

ST. AUSTIN'S ABBEY, CANTERBURY.

ABBOT ROGER II. (1252-1272).

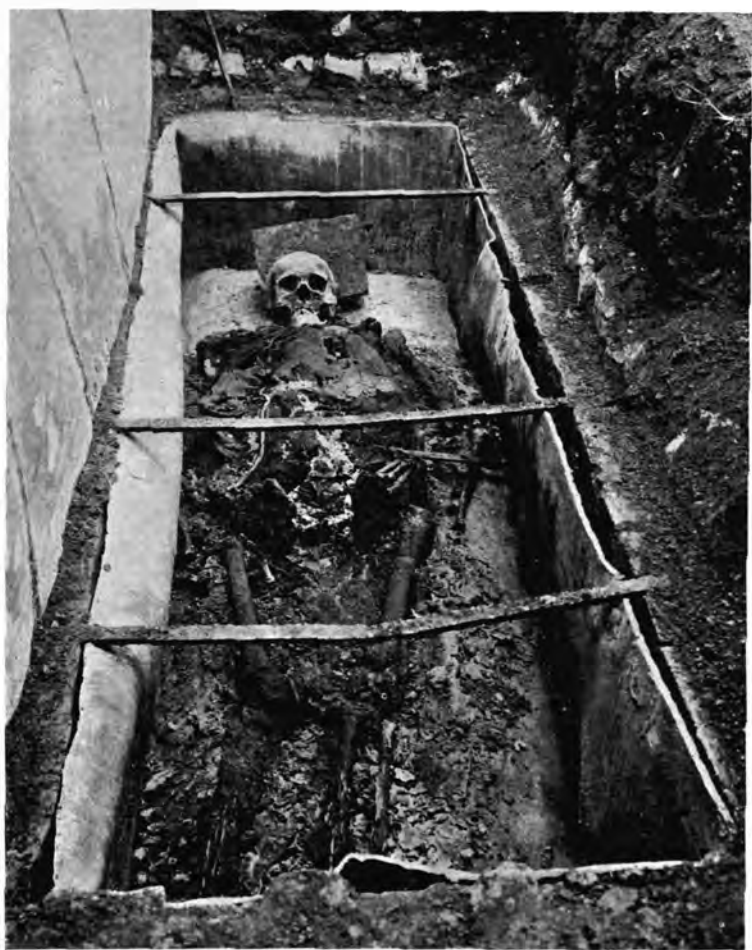
BY THE REV. R. U. POTTS, M.A.

SUBWARDEN OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE.

ON June 25, 1918, quite accidentally the tomb of Abbot Roger II. was discovered in the south transept of the Abbey Church.

To verify a current statement that below the surface of the south transept lay an iron plate, we began to dig a small trench, and just two feet below the floor level, which was indicated by some remains of tiling, we came upon, not an iron plate, but a great slab of rough Purbeck marble about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet square, and west of it another, and yet a third slab west of the second. We lifted them and found underneath a single great sheet of lead,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, lying unfastened. We lifted this on edge, and there before us was a grave faced with cut stone and lined with great sheets of lead on the bottom and round the sides, with four flat iron bars, laid across the top, and let into the stone sides to support the leaden sheet which formed the lid.

In the grave was a skeleton of a very big man, over 6 feet 2 inches high, with a strong lower jaw. The skeleton was covered with the remains of a chasuble (of which portions of the gold lace border still clung to the wrists) with a ring on the right hand and the withered remains of a crozier. The ring, which was very large and of the regular thirteenth-century type, was of copper-gilt and had a carbuncle in it. There was no trace of any vessels, but there was a mark across the skull which the late Sir William St. John Hope, who carefully examined the grave, thought might be due to the mitre, which had perished. The marks of the feet on the lead at the east end of the grave were quite clear. The skull, which had been supported by a stone,



CANTERBURY. St. Austin's Abbey. Tomb of Abbot Roger II.

had rolled from its place owing to the jar of some falling masonry long ago. On the breast,\* lying on the chasuble, was a leaden plate bearing the following inscription, which settled beyond all doubt the identity of the skeleton, as it was clear that the grave had never been disturbed before:—

+ HIC : REQUIESIT : DMS : ROGERUS : SECVDS :  
 QVONDAM : ABBAS : HVIYS : LOCI : QVI. OBBIIT.  
 ANNO : INCARNACIONIS : DOMINICE : M:CC :  
 LXXII : IDVS : DECEMB'.

(Here rests the Lord Roger II., sometime Abbot of this place, who died on Dec. 13 in the year of Our Lord's Incarnation 1272.)

It was the tomb of Abbot Roger II. or Roger of Chichester, who according to Thorn (p. 1899) was elected abbot in 1252, and died (Thorn, p. 1920) on the Feast of St. Lucy (December 13) 1272, and was buried before the altar of St. Katherine under a stone with a recumbent effigy.

After photographs had been taken of the grave and notes made of its position and dimensions, the ring and plate, with some fragments of lace and of the fabric of the chasuble and of the crozier, were placed in the College museum, and the grave was carefully closed up again with the big sheet of lead and the three stones relaid above it.

Abbot Roger was the first of three great abbots, the two others being Nicholas Thorne (1272—1283) and Thomas Fyndon (1283—1306), who practically rebuilt the monastery. Thorn has a long account of his abbacy (pp. 1899—1920), which may be summarized as follows:—

In 1252 on the feast of St. Laurence the Archbishop (Feb. 2), Roger of Chichester the chamberlain was elected abbot in the room of the late Abbot, Robert of Battle, who had ruled from 1224 to 1252.

It was during the time of this Abbot Robert that the long struggle with the Archbishop, as to the independence of the Abbey, had been settled by a concordat which St. Edmund the Archbishop made very much in favour of the Abbey in 1237.

\* The white mark in the photo shews the position of the plate.



CANTERBURY. St. Austin's Abbey. Ring, specimen of woven lace from vestments, and the name-plate from the grave of Abbot Roger II.

"Inspectis etiam privilegiis Romanorum pontificum Lucii et Urbani qui dictam sententiam ex certa scientia confirmarunt, pro se et successoribus suis concedit in futuro, benedictionem impendere electis sancti Augustini in eodem monasterio sine exactione professionis cum ad hoc fuerit requisitus. Cum autem dictus archiepiscopus ad benedicendum electum, ut dictum est, venerit, cum processione, et pulsatione a conventu recipietur, non tanquam ordinarii set tanquam domini Papae ministri ad hoc faciendum ratione privilegiorum dicti monasterii specialiter destinati." (p. 1882.)\*

However, it was not to be expected that future archbishops would acquiesce in this abdication of their rights as Ordinary, and so, on the next vacancy in the Abbot's chair, when Roger of Chichester, as abbot-elect, applied to Archbishop Boniface for benediction, the archbishop, in spite of a letter from Pope Innocent IV. requiring him to do so, refused to give benediction to the abbot-elect in his own monastery without his previous profession of obedience. Whereupon, on the day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Aug. 29) he received his benediction from the Bishop of London—

"in ecclesia sua ab episcopo Londoniensi benedictus praelationis accepit dignitatem." (p. 1899.)

Roger held office in troublous times, all through the latter part of the reign of Henry III., and died in the same year as the King. He saw the rise and fall of the great Earl Simon de Montfort, but did not take much part in the struggle, except that in 1263, in obedience to letters from the Bishop of Norwich, he published a Papal decree absolving from the oath by which they had sworn to keep the Provisions of Oxford, King Henry, Queen Eleanor, Prince

\* Having examined the privileges given by the Roman pontiffs, Lucius and Urban, who, after full inquiry, confirmed the aforesaid decision (sc. of Pope Alexander III.), he (St. Edmund), on his own behalf and on that of his successors, consented hereafter to bestow benediction on the abbots-elect of S. Augustine in the same monastery, when requested so to do, without enforcing any profession of obedience; and further that, when the said archbishop should come, on the occasion stated, to bless the abbot-elect, he should be received by the Convent with a procession and ringing of bells, not in his capacity of Ordinary, but as the delegate of our Lord the Pope, specially appointed for this duty by reason of the privileges of the said monastery.

Edward and Prince Edmund, and excommunicating all who opposed them (pp. 1912-13).

Abbot Roger's interests seem to have been mainly domestic. In 1254 he made an agreement with the Prior of St. Swithun's, Winchester, by which the monks of either house were to enjoy the same privileges in the other convent which they would have had at home (p. 1904).

In 1255 he built the church of Kingsdown on land given to St. Austin's by R. de Cornhull, son of G. de Cornhull.

In 1260 he began the new refectory, which was completed in six years (p. 1905).

In 1262 he made a new shrine for St. Mildred on the north side of the shrine of St. Augustine. Thorn here gives some interesting details as to the shrine of St. Mildred. The body of St. Mildred by special grant of King Knut was translated from Minster in Thanet on the 18th of May 1030 by Abbot Elfstan, and placed in a shrine in front of the high altar of the abbey church. At her head was the altar whereat the early mass was celebrated daily (*in quo missa matutinalis celebrata fuit omni die*). Her body lay here (*i.e.*, a little higher up than the great candle called Jesse which stands in the choir) until the time of Wulfric II., who in enlarging his church translated her into the porticus of St. Gregory,\* where then St. Augustine also lay. Afterwards, in fear of an invasion of the Danes, her remains were placed by Abbot Scotland *etsi non satis decenter tamen satis sagaciter in saxeo sarcophago*, where they remained until, on the completion of the church, they were moved in the said sarcophagus to the north chapel, where they afterwards continued to be preserved.

Abbot Roger in 1262, thinking that there had been some lack of care in her previous translations, and wishing to stir up the devotion of the people and to put an end to false rumours about her translation, opened her shrine and found the sarcophagus with the inscription :

“Clauditur hoc saxo Mildreda sacerrima virgo  
Cujus nos precibus adjuvet ipse Deus.”

\* Thorn by a slip writes St. Augustine for St. Gregory.

With the sarcophagus was a leaden vessel containing some dust. The Abbot closed up the shrine again until he could prepare a more fitting one, which he did in due course, and the new altar to St. Mildred was dedicated in 1270.

In 1264 Master Hamo Doge, Rector of St. Paul's, founded in memory of his parents and of Abbot Roger and his successors as abbots, the Chantry which gives its name to the present Chantry Lane. For its support he gave a messuage in the new street in St. Paul's parish. There were to be two chaplains, one of whom should celebrate in the chantry, and the other at the altar of St. John the Baptist in St. Paul's Church. The chaplains were to be appointed by the Abbot of St. Augustine's, and the foundation was approved by Pope Honorius III. (p. 1914).

In the same year, 1264, a practical reform was carried out in the house by Abbot Roger by the introduction of secular barbers. Hitherto, says the Chronicle, the monks had shaved one another, but to avoid the cuts and many risks they ran from clumsy and ignorant hands, the abbot, with the approval of the convent, ordered that the shaving should be done in a room near the bath-house when it was necessary, and on shaving days three collects were to be said in chapter in memory of the benefaction and for the soul of Abbot Roger (p. 1915).

In 1267 Adam de Kingesnoth the Chamberlain, who afterwards became Abbot of Chertsey, made very large benefactions to the monastery. He rebuilt the pulpitum in the church, re-roofed the refectory, made a new bath-house and baths, gave a bell and many vestments and ornaments to the church; he re-roofed the dormitory with lead, built a chapel over the gate, repaired the infirmary and built a new lavatory, and paid 200 marks to free the monastery from the hands of the Jews at Canterbury.

In 1268 an agreement was made at Westminster, in the presence of the King, between the Abbot and the citizens of Canterbury as to the bounds of their respective jurisdictions. Among the boundaries mentioned are the house of one Nicholas de la Berton (Barton Court?), *vicus quae vocatur*

*Loderslane* (Love Lane ?), *campi de Northome* (North Holmes ?). In 1269 was completed the new refectory, and, in the third year after, the lavatory at the door thereof, built by Abbot Roger at his own cost of 300 marks (p. 1918).

In 1271 the church of St. Margaret in Canterbury, which was formerly in the patronage of the Abbey, was given by Abbot Roger to the Hospital of Poor Priests as a free gift for ever. The syndic or priest of the hospital was not to buy from the Abbey tenants in St. Margaret's parish any lands or tenements without the permission of the abbot and convent, and was to take an oath of fidelity in chapter in recognition of the Abbey rights. And whenever the abbot passed the church of St. Margaret the bells were to be rung in his honour.

In the same year, on the Feast of the Translation of St. Augustine (Sept. 6), there was a great storm and the church was almost flooded.

In the next year, 1272, King Henry III. died on the morrow of the Translation of St. Augustine (Sept. 7) in the 55th year of his reign, and Abbot Roger on Dec. 13.

The wording of the account of his death is interesting from its correspondence with the inscription on the leaden plate found in his grave.

“Anno Domini m.c. lxxij die Sanctae Luciae virginis obiit Rogerus de Cicestria abbas hujus loci & ante altare sanctae Katerinae sub lapide cum imagine sculpto est sepultus.” (p. 1920.)

There remains no trace of the carved stone figure, but the foundations of an altar in the south transept to the east of his tomb are visible.

The lead which lined his grave is thick roofing lead, which may have been ready to hand after the re-roofing of the dormitory. The leaden plate with the inscription is the fourth which has been found, the others being those of Abbot Wulfric I. (1007), who, with Abbot Wydo, was buried in the crypt before the altar of St. Richard, Abbot Scotland (1087), who was buried in the centre of the crypt, and Abbot Dygon (1509), who was buried in the centre of his own new Lady Chapel.



OTHER INSCRIPTION PLATES FROM COFFINS OF ABBOTS.

The inscription found in the coffin of Abbot Roger II. referred to above is one of four which have been so far discovered in St. Austin's Abbey. It may therefore be convenient to add a short note about the others.

The first in date is that of Abbot Wulfric I. (989—1006), who died in 1006, and not in 1059 as is stated in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XXVI., p. 4—this being the date of the death of Abbot Wulfric II., who built the round church.

As related by Mr. Sebastian Evans in the paper referred to, the coffin plate of Wulfric I., with some bones, was found in 1902 in the crypt in front of the fifth pier from the south-west in a leaden box only 3 ft. 5 in. long and 7½ in. wide. The plate measures 13¾ × 5½ in.

Wulfric I. is said in the *Chron. Augustin.* to have been buried in the crypt before the altar of St. Richard, but, of course, was previously buried in the old church, and his remains translated to this place in the leaden box. The inscription reads thus:—

“Hic sunt reliquæ venerabilis Wulfrici primi Dicti senioris hujus monasterii abbatis XXXV.”

“Here lie the remains of the venerable Wulfric I. called the Elder, thirty fifth Abbot of this Monastery.”

The second is that of Abbot Scotland, who died the day before William the Conqueror as Gocelin says (ii., 41). His tomb was found on October 22, 1902, about the centre of the crypt which he built, and in his coffin were the remains of a leaden chalice and paten and a plate 7¾ × 2¼ in. with this inscription:—

“Anno ab Incarnatione Domini MLXXXVII Obiit Scotlandus Abbas V Idus Septembris.”

“In the year 1087 after the Incarnation Died Abbot Scotland on the Ninth of September.”

The Bollandist in his note on Gocelin i., 2, says that, according to Orderic Vitalis and others, King William I. died

on September 9, 1087, and that therefore Abbot Scotland died on September 8, and that Thorn, who gives September 3 as the date, is wrong. Unless, however, any better reason can be alleged for altering the date, the inscription on the plate would seem to be decisive.

The third coffin plate is that of Abbot Roger II. in 1272, described above.

The fourth plate is that of Abbot John Dygon, which was discovered in 1901 in the centre of the rectangular chapel (*Archæologia Cantiana*, XXV., 242), which possibly he built. In the grave was a large painted leaden mitre (figured in *Archæologia Cantiana*, XXVI., 8), a leaden chalice and paten, two finger rings and a coffin plate. One of the rings, a gold one, and the various leaden articles are in the College Museum.

This coffin plate, which measures  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$  in., bears the following inscription, which, as abbreviated, runs:—

“Hic tumilat<sup>o</sup> egregi<sup>o</sup> pater dōpn<sup>o</sup> Johes  
dygon Abbas hui<sup>o</sup> cenobij sexagesim<sup>o</sup> v<sup>o</sup> et i  
senectute bona plen<sup>o</sup>q<sup>3</sup> dierz hoc secto exēpt<sup>o</sup>  
desolatū suū gregem relinquēs qui q<sup>u</sup>mdiu rebz  
humanis iterfuit vt ydone<sup>o</sup> pastor gregi sibi cō  
misso solicit<sup>o</sup> curā exhibuit et in vita sua q<sup>u</sup>m  
pluria bona huic loco cōtulit in tātū vt meri  
to dici potuit hui<sup>o</sup> loci alter fūdator Rexit  
autē hanc eccliam xiiij annis duobz mēfibz  
et xix diebz et obiit x die may anno dñi  
m<sup>o</sup> cccc<sup>o</sup> x<sup>o</sup> cui<sup>o</sup> anime ppiciet<sup>r</sup> altissim<sup>o</sup> Amē.”

The above, being extended, reads:—

“Hic tumilatus egregius pater dompnus Johannes | dygon Abbas  
huius cenobii sexagesimus quintus et in | senectute bona plenusque  
dierum hoc seculo exemptus | desolatum suum gregem relinquens  
qui quamdiu rebus | humanis interfuit ut ydoneus pastor gregi sibi  
com | misso sollicitus curam exhibuit et in vita sua quam | plurima  
bona huic loco contulit in tantum vt meri | to dici potuit huius loci  
alter fundator Rexit | autem hanc ecclesiam xiiij annis duobus men-  
sibus | et xix diebus et obiit x die may anno domini | m<sup>o</sup> cccc<sup>o</sup> x<sup>o</sup>  
cuius anime propicietur altissimus Amen.”

The above may be translated thus:—

“ Here is buried the singular good father dan John Dygon, the sixty-fifth abbot of this convent, and he was taken out of this world in a good old age and full of days, leaving his flock desolate ; who, as long as he took part in mortal affairs, zealously bestowed his care, as a worthy shepherd, upon the flock committed to him, and during his life conferred very many benefits upon this place, in so much that he might deservedly be called the second founder of this place. Now he ruled this church thirteen years, two months and nineteen days, and died on the tenth day of May in the year of our Lord 1510; upon whose soul may the most High have mercy. Amen.”

John Dygon was elected abbot of St. Austin's in 1496-7. The *congé d'élire* consequent upon the death of Abbot John Dunster was granted by the Crown on 13 Jan., and the mandate for the restitution of temporalities was issued on 17 Feb., the election having been confirmed meanwhile by the Pope.\* The period of his rule as given in the inscription fixes its beginning on 20 Feb. 1496-7, probably the date of his installation. A *congé d'élire* was issued to the prior and convent on 18 May 1510, eight days after Dygon's death, in answer to the petition of their proctors, Thomas Hampton, D.D., and William Holyngborne. Hampton was elected abbot shortly after, and the temporalities were restored to him by Royal Letters Patent of 21 July following.†

(Thanks are due to Mr. A. Hamilton Thompson, F.S.A., for his transcript, translation into English, and his valuable notes on Abbot Dygon's inscription, rough drafts of which, found among Sir William Hope's papers, have kindly been forwarded by his widow.—ED.)

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© Kent Archaeological Society

\* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1494—1509, pp. 77, 80.

† *L. & P., Hen. VIII.*, I., 158, 175.