekyn's parish of St Michael, Crooked Lane, London. On the strength of this generous endowment, Lovekyn was able to increase the establishment of the chapel from one chaplain to two, one of the pair acting as warden. This increase appears to have come into effect on 3 March 1356, when Thomas Helmenden and Elias de Rodeston were both admitted by the bishop, Rodeston being designated as warden from 1358.⁴³

In the wake of his re-endowment, Lovekyn published a lengthy set of ordinances regulating every aspect of the chaplains' lives and setting out the liturgy. So far as is known, his father had provided no such prescriptive regulations when he had founded the chapel in 1309. Lovekyn reveals himself as a man obsessed with control and detail, and leaving nothing to chance. The main provisions were as follows.⁴⁴ The chaplains were to swear immediately on institution that they would reside continuously and minister in person at the chapel; they were to reside together in the appointed houses or manse, and the warden was to pay the other chaplain 40 shillings yearly in addition to necessary food, the residue of the income being applied by the warden for the benefit of the chapel and in no other way; the chaplains were to have meals together in the same apartment and each sleep in his allotted chamber; no chaplain, save the warden, was to introduce any stranger at the expense of the house, but 3d should be paid for a stranger at dinner; the warden and chaplain should entirely abstain from taverns, and the latter should not visit any house without leave of the warden; and any refractory or incorrigible chaplain should be removed by the bishop. In addition to regulation of the chaplains, full prescription was made for the services, which were to be according to the liturgical rite known as the Use of Sarum. On Monday, mass was to be said for the founders; on Tuesday, the mass of *Salus Populi* for the welfare of the king and queen and the bishop, and after their deaths the mass of St Thomas the Martyr; on Wednesday, the mass of St Mary Magdalen; on Thursday, the mass of the Holy Spirit; on Friday, the mass of the Holy Cross; on Saturday, the mass of Our Lady; and on every Lord's Day and other festivals, the mass of the day. There was also to be a daily Requiem mass.

These ordinances were confirmed by Bishop Edington of Winchester on 1 June 1355, subject to the safeguarding of the rights of the parish church. The main reason for Lovekyn's drawing up of such detailed regulations was to afford protection against dereliction of duty by the chaplains in their intercession for his and the other beneficiaries' souls. In conventional thought, the safe passage to heaven of those for whose souls the chaplains were to pray was partly dependent on the chaplains' own standing with the Almighty. It was thus important for Lovekyn that their life was pure, for any lapses would weaken the value of their prayers and so compromise the safety of his and the others' souls. In many boroughs, those who established chantries sought to achieve this discipline by entrusting the supervision of the chaplains they appointed to the governing body of the borough.⁴⁵ In Kingston, because the

⁴² *CalPR*, 1350–4, 362.

⁴³ Heales 1883b, 264–5, 299. Heales has Helmenden and Rodeston admitted in 1355, but since the day and month of admission were 3 March, the year should read 1356, as correctly given in Hockey 1986, nos 1063, 1064.

⁴⁴ Printed in Heales 1883b and c, Appendix 7.

⁴⁵ Wood-Legh 1965, 155.

town was not actually incorporated, this was not possible. Nor was it practical for Lovekyn to follow the other obvious course, that of entrusting supervision to the parish, because the chapel was not actually in a parish church; it was free-standing. There was no alternative to prescription by ordinance. To that background, Lovekyn attempted to cater for every possible eventuality. Most moneyed people in the Middle Ages, as death approached, were concerned to ensure the safe passage of the soul to the afterlife. Lovekyn appears to have been almost obsessively so.

Shortly before he secured confirmation of his ordinances Lovekyn embarked on his other great project – the rebuilding of the chapel. Work appears to have begun in or around 1352. In the king's letters patent issued in that year the chapel is referred to as 'then under construction', while in the ordinances of three years later it is said to be 'constructed and built anew'.⁴⁶ On the eve of the Black Death the fabric had been said, in the bishop of Winchester's mandate to the dean of Ewell, to be on the 'verge of ruin'. This was when Walter Cooke, the chaplain, had been charged with neglecting his duties and withdrawing from the chapel. Possibly the highly coloured wording of the bishop's missive bore closer relation to the truth on that occasion than was usually the case in ecclesiastical rhetoric. Certainly, the rebuilding programme was ambitious. The chapel as seen today is almost entirely a structure of the early 1350s. It is a rare and complete example of an ecclesiastical building of that period.

In plan the chapel is a simple rectangle, measuring some 11.51 x 5.56m.⁴⁷ Inside it has an elevation of 6.1m from the floor to the level of the wall-plate. Structurally, it consists of three broad fenestrated bays with octagonal staircase turrets at the eastern angles, the southern one today without steps. In style, it sits poised on the edge between the flowing forms of early 14th century Decorated architecture and the more regularised forms of Perpendicular. The window tracery, while retaining the cusps of the Decorated style, shows the rectilinear formality associated with Perpendicular. In each of the two end walls the space is filled by a big window of three cinquefoiled lights with two quatrefoils in a traceried two-centred arch. The windows in the side walls represent a scaled down version of the end-window design. Each is of two cinquefoiled lights with a sexfoil over in a two-centred head. In the side walls, between the second and third bays from the east, are two shallow recesses facing each other, which are likewise of proto-Perpendicular form. These are some 1.4m wide and are of two levels with a transom moulded and embattled across the middle and, at the top, a foliated three-centred arch in a square head with embattled cornice. Their purpose is not immediately apparent. The timber roof, which is largely original, is of a standard crown post design with the vertical posts rising from horizontal tie-beams to support a collar purlin.

Today, it is difficult to visualise the original internal appearance of the chapel, because so much of what is seen is the product of 19th century and later restoration. It is particularly difficult to tell whether all the windows currently blocked were originally open. Today only one of the three windows on the north side is exposed (the easternmost); the second is filled in at the glass line, and the third – if a window ever existed – has lost its tracery. On the south, the existence of a window in the westernmost bay, where today a door is inserted, is perhaps doubtful. Of the fixtures, fittings and decoration that once enriched the chapel virtually nothing is known. The stained glass windows, the stalls used by the chaplains, the floor tiles, and whatever wall paintings there may have been, have all gone. According to the All Saints' churchwardens' accounts, the stained glass was transferred to that church in 1566.⁴⁸ Until the late 19th century the most eye-catching features in the chapel were the two image brackets at the foot of the east window bearing the heads of Edward III and Queen Philippa, for whose good estate the chaplains were to pray. Today only the bracket bearing

⁴⁶ Heales 1883b, 294.

⁴⁷ For detailed descriptions of the chapel, see *VCH*, 3, 511–12; and, more recently, Kirtley 1986.

⁴⁸ Ward 2001.

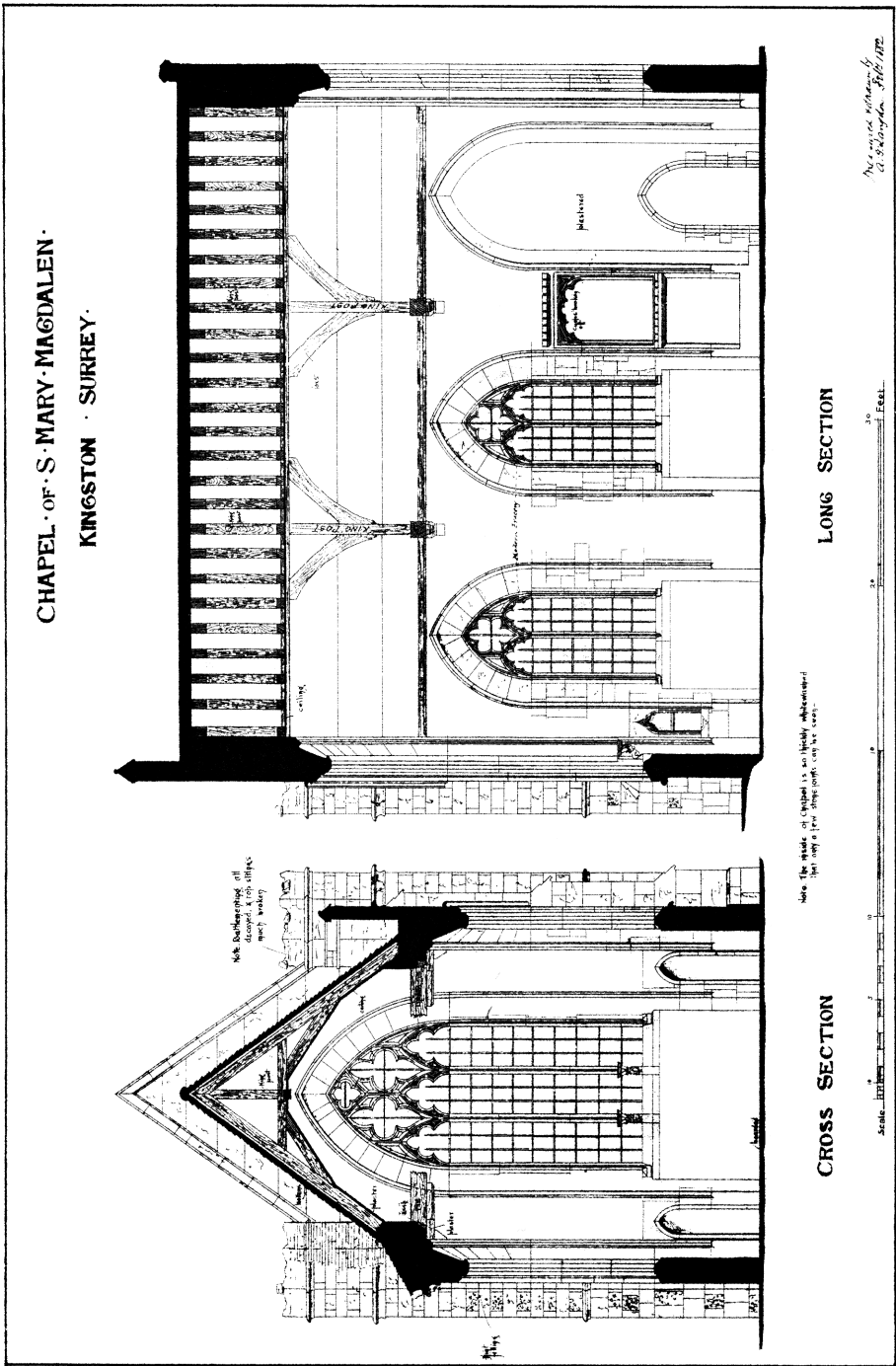


Fig 2 Diagrammatic sections of the Lovekyn Chapel, reproduced from Heales (1883b).

the king's head is extant, its companion having been removed sometime after 1883.⁴⁹ On the outside, an unidentifiable head survives at the eastern end of the north wall, acting as a dripstone. The walls themselves have suffered from much unattractive repair over the years. Originally they were of flint with stone dressings. On the east wall and the first two bays of the south, they are today faced externally with smooth sandstone ashlar.

The design sources for the chapel locate it broadly in the tradition of the 'palace chapels' attached to the larger royal and episcopal manor houses of the day. The 'palace chapel' type was ultimately of 11th century Ottonian German origin, most of the early examples being found in the Rhineland and associated with bishops connected with the imperial court. The earliest example in England appears to have been the late 11th century bishop's chapel at Hereford, built by Bishop Robert de Losinga. Now lost, except for one wall, it consisted of a square two-storeyed building, with a broad entrance and a rectangular sanctuary projecting at the east.⁵⁰ An important and influential example from the early 13th century is afforded by Archbishop Langton's chapel of c 1218–c 1228 at Lambeth Palace, probably designed by Elias de Dereham. This takes the form of a large rectangular structure of four bays, entered from the west and lighted by big lancet windows at each end and smaller lancet windows along the sides.⁵¹ The chapel was originally almost free-standing and established the basic rectangular form which the Lovekyn Chapel was to follow. The only significant respect in which it differed from the Lovekyn was in being raised up over an undercroft, as many high-status chapels of the day were. From towards the end of the century comes another chapel of the same type, Bishop Burnell's chapel in the Bishop's Palace at Wells (Somerset), built in the 1280s.⁵² Bordering onto the south-west corner of the palace, it is slightly smaller than Langton's chapel at Lambeth, being of three bays not four; however, it follows the same basic plan. It is lighted by five- or six-light windows at the ends and smaller windows along the sides. It anticipates the Lovekyn Chapel in conveying a general sense of loftiness and space. From early in the next century comes the Wykeham Chapel at Spalding (Lincolnshire), the private chapel of the priors of Spalding, attached to their grange, and almost identical to the Lovekyn Chapel in having three side windows and one big window in each end wall. From the third decade of the 14th century comes Prior Crauden's Chapel at Ely, a structure of exceptional lavishness befitting the standing of the prior who commissioned it, and another example of a first-floor chapel.⁵³ It is lit by big windows in each of the end walls, but along the sides only by openings in the eastern half, in this respect mirroring what may have been the pattern in the Lovekyn Chapel. The western half of Prior Crauden's Chapel appears to have functioned as an ante chapel. It is possible that an internal separation into two parts provides an explanation for the blocked windows in the westernmost bay of the Lovekyn Chapel.

John Lovekyn's ambitious rebuilding of the chapel fabric, his provision of the detailed ordinances governing the chaplains' lives, and his generous additions to the chapel's endowment all afford clear evidence of his concern to revive the chantry institution and so maximise the intercessory benefit for his soul. His interest in the provision of intercession, however, was by no means confined to the family chapel at Kingston. He showed himself equally interested in the 'increase in divine service' in London, in his parish church of St Michael, Crooked Lane. Here the measures that he took were closely allied to his plans for burial and sepulchral commemoration in the building.

Knowledge of Lovekyn's work at St Michael's is almost entirely derived from the writings of the late 16th century London antiquary John Stow.⁵⁴ Stow states that St Michael's church

⁴⁹ Both are shown in the engraving accompanying Heales 1883b, opposite 296.

⁵⁰ Fernie 2000, 233–6.

⁵¹ Tatton-Brown 2000, 29–32.

⁵² Pevsner 1958, 314–5.

⁵³ Maddison 2000, 77–8.

⁵⁴ Kingsford 1908, i, 219–20.

‘was sometime but a small and homely thing, standing upon part of that ground wherein now standeth the parsonage-house’. Lovekyn, however, rebuilt the fabric, and ‘was there buried in the quire, under a faire tombe, with the images of him and his wife in alabaster.’ The church was further enlarged ‘with a new quire and side chappels’ at the instance of Lovekyn’s eventual successor, his former apprentice William Walworth. It seems that Lovekyn was regarded as the second founder of the church rather as he was regarded as second founder of the chantry chapel at Kingston: he was honoured quite precisely as ‘chief founder’ on an inscription tablet placed to his memory in the church by the Fishmongers’ Company in 1562. If Stow’s predecessor, the antiquary John Leland, is to be believed, Lovekyn was also responsible for building accommodation for a college of priests by the side of the churchyard.⁵⁵ The only college known to have been founded in or associated with the church is that which Walworth established in 1381; however, Walworth may have been carrying through a plan which Lovekyn had first conceived.⁵⁶

Today, unfortunately, nothing at all remains of St Michael’s church, or even of Crooked Lane in which it stood. The church was completely destroyed in the Great Fire and had to be rebuilt from the foundations. In the 19th century this church in turn was demolished to make way for the widening of the big junction, immediately to its east, of Cannon Street, Gracechurch Street, Eastcheap and the approach to London Bridge.⁵⁷ A fragment of a brass inscription commemorating Lovekyn, however, has survived as a palimpsest in Walkern church (Hertfordshire).⁵⁸ Although broken-off and incomplete, it is a remarkable survival from the commemorative world of pre-Reformation London. What it tells us about Lovekyn adds something to our understanding both of his piety generally and his plans for the afterlife more specifically.

The inscription survives on the reverse of a later inscription to Richard, son of John Humberstone of Walkern, who died in 1581. The plate was presumably ripped from its slab in St Michael’s in Edward VI’s reign when, as Stow tells us, Walworth’s own monument was severely defaced by what he calls ‘bad people’. It was certainly gone by 1562 when the Fishmongers’ Company carried out restorations to both monuments, in the case of Lovekyn’s providing an entirely new epitaph.

The inscription is composed of three Latin verses and reads:

[Ve]rmibus esca datur Lovekyn caro pulcra [Johannis]
[Bi]s fuit hic maior iterum bis Rege jube[n]te
[A]nno milleno ter C cum septuageno

The lines may be translated as:

The flesh of John Lovekyn is given, a fine food for worms
Twice he was mayor here, twice again at the king’s command
One thousand three hundred and seventy.

Stow tells something of the circumstances in which the brass came to be laid. He relates that Lovekyn was originally commemorated ‘in the quire, under a faire tombe, with the images of him and his wife in alabaster’. What he is describing was in all probability a standard high-status tomb monument, perhaps resembling the slightly later monument of John Otewich and his wife, now in St Helen’s, Bishopsgate. Walworth, however, he goes on to say, replaced this with a marble slab bearing brasses. In Stow’s words, ‘the tombe of Lovekyn was removed, and a flat stone of grey marble garnished with plates of copper laid on him, as yet remaineth.’ Stow’s account, while apparently straightforward, presents difficulties. On

⁵⁵ Toulmin-Smith 1964, iv, 86.

⁵⁶ *CalPR*, 1377–81, 612. According to Toulmin-Smith 1964, iv, 86, a marginal note by Stow in his own copy of the *Itineraries* attributed the foundation to Walworth.

⁵⁷ Lobel 1989, 90.

⁵⁸ Nichols 1870, 133–7.

the face of it, Walworth's removal of a tomb of relatively recent date, commissioned to the memory of his former employer and master, seems a somewhat high-handed action to have taken. One possible way of interpreting Stow's report might be to suppose that Walworth did indeed replace the sculpted monument with a brass, prompted perhaps by the need to free up processional routes in the church, for floor space would have been limited. Another possible interpretation, however, is to suppose that Stow actually misunderstood what happened, and that Walworth, instead of replacing the tomb, supplemented it with a brass epitaph, perhaps over Lovekyn's actual burial place. Whichever interpretation is favoured, and either is possible, there can be little doubt about one thing: that the laying of the brass to Lovekyn postdated his death by some years. Confirmation of this is found in one feature of the epitaph otherwise difficult to explain: that the date of Lovekyn's death is incorrect. Lovekyn is said to have died in 1370, whereas in fact he had died in 1368. Such an error is explicable only on the assumption that the inscription was commissioned some time after Lovekyn's passing, when memories were fading. Walworth, the man who was to gain notoriety for the killing of Wat Tyler in the Great Revolt, lived until early 1386. Quite possibly the laying of the epitaph was a project of his later years, when he began to think about his own commemoration. The evidence of the epigraphy of the epitaph would certainly be consistent with a date in the 1380s.

That the brass may actually be a product of Walworth's patronage, and not Lovekyn's, in no way deprives it of value as a source for the latter's piety and general outlook. On the contrary: the verses, both in their tone and their content, carry an authentic ring as though Lovekyn himself is heard speaking. Of particular interest is the reference in the second line to Lovekyn's direct appointment as Mayor of London by the king. This was obviously a cherished indication of official approval, which lived on in family memory for a long time. Also of note is the ascetic, puritanical tone of the verses. In the opening line Lovekyn speaks of his contempt for the flesh: 'the flesh of John Lovekyn is given, fine food for worms'. This was a moralising sentiment rooted in a similar body of thought to that which had given rise to the austere prescriptions of the ordinances for the chantry priests at Kingston. In each case, Lovekyn showed himself concerned with the matter of personal acceptability to God. In the case of the epitaph, his own acceptability, achieved through personal humility, and in the case of the ordinances, that of his chaplains, achieved through moral purity. If the inscription was commissioned by Walworth, as may have been the case, it nonetheless reflects Lovekyn's own thinking. Quite possibly, it reproduces part of the wording of the epitaph on Lovekyn's original alabaster tomb chest.

While distinctive and certainly strikingly expressed, the sentiments on the epitaph were by no means those of a sensibility sharply distinguished from the mainstream religious thought of the day. Personal self-abasement, contempt for the flesh and an emphasis on funerary simplicity were all the hallmarks of an austere piety widely disseminated among the more reflective faithful in the years after the Black Death. The horrors of the plague visitation and the many later demographic afflictions contributed to the spread of morbid habits of thought, reinforcing a belief that worldly wealth availed nothing. More generally, an emphasis on personal unworthiness and contempt for the flesh was prompted by a reading of the penitential literature popular at the time. In the most widely disseminated of such texts, the *Prick of Conscience* of c 1360, the reader was urged to reflect on the wretchedness of man's state and to prepare for death by contemplating the four last things, Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell.⁵⁹ A powerful stimulus to reflection was afforded by the penitential exercises sometimes prescribed to wealthy employers by their confessors. The language of contempt for the body – specifically, indeed, use of the phrase 'food for worms' – is found in the penitential tract, *Le Livre de Seyntz Medicines*, written in 1354 by the king's cousin, Duke Henry of Lancaster.⁶⁰ The attitude of contempt for the flesh infiltrated some of the more distinctive and reflective upper-class wills

⁵⁹ Pantin 1955, 230.

⁶⁰ Arnould 1940, 4, 124.

of the day. In 1394 the Yorkshire knight Sir Brian Stapleton referred to his 'caitiff body', while five years later a Chancery clerk, Robert Folkingham, spoke of his 'wretched sinful body' to be 'buryen here in earth'. This ascetic streak was also manifested in a trend towards simpler funerary obsequies than had usually been the case before for the upper classes. In 1407, the Wiltshire knight Sir William Stourton insisted on a simple burial for his 'putrid body, naked as it came into the world except for a linen cloth'.⁶¹ On some of the longer tomb epitaphs the theme of the mortality of the flesh was picked up, as on Lovekyn's brass. In a borrowing from the Office of the Dead, the text 'de terre fu fait et en terre et a terre suy retourne' (from earth I was made and formed and to earth I shall return) was used on brasses at Norbury (Staffordshire), Mereworth (Kent), Etchingham (Sussex) and Birdbrook (Suffolk).

The sentiments expressed on Lovekyn's brass epitaph, therefore, have their roots in a mood of popular piety closely associated with the penitential and contemplative writings of the time. On the evidence of wills and funerary epitaphs, those who responded most keenly to the new mood were the senior ecclesiastics, knights, and members of the higher nobility. What is remarkable about Lovekyn's epitaph is that it shows these same sentiments being espoused by a wealthy townsman. Much less is known about the commemorative tastes of the townsmen than of the gentry because so many of their memorials have gone. The loss is regrettably most severe in London, where the majority of the pre-Reformation churches were destroyed in the Great Fire. The significance of the Lovekyn inscription is that it suggests that the townsmen's tastes may not, in some cases at least, have been so very different from those of the gentry about whose memorials so much more is known.

John Lovekyn, the most distinguished of his line, was also to be the last in the direct line of descent. When he died in 1368, he left no issue.⁶² His business was taken over by his former apprentice William Walworth, who married his widow Margaret. Walworth, while lacking any previous connection with Kingston, maintained his predecessor's interest in the family chapel. In 1371, he added to the endowment by granting the chaplains a mill, a dovecote, 68 acres of land, 16 acres of meadow, 44 acres of pasture, 12 acres of wood, pasture for oxen and sheep, and 34s 3d of rents, all in Kingston and Tolworth. He also granted them the reversion of two shops and a garden and the moiety of a messuage in Kingston.⁶³ On the strength of these additions, he appears to have envisaged the possibility of a third chaplain. There is no evidence, however, that the number of chaplains appointed ever exceeded two, one of them serving as warden.

Beyond the succession of wardens and, in some cases, of chaplains, disappointingly little is known of the history of the Lovekyn Chapel in the late Middle Ages. Some of the wardens can be shown to have been graduates and to have gone from their appointments at the chapel to higher things; others – far more – are mere names.⁶⁴ Several served in office for lengthy periods of ten years or more. The lives of the chaplains and their staff seems, on the whole, to have been blameless enough.⁶⁵ So much perhaps can reasonably be inferred from the fact that they escaped the scrutiny of the local bishop. For precisely the same reason, however, no insights are afforded into their domestic lives by the episcopal registers that at least give their names.

⁶¹ For these examples, see McFarlane 1972, 213, 215; Vale 1981, 11.

⁶² Collateral members of the family were to flourish in Kingston, however, until the later years of the century. In 1373 Richard Lovekyn and one John Lovekyn were named as mancapitors, ie they had offered bail for the MPs for the town elected that year: BL: Lansdowne MS, f 14r. For a conjectural genealogy of the family, see Ward & Evans 2000, 4.

⁶³ *CalPR*, 1370–4, 153.

⁶⁴ The graduates of Oxford were John Gorsuch (d. 1448), William Sharp (resigned 1451), William Carpenter (instituted 1485) and Richard Kirkby (resigned 1522), for whom see respectively Emden 1957–9, ii, 793; iii, 1681; i, 362; ii, 1055. The two recorded Cambridge graduates were Peter Baxter and Edmund Hampden (Emden 1963, 45, 284).

⁶⁵ But one, Edmund Hampden, instituted in 1476, obtained papal dispensation relaxing his residence so that he could serve as chaplain of Edward IV's chantry at St George's Chapel, Windsor (Emden 1963, 284).

The lack of information about the chapel is the more infuriating because from one later source the impression is gained of an establishment of some complexity on the chapel site. This source is the description of the buildings compiled in about 1547, at the time of the chantry's suppression, when a lease on the site was granted by the crown to Richard Taverner.⁶⁶ The plots and buildings were then detailed as follows: the chapel of St Mary Magdalen itself, with a garden adjoining to its east; another small chapel called St Anne's Chapel, with a small apartment called 'le Studie' beneath and an inner chamber with a hawk's mew above; a small chapel called St Loy's immediately to the south of the main chapel with a little place under it; an old kitchen with chamber adjoining and a solar or loft over both, a chamber under the kitchen, and a house next to the kitchen, all to the west of the chapel on the further side of a footpath leading from the town towards London; yards to the north and west of the main chapel; a connecting gallery over the yards, leading from St Anne's chapel to a small space and to two chambers called the master's lodging; a cellar and four small chambers under the master's lodgings; a granary; and a stable and dovecote.

The plots and buildings described here amount to premises of some considerable size. It needs to be remembered that before the eastward extension of Kingston's suburbs in relatively recent times London Road was much narrower than it is today, and the chapel would have been flanked by spaces both to the south, facing the road, and to the west and east.⁶⁷ There was accordingly plenty of room for subsidiary buildings to be accommodated. The number and extent of these buildings raise interesting questions. The impression is given that other activities were taking place on the chapel site besides the offering of intercession for the Lovekyns' souls. But what could these activities have been? No clues are afforded by John Lovekyn's ordinances of 1355, which are concerned solely with the performance of the liturgy and the manner of the chaplains' lives. Leland's suggestion, made in the 1540s, that there was a 'hospital' or almshouse attached to the chapel finds no support in any other source.⁶⁸ In the extant evidence there is unfortunately no document that sheds any direct light on the purpose for which the buildings could have been used. The only slight clue afforded is the record of the grant of materials from the demolished vicar's house to build a house for the chaplains on the site.⁶⁹

In this connection, it is worth recalling the suggestion, first made a century ago by A F Leach, that the chapel could have been home to a small grammar school.⁷⁰ Since a grammar school was later to be founded on the site by Elizabeth I, it is naturally tempting to speculate that that successor establishment built on a tradition of schooling on the site stretching back

⁶⁶ Printed by Heales 1883b, 303–4.

⁶⁷ In the absence of surveys or rentals of the town from this period it is difficult to reconstruct the immediate surroundings of the chapel. Some light on the local topography is shed by the agreement of c 1390 made by Alexander Bykenore and Andrew Kyngeswode, bailiffs of Kingston, relating to the implementation of John Lovekyn's will (KuTBA: KB21/3/1). Lovekyn had left sums for the repair of the bridge and the parish church, and had released £10 which he had lent to the churchwardens, on condition that the interest of the warden and chaplains of the chantry in an alleyway ('scalera') called Londonysshestile be upheld. The bailiffs had broken their side of the agreement, apparently by allowing the passage of livestock and carts. The bailiffs now agreed to uphold the conditions of the will and, at the same time, they granted the warden and chaplains another alleyway called Tarentstyle. Londonysshestile is said to lie between the chapel on the east and the curtilage of John Rivere on the west, and Tarentstyle next to a croft of the chapel called Thurbarnscroft or Tarentiscroft. It is evident from the Dissolution survey that the chapel outbuildings spilled across one or other of these alleyways. For a conjectural groundplan of the chapel site on the evidence of the survey, see Ward & Evans 2000, 9.

⁶⁸ Though the word 'hospitium' was used to describe the chapel in early 14th century letters of the bishops of Winchester (for example, Goodman 1940, 563), its sense was 'household' or 'establishment', not the modern sense of 'hospital'.

⁶⁹ Heales 1898, 258: a licence for the transfer to John Lovekyn of the materials from the demolished house of the vicar of Kingston for the building of a house for his own 'vicars' – a term which presumably refers to the chaplains.

⁷⁰ *VCH*, 2, 156.

to the Middle Ages. Many major chantry foundations in other towns are known to have had schools attached to them. Leach made the point that Kingston occupies a position of some importance in English educational history in having hosted the first school referred to as such as a 'public school'. Unfortunately, it is not known precisely where in the town this 'public school' was sited. The references in the sources are to teachers and teaching syllabuses, not to sites. Bearing in mind, however, that teaching in the Middle Ages was invariably undertaken by clerks, it is obviously a possibility, as Leach suggested, that the chapel of St Mary Magdalen was home to a community of masters. To this background, it is perhaps worth looking afresh at the history of education in medieval Kingston to see if any support can be found for Leach's suggestion.

The reference to the 'public school' in the town is found in a letter of 1364 sent by the bishop of Winchester to the prior of Christchurch, Canterbury, and copied into the prior's register.⁷¹ In it the bishop, as Ordinary of Kingston, asked the prior to return the belongings of one Hugh de Kingston, a teaching master, seized by the prior when Hugh had decided to change schools, returning from Canterbury to Kingston, where the public school was without a teacher. It emerges from the letter that a contract had been agreed with Hugh by the parishioners of Kingston by which he was to take up his post at Michaelmas 1363. Seven months later, however, when the bishop wrote to the prior, Hugh was still trying to recover his possessions, the prior presumably objecting to him having been 'poached'. It is a reasonable inference from the bishop's letter that the 'public school' in Kingston was an institution of some note, with a degree of stability and status. And the fact that it was referred to as a 'public school' – that is to say, open to all – implies that scholars flocked there not just from Kingston but from elsewhere.

Further light is thrown on the school's status by another letter from the bishop of Winchester, this one dated 27 November 1377 and addressed to the vicar of Kingston. The bishop's main concern was to confirm an augmentation of the vicarage, which he had extorted from the prior of Merton, the owner of the benefice. In announcing this, however, he added a number of stipulations, among them that 'it shall be lawful for the vicar that now is and his successors [...] to serve the said church and chapels and to keep a school for boys in letters, song and other things up to and including the Donatus'. The implication of the bishop's letter appears to be that the vicar was presiding over a school of the kind known as a song school, a school for younger boys of between about seven and eleven in which instruction was given in reading, singing and elementary Latin grammar to the level of Donatus's primer.⁷² What the bishop was saying was that beyond the limit of such elementary instruction the vicar was not entitled to go. By implication there was another school in the town to which scholars who had mastered their Donatus would proceed. And this could only have been the public school – the grammar school – referred to in the bishop's predecessor's letter of 1364. This establishment evidently lay somewhere away from the parish church and outside the vicar's control. But where?

The evidence, such as it is, is conflicting. Counting against an identification with the Lovekyn Chapel is the evidence that a school of some distinction had been in existence in Kingston some 30 years before the Lovekyn Chapel was founded. In 1272, in a lawsuit concerning the ownership of lands in March Fields, Kingston, Master Gilbert de Suthewelle is described as 'rector of the schools in Kingston'. The schools over which Gilbert presided may not have had a stable institutional existence, and it is not known whether Gilbert as 'rector' had any predecessors or immediate successors. However, what the evidence of the suit establishes beyond doubt is that there were premises in Kingston in use for the giving of

⁷¹ Translated and discussed by Leach in *VCH*, 2, 155–6.

⁷² For song schools, see Orme 2006, 63–6; and for distinctions between song and grammar schools sometimes being blurred, *ibid.*, 67.

instruction as early as the 13th century, and these premises constituted more than a 'song school'.

If there is a case for believing that in the late medieval period the Lovekyn Chapel could have been a school site, it is to be found principally in one body of evidence: that of the complex cluster of buildings recorded in the 1547 survey. Stretching behind and to the side of the chapel, the buildings would have provided an excellent setting for the instruction of young scholars. Unfortunately, no hint is given in the survey of the uses to which any of the chambers were put. The evidence for seeing the chapel and its surroundings as a possible school site, therefore, can only be circumstantial. Nonetheless, what is known of the involvement of chantry chaplains in the provision of instruction to scholars elsewhere lends support to the idea. The offering of instruction was one of the main ways in which chantry foundations brought benefits to parishes beyond the narrow one of 'an increase in divine service' through regular intercession. The absence from foundation ordinances, such as John Lovekyn's, of any reference to schooling need not count against the argument. As Leach pointed out a century ago, even in the 68 closely printed pages of the statutes of Winchester College, no more than five lines are devoted to the conduct of the school at its heart. In the eyes of almost every medieval founder or benefactor, it was the need to ensure the proper performance of the divine office that provided the main reason for the drawing up of such documents.

However, by the middle of the 16th century, as the chill wind of Protestantism swept across England and the Church's traditional teaching on intercessory prayer was called into question, so the justification for chantry foundations, such as that of the Lovekyns, was called into question with it. Whatever benefits chantry priests may have brought to communities by offering elementary or grammar education were outweighed in the reformers' eyes by their offence in seeking divine mercy for the souls of the departed. When, at the beginning of Edward VI's reign, therefore, parliamentary legislation led to the suppression of the chantries, the Lovekyn Chapel was one of the institutions forced to abandon its work and close down. Unlike many urban foundations of its kind, however, the chapel was not physically stripped, taken apart and dismantled. It was put to another use. The final task must be to explain how this remarkable turn of events came about.

In a sense, the death agonies of the Lovekyn Chapel may be said to have begun some seven or eight years before the formal dissolution with the removal of the last warden, Charles Carew. Carew, the illegitimate son of Sir Nicholas Carew, Henry VIII's courtier, was a violent, unruly character who doubled as rector of his home parish of Beddington, near Croydon. Among the charges to be brought against him by his prosecutors was his involvement in the robbery of his own grandmother.⁷³ There is evidence, however, that well before this terrible crime he was a marked man: in the previous year his father, Sir Nicholas, had been executed for his role in the suspected treason of the Marquess of Exeter. Charles Carew was proceeded against, somewhat curiously, by Act of Attainder to prevent him claiming benefit of clergy. He was found guilty and executed in August 1540. What was ominous for the chapel was that no successor to him in the office of warden was appointed. For the next seven years the second chaplain, John Debenham appears to have officiated alone. The final blow to the chapel came, as has been seen, in late 1547, when it was dissolved under the terms of the Chantries Act. In early 1548, Debenham was pensioned off and the endowments of the Lovekyn estate seized by the Crown. Even before Debenham's departure, a 21-year lease of the property was granted to Richard Taverner, a minor court official, for the yearly rental of £12 1s 0d.

Taverner's interest in the chapel site probably arose as a by-product of his temporary residence nearby at Norbiton Hall. Some four or five years earlier, he had taken a lease on the Norbiton estate while his main property at Wood Eaton (Oxfordshire) was being rebuilt. Taverner was a clerk of the signet, onetime hanger-on of Thomas Cromwell, Bible translator

⁷³ *VCH*, 2, 160, corrected by Michell 1981, 41.

and small-time speculator in former monastic property.⁷⁴ It is doubtful whether he had any intention of holding onto the chapel estate for good, for he had no long-term territorial ambitions in Surrey. Within fifteen years of his taking the lease, there were moves in the Kingston community to secure an entirely new use for the site. The burgesses of the town were apparently feeling the loss of the 'public', or grammar, school which had served them so well before the Reformation. Like their fellows in other towns who had lost their grammar masters, they decided to take steps to seek the school's replacement. In 1557 an initiative to re-establish a grammar school was made by Robert Hammond of Hampton, the founder of Hampton School. By the terms of his will, which he made that year, Hammond left money for his widow to pay to the bailiffs of Kingston 'to set up a free grammar school in the town to continue for ever more'.⁷⁵ A schoolmaster called Edmund Green is known to have been giving instruction in the town two years later. The new school, however, seems to have lacked any financial and institutional permanence. There was a danger that when Hammond's money ran out, as it threatened to, the bailiffs themselves would have to carry the expense. Accordingly, in 1561 they came up with a bold new solution. They petitioned Queen Elizabeth for the establishment of an entirely new school to 'instruct boys and youths in grammar for ever', to be endowed with the property of the Lovekyn chantry. The letters patent granting the queen's assent to the bailiffs' scheme were issued on 1 March. By three years later, Taverner had surrendered the remaining part of his lease and the bailiffs were able to enter into possession. The chapel itself became the new school's main schoolroom. The story of the chapel's survival, then, corresponds in broad outline to that of other medieval chantry or guild foundations whose buildings owed their survival to the good fortune of being turned into schools. The chapel and halls of the Guild of the Holy Cross at Stratford-upon-Avon afford a comparable example.

For some three centuries the chapel building was to serve as the school's principal social centre and teaching room. It was in this crowded room in the 1740s that the young Edward Gibbon was instructed by one of the most remarkable educators of the age, the Reverend Richard Wooddeson. Until Wooddeson's time, the number of pupils in the school had rarely exceeded more than a few dozen. In the heyday of Wooddeson's rule, however, the number rose towards 100, and extra accommodation in London Road had to be found.⁷⁶ The mid-century period of glory in the history of Kingston's school was shortly to pass, however. After Wooddeson's retirement numbers began to fall back again. By the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries the school, like a good many endowed grammar schools, had fallen on hard times. Fee income was low and wholly inadequate for the school's purposes, and the fabric of the chapel was falling into disrepair. Half a century later, when a government inspection of the school was conducted, the poor condition of the chapel building was commented on. The inspecting commissioner wrote:

The schoolroom is singularly ill-adapted for educational purposes [...] The whole of the buildings are most unsatisfactory. They would not be tolerated as buildings for a National or Wesleyan or British school in receipt of Government grants either in respect of their size, shape, furniture or apparatus. They appear to be hardly worth repairing or enlarging.

In 1878, as part of a reorganisation of secondary education in the borough, new premises for the school were finally constructed on the opposite side of the road. The future of the chapel was now looking highly uncertain. The building stood forlorn, empty and disused.

⁷⁴ For his career, see Matthew & Harrison 2004, 53, 840–2 (by A Taylor). He owed his early preferment to Thomas Cromwell, on whose behalf he acted as a propagandist for the king's divorce. He died in 1575 and was buried at Wood Eaton.

⁷⁵ *VCH*, 2, 160.

⁷⁶ Ward & Evans 2000, 31–2.

The Headmaster's house, which had abutted onto its south side, was pulled down, necessitating the hasty repair of one corner. Photographs of the chapel taken at this time show it as semi-ruinous, its windows boarded up, and the walls supported by wooden props.⁷⁷ Rumours were circulating in the Kingston press that the chapel might even be demolished.

It was to this background that the Surrey Archaeological Society took the lead in alerting local opinion to the danger facing the chapel. On 27 March 1882, a Special General Meeting of the Society was held in the town to launch a campaign to save the building.⁷⁸ The meeting opened at the chapel, where a paper was read on its architecture, and then adjourned to the Assize Court, where two motions were passed. The first of these committed the Society to launching an appeal to raise enough money to save and restore the building, while the second established a local committee 'to assist in carrying out the same'. It was to provide intellectual support to the campaign that Alfred Heales' paper in the *Collections* was written.⁷⁹ By early the next year sufficient money had been raised to allow the programme of repair to be begun. A J Style of Thames Ditton was appointed consultant architect.⁸⁰ The foundations of the building were strengthened, decayed stonework replaced, and parts of the external walls refaced in sandstone ashlar. The cost of the entire works came to £658, a sum raised almost wholly by individual donations, and the chapel was reopened on 6 August 1886.⁸¹

For the next century the chapel was put to a variety of uses. For some twenty years it continued to serve as a teaching room, mainly for the instruction of the Upper School. In 1904 it was converted into a gymnasium, serving in this role until the 1930s, when a new gym was built. In 1922, severe deterioration in the external stonework led to a second restoration being undertaken. Under the direction of A R Powys, secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, extensive repairs were made to the north wall, the south wall parapet was taken down and replaced, the window mullions and the sill of the west window were all repaired, and the windows re-lead. Once again the work was paid for by resort to a public appeal, the sum of £750 being raised.⁸²

In 1927, the chapel's importance as an ancient monument was recognised in its being granted Listed Building status. As appreciation of its historical and architectural significance increased, so concern came to be voiced about the inappropriate use made of it by the school. Reports circulated locally of the regular breaking of window panes by boys kicking balls in the building. On 15 December 1927 the Mayor of Kingston wrote to Dr R N Goodman, chairman of the school's Board of Governors, asking if ball games in the chapel could be forbidden.⁸³ Relief of a sort came in 1936, when the heavy gym equipment was finally removed to the new gymnasium across the road. In the event, however, one inappropriate use was simply replaced by another in that the school installed a woodwork shop which made its own heavy demands on the fabric. Photographs of the time show the chapel's interior jammed with workbenches and equipment, wooden planks propped against the end wall, and shelves jammed along the side walls loaded with tools.⁸⁴ The centuries-old building was hardly treated with any greater respect than it had been in the days of its use as a gym.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁸ Reports of proceedings, *SyAC*, 8, xviii–xix.

⁷⁹ Significantly the article was also published in book form alongside Heales' article on Kingston parish church from the same volume of the *Collections*: Heales 1883c.

⁸⁰ KuTBA: KT 31/1.

⁸¹ Ward & Evans 2000, 60–1. A grant of £60 was made by Kingston Corporation (KuTBA: KT 31/1).

⁸² The poor state of the external stonework had been a matter of concern since 1907, when Dr R N Goodman, chairman of the school's Board of Governors, had been alerted to the problem. The appeal for funds was launched in 1921, when J G Black, an Assistant Keeper at the Public Record Office, who acted as historical advisor, made an announcement in the *Surrey Comet* (16 July 1921). Powys expressed the view that the internal stonework was in good condition. The file of papers relating to the restoration is: KuTBA: KT 31/1.

⁸³ KuTBA: KT31/1.

⁸⁴ Ward & Evans 2000, 146.



Fig 3 View of the interior of the Lovekyn Chapel in 2010, looking east. (Photograph: author)

The turning point in the chapel's fortunes was to come in 1992, when the opening of a new technology centre on the main school site allowed the removal of the workbenches and the possibility of a more appropriate use for the building. The newly appointed headmaster, Duncan Baxter, quickly conceived a vision of the chapel as an attractive setting for concerts, small productions and lectures, to the mutual benefit of the school and the wider Kingston community.⁸⁵ Acting in close co-operation with local businessmen and those involved in the arts, he took the initiative to launch a completely new programme of restoration. An appeal committee was established, initially under the chairmanship of David Smedley, and later under John McCarthy, with the target of raising some £200,000.⁸⁶ By October 1996, when the appeal was finally closed, no less than £212,966 had been raised.⁸⁷ In 1993 work began on surveying and restoring the exterior of the chapel, with the assistance of an immediate grant in aid from English Heritage. Carden and Godfrey were appointed the architects and Gostling (Builders) Ltd of Hampton Wick the builders. The masonry was cleaned, repointed and, where appropriate, renewed; a lime shelter coat was applied to the south-east turret;

⁸⁵ This paragraph is based partly on files in the possession of the School and partly on papers relating to the appeal made available by the kindness of John McCarthy.

⁸⁶ The appeal committee reported to the Trustees of the Lovekyn Chapel Restoration Fund. The Trustees were David Smedley, John McCarthy, Sylvia Blanc, Jack Chevalier, Peter Jarvis and Maurice Tate. Their first meeting was held on 13 October 1992.

⁸⁷ Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees of the Lovekyn Chapel Restoration Fund, 13 September 2001. This figure includes the grants from the KGS Governors, the NHMF Lottery Fund and the Foundation for Sports and Arts mentioned below.

the entire roof was re-tiled, using existing tiles where possible; later, the south-east turret door was replaced. The total cost of the external repair work came to £64,773.50. In the following year, work began on renovating the interior of the chapel. A new wooden floor was laid; the walls were cleaned and whitewashed, new heating was installed, and secondary glazing installed to reduce the effects of noise.⁸⁸ In 1998, thanks to grants of £35,865 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £19,359 from the School Governors, the Victorian cottage adjacent to the chapel was restored and refurbished to serve as music practice rooms, while the surrounding garden was landscaped. In 1999 floodlighting was installed on the London Road and Queen Elizabeth Road frontages to enhance the appearance of the building at night time.⁸⁹ The completion of the long programme of restoration was marked by a visit to the chapel on 27 April 2000 by Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra.⁹⁰ The chapel was quickly established as a popular setting for small concerts and lectures and for rehearsals by school musicians. Today it is also licensed for use for civil ceremonies.

The most recent milestone in the chapel's history has been the celebration in 2009 of the 700th anniversary of its foundation, an occasion marked by a Requiem mass for the souls of the Lovekyns and a programme of lectures and other events in the town. Today the chapel stands in better physical condition than at any time since the Reformation. It has long been recognised as the oldest surviving building in the borough of Kingston. There is a strong case for saying that it is also historically and architecturally the most remarkable.

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⁸⁸ Installation of the secondary glazing was made possible by a grant of £9903 from the Foundation for Sports and Arts. No significant archaeological finds were made when the old floor was lifted and replaced.

⁸⁹ For the cottage and the floodlighting, see the Lovekyn Chapel Restoration Fund Final Newsletter. The floodlighting was installed by J H Gabb (Hampstead) Ltd at a cost of £1997.50.

⁹⁰ A matter of days before the visit, a small fire broke out in the chapel, the cause of which was never discovered. Little damage was done.

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