

THE REBUILDING OF THE SOUTH-WEST  
TOWER OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL  
IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

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THE Archives of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, unlike those of York, Ely and Exeter, can produce no long series of fabric rolls giving details of building operations. For information on these matters we have to depend, chiefly, upon the accounts of the monastic treasurers, which mention merely the cost of any work that might be in progress without giving particulars of the manner in which it was carried out. There are, however, just two rolls which do give minute details concerning the rebuilding of the south-west tower of the Cathedral Church in the earlier years of the reign of King Henry VI, the contents of which form the subject of the present article.

The last quarter of the 14th century had been a period of much building activity at Canterbury. Lanfranc's nave had been rebuilt by Priors John Finch and Thomas Chillenden ; the work apparently was completed by midsummer in the year 1398, since an entry in the Treasurer's accounts records a final payment of £9 2s. to the glasier, who thereupon " went his way."<sup>1</sup> The work, however, did not extend to the Norman towers, which were left standing, though within the church their piers were cased in perpendicular masonry. The S.W. entrance porch was probably Chillenden's work, at any rate it was in existence before 1418, since in that year one Thomas the Waxchandler left instructions in his will for his burial " in the cemetery of Christ Church Canterbury *before the porch of the new work.*"<sup>2</sup>

Why it should have seemed necessary to the Prior and Chapter to rebuild the S.W. tower in 1424 we do not know.

<sup>1</sup> " Vitrarius recessit ad festum Nat' sci Johis bap̄te ix<sup>o</sup> ij<sup>o</sup>."

<sup>2</sup> Lambeth Wills, Chich. Reg. 1.

Possibly the great earthquake of 1382, which is said to have brought down the campanile in the churchyard, may have damaged it; but if so it is strange that the other western tower should have stood for upwards of four hundred years longer—it was not rebuilt until 1831. But, however, this may have been the work was begun in the second year of King Henry VI, John of Wodensburg being prior, and Henry Chicheley Archbishop.

Chicheley, who had just completed his college for secular priests at Higham Ferrers, his native place, was during this part of his primacy free from pecuniary commitments elsewhere (his great foundation in Oxford—All Souls College—was not commenced until 1438) and so able to contribute liberally to the re-building of the S.W. tower of his Cathedral Church.

Fortunately the extent of the Archbishop's benefactions in this connection is set forth in another roll, from which source it appears that the work on the tower went on for ten years (1424-1434), during which period Chicheley, through his agents, contributed no less than £474 8s. 2d., a sum probably equal to seven thousand pounds at the present day, at any rate it was so large that the tower was called by his name, or, from the Archbishop's close connexion with the University of Oxford—the Oxford Steeple.

It is not unlikely that Chicheley may have selected the architect who was employed on the work, one Thomas Mapleton, the King's master mason, since the Archbishop had been a trusted friend and counsellor of the late King, and was godfather to the young King Henry VI. Moreover, Mapleton, who had been employed as master mason at Durham Cathedral until 1416, was entrusted later with the rebuilding of the Church of St. Stephen Walbrook, in the city of London, to which Sir Robert Chicheley, a brother of the Archbishop, was the chief benefactor.<sup>1</sup> During the progress of the work he was not resident in Canterbury, but paid periodical visits to the city, accompanied by his clerk, much as the architect to the Dean and Chapter does at the present

<sup>1</sup> See Lethaby's *Westminster Abbey and the King's Craftsmen*.

time, and receiving on each occasion a fee of twenty shillings and his expenses.

The supervision of the masons was entrusted to Edward Durrant, who acted as clerk of the works, and was paid a salary of twenty-six shillings and eight pence a year. It is curious, however, that it should have been thought necessary to call in skilled aid from outside for the proper adjustment of some of the hoisting tackle used in the work, and that the expert employed should have been a monk of St. Alban's Abbey.

The two rolls which have been preserved, give full particulars of the receipts and expenditure of the building fund during the years 1424 and 1426. The accounts which are written in Latin were kept by two of the senior monks, Henry Sutton and William Molash;<sup>1</sup> but though men of experience they were not good arithmeticians—they often make mistakes in their addition; blunders, however, are excusable when using roman figures.

That the new tower was actually commenced in 1424 is clear from the fact that the roll for this year records the erection of an enclosure of lath and plaster around the new work, designed doubtless to keep unauthorized people from ascending the ladders. Unfortunately this precaution was not altogether effective, for John Stone relates how on a winter's evening after compline, when of course it was dark, two of the monks climbed up the ladders, and how one of them, namely John Grove, while walking somewhat carelessly on the platform above missed his footing, was precipitated on to the pavement below, and fractured his skull.<sup>2</sup>

Three kinds of stone were used in the construction of the tower: viz. Caen stone, Merstham stone, and "northern stone" concerning which no further information as to the locality of the quarry is given. The Caen stone, which, as always at Canterbury, preponderated, was purchased at

<sup>1</sup> Sutton had been professed thirty-four years earlier; he became subprior in 1426. Molash received the tonsure in 1398 and succeeded John Wodensburg as prior in 1428. See Searle's *List of the Monks of Christ Church Canterbury*, at the end of his edition of *Stone's Chronicle*.

<sup>2</sup> *Stone's Chronicle*, Ed. Searle, p. 12.

Sandwich at from 6s. to 6s. 4d. per ton ; water carriage to Fordwich cost one shilling a ton, except what was brought up in the Prior's barge, for which only crantage dues at Fordwich were paid. Cartage from Fordwich to Canterbury cost ten pence a ton. The " Firestone " from the quarries at Merstham in Surrey, cost 4s. per ton, delivered at Battersea, where it was put into barges and landed at a place called " Greystone," which, probably, was in the neighbourhood of Whitstable ; the sea carriage cost one shilling and fourpence per ton, and cartage from Greystone to Canterbury a similar amount. The " northern stone " (*petrarum borealium*, or *emp' ab hominibus borealibus*), which presumably came from some quarry in the northern or midland counties, was brought by water to Monkton, where the convent took delivery at 6s. per ton, but the cost of conveyance thence to Canterbury is not stated.

The wages of the masons employed upon the work are lumped together in the account, so we cannot tell how many were engaged or what each man received, but in addition to their wages the men received an allowance for clothes, and a further sum for sharpening their tools.

In addition to the munificent support given to the work by the Archbishop, of which I have already spoken, the Prior and Convent received several benefactions from the laity ; some of these assume quite a modern form, e.g. William Lane gives £2 16s. 8d. as his first instalment of a sum of twenty marcs which he has promised to contribute in four years, and John Smith, of Sandwich, £7 10s. in part payment of a larger sum (unspecified) for which he has given his bond. These are entered under the heading *Obventiones* which, perhaps, may be best translated " windfalls." Chief amongst them is a sum of £15 6s. 8d. received from Cecily, the widow of John Parker of Quex, for a window in the chapel of Birchington—probably in memory of her husband who died in 1411.

It might be supposed that in 1426 the tower was approaching completion, since the roll for this year contains entries relating to payments to the carpenters who were constructing the roof of the new work, and the purchase of thirty-eight

newel stones for supporting the steps of the stairs, but the roll containing Chicheley's benefactions seems to show that the tower was not finished until 1434, so the roof of 1426 may have been of a temporary nature only.

Bell Dunstan, which hangs at the top of Chicheley's tower, was cast in London in 1430, but was not blessed, and, presumably, not hung in its present position, until 1459,<sup>1</sup> when Thomas Goldstone I was prior. Goldstone is credited in his obituary with having added certain ornamentation to the S.W. tower up to the height of the porch, the words are "*Turrem quoque sive campanile in australi parte navis ecclesie supra pulchro artificio consummari fecit,*"<sup>2</sup> which I understand to mean that the canopied niches on the lower stage of the tower, and probably the fan vaulting which supports the ringers' floor were added by Prior Goldstone.

A literal translation of the contents of the rolls follows :

[Fabric Drawer Bundle XIX.]

The Account of brothers Henry Sutton and William Molesse concerning the work of the new southern bell tower of Christ Church Canterbury, from the feast of Easter in the second year of the reign of King Henry the sixth to the feast of the Lord's Nativity in the third year of the reign of the same King.<sup>3</sup>

The same answer for the receipt of £200 from the lord Prior for the abovesaid work. Out of which they account for a payment for 227 tons<sup>4</sup> of stone bought for the same work at divers times, the price is set forth on a separate sheet

£78 17s. 4d.

And for water carriage of the same stone from Sandwich to Fordwich

£15 10s. 0d.

And for cartage of the same from Fordwich to Canterbury

£7 6s. 8d.

<sup>1</sup> *Stone's Chronicle*, Ed. Searle, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, Vol. I, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Henry VIth's regnal year began Sept. 1st.

<sup>4</sup> Always written "tonnetyzth," presumably an English word, but it does not occur in the *New Oxford Dict.*

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And given to Thomas Mapylton and his servant for advice concerning the aforesaid work [*pro opere predicto avisando*]  
£2 3s. 4d.

And for 1 ryngge bought for the same work 1s. 4d.

And paid to the masons on various occasions for the same work, as is set forth on the pay sheets [*cedulas*] £51 5s. 0d.

And for loading sand [*zabulo iactando*] 3s.

Total of expenses £155 6s. 8d.

And they owe £44 3s. 4d.

Concerning which the same (accountants) reckon in payments to the Masons, from the feast of the Lord's Nativity to the feast of the Lord's Annunciation next following, as is set forth by the pay sheets £26 2s. 8d.

And for their clothes £4 13s. 4d.

And to Master Thomas Mapylton for coming twice to give directions concerning the aforesaid work 40s.

And for 80 quarters of quick-lime for the same work 42s. 7d.

And paid to John Hardy for making and binding various vessels [*vasis*] for the same work 2s. 4d.

Total of the expenses £35 1s. 0d.

And there is left in the bag £9 12s. 4d.

[On the same sheet of parchment]

The Account of Brothers Henry Sutton and William Molessh receivers of the money of the new work of the Church from the feast of the Lord's Annunciation in the third year of the reign of King Henry the sixth to the feast of the Lord's Nativity next following in the fourth year of the reign of the same King (1425).

The same answer for £9 12s. 4d. left over from their last account.

And for £200 received for the same work.

And for 4d. received from Dom. Richard Godmersham the penitencer.

Total £200 0s. 4d.

Sum total of the receipts £209 12s. 8d.

The same account for a payment for 71 tons of stone bought from northern men [*hominibus borealibus*] at Monketon, at 6s. per ton £21 6s. 8d. and 8d. over [*plus in toto vijj<sup>d</sup>*].

And for carrying by water 128 tons (of stone) from Sandwich to Fordwich, at 12d. per ton £6 18s. 0d.

And for wyndyng and cranage at Fordwich, of stone brought by the barge belonging to the lord Prior 23d.

And paid to Richard Bonvyarer of Dovor for 22 tons of Caen stone bought for the same (work), price per ton 6s. 2d., £9 17s. 4d.

And for carriage of the aforesaid 103 tons of stone from Fordwich to Canterbury, at 10d. the ton £4 5s. 10d.

And paid for 82 tons of northern stone £24 12s. 0d. at 6s. the ton.

And for 28 cartloads of flints bought by Edward Duraunt, 21s. 4d.

And for loading 60 cartloads of sand at  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. the load 7s. 6d.

And paid to Edward Duraunt for 214 cwt. of burnt lime bought, price per hundred 53s. 3d. = 114s.

And for a thousand of iron bought for the same work 46s. 8d.

Total £76 11s. 3d.

And for the wages of the carpenters hired for making an enclosure about the new work according to the daily pay sheets £4 10s. 11d.

And for one plasterer hired with his servant for plastering the said enclosure 21s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

And for 1,800 *dawbyng* laths bought for the same work at 3d. the hundred 3s. 6d.

And for 9,000 *dawbyng prig* bought for the same at 8d. the thousand, 6s.

And for sawyers hired by the day for the same work 28s. 4d.

And paid to brother William of St. Albans for setting up hoisting tackle [*pro organis deponendis*].

And paid for making hurdles [*clatibus*] and for the carriage of same 8s. 4d.

And for collecting rods and *wythys* 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

And for the wage of Edward Duraunt for exercising supervision among the workmen during the terms of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael and the Lord's Nativity 20s.

Total £11.

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And paid for one great rope containing 222 lbs. of hemp for the same work, price per lb. 2d., made by Robert Bochard, roper, 45s. 4d.

And paid for *stopp rynges*, hoists [*jectis*], hasps, *treyys*, rammers [*tribulis*], and divers other necessary things 11s. 1d.

Total 56s. 5d.

The total of all the expenses and allowances [*liberacionum*] is £171 5s. 0d., and they owe £38 6s. 6d.

#### Roll 2.

The Account of Brothers Henry (*sic*), and William Molesshe, Receivers of the money for the new work of Christ Church, Canterbury, from the feast of the Lord's Nativity in the fifth year of the reign of King Henry the sixth, to the same feast in the sixth year of the same King, that is to say for one whole year. (1426-7.)

The same answer for £188 17s. 8½d. left over from their last account, and for £40 7s. 8d. (the value) of stock remaining in hand, as is set forth at the foot of the same account.

Total £220.

And for £412 0s. 2d. received of the lord Prior on various occasions during the time of the account.

And for 53s. 4d. received for a thousand of iron, sold from stock.

And for 20s. received as a gift of William Marcher for the same work.

And for 39s. received of the money of brother Thomas Bray.

And for 12d. received from Dom. Richard Godmersham, the penitencer.

And for 6s. 8d. received from a certain friend by the hands of the Shrine-keepers.

And for 66s. 8d. received from William Lane in part payment of 20 marcs, to be paid in four years in equal instalments, of which the first is made in this year.

And for £15 6s. 8d. received from the widow of John Parker for one window made in the Chapel of Byrchynnton.



*And for £7 10s. 0d. received from John Smyth of Sandwic, in part payment of a larger sum which he undertook to pay.*<sup>1</sup>

Sum total of the receipts together with the balance carried forward £625 12s. 0½d.

The same (accountants) reckon for 178 tons of Caen stone bought for above mentioned work price per ton 6s., £53 8s.

And paid to William Edmund for 258 tons of Caen stone, price per ton 6s. 4d. £81 14s.

And for carrying the abovesaid 436 tons, and 22 tons left over from the preceeding year, from Fordwich to Canterbury, at 10d. per ton, £14 1s. 8d.

And for 80 tons of Merstham stone bought of Peter Ryder at Badeseye (Battersea), price per ton 4s., £16.

And paid to William Stephens for water carriage of the same to Greyston, at 16d. per ton, £5 6s. 8d.

And for carting the same from Greyston to Canterbury, at 16d. per ton, £4.

And paid to Edward Duraunt and Nicholas Hoyger for 38 newel 53s. 4d., price of each 20d.

And for 4,000 of iron bought at Sandwich in this year, price per 1,000 50s., £10.

And for 201 quarters of quick-lime bought, price per hundred 53s. 4d.

And in loading sand 8s. 4d.

Total £229 10s.

Also for the wages of the masons during the time of the account, as is shown in the pay sheet £163 9s. 2d.

And for the fees of Master Thomas Mapylton supervisor of the work 40s.

And paid to Edward Duraunt, as his wages, for exercising supervision among the workmen 26s. 8d.

And for the clothing of the said masons £15 3s. 4d.

And for the expenses of Master Thomas Mapylton coming on various occasions to inspect the work, and for the expenses of John Morys, warden of the masons for going to Merstham to order the stone 20s. 5½d.

Total £182 19s. 7½d.

<sup>1</sup> Pen struck through this entry.

Also paid to William Smaldane, the carpenter, and his mates, who were hired at various times 74s. 10d.

And to Ouerley, carpenter, in part payment for making the roof of the above said new work 66s. 8d.

And for sawyers hired at various times for fashioning syntorys (? centerings), and for sawing other things 21s. 8d.

And paid to John Froman and Roger Banham for making divers ironwork for the same work £4 14s. 3½d.

And for binding the great wheel, 5s.

And paid to the glasier for glazing 1 window in Thanet, 57s. 6d. Total £16 0s. 11d.

Also paid for hurdles [*clatibus*] bought for the said work together with rods [*virgis*] 5s. 11½d.

And for sharpening the workmen's tools, 5s. 9d.

And for the cartage of timber from Broke for synterys (? centerings) and other things 2d.

And for rammers (?) [*tribulis*] and trayyes bought for the same 2s. 11d.

And for straw bought 21d.

And paid to Edward Duraunt for removing earth in the cemetery 6s. 8d. Total 25s. 0½d.

Total of all expenses and allowances £422 5s. 7½d.

And they owe £203 6s. 5½d.

In the hands of the lord Prior of Merton as an offering [*pro oblacione*] £33 6s. 8d.

And in the hands of John Smyth of Sandwich £22 10s.

And in the hands of William Edmond £20.

And cash in the hands of the accountants [*super computantes*] £127 9s. 9d., besides stock left over, as is set forth more fully on the back of the roll, namely, lead valued at £30, and iron valued at 113s. 9d.

Sum total of what is owing £239 7s. 10d.

[On a separate roll]

Monies received from our lord Archbishop for the new work of his church of Canterbury, on various occasions, from the third year of the reign of King Henry the sixth to the thirteenth year of the same king (1424-1434).

First by the hands of John Ely 100 mares.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Also by the hands of Henry Penwortham <sup>1</sup>                | 107 marcs.        |
| Also by the hands of the same Henry                               | 145 marcs 5s.     |
| „ „ „ „   | 106 marcs 6s. 8d. |
| „ „ „ „   | 32 marcs 10s.     |
| Also by the hands of Lewis Robesart <sup>2</sup> lord of Bouchier | 200 marcs.        |
| Total 691 marcs 8s. 4d.=£460 14s. 10d.                            |                   |
| Also by the hands of the Archdeacon of Lichfield                  | 20s.              |
| „ from the Abbot of Louth Park                                    | 26s. 8d.          |
| „ from a Prior of Lichfield diocese by the hand of                |                   |
| John Bolde  | 40s..             |
| „ from the Prior of Christ Church London                          | 40s.              |
| „ from the Prior of the Church of Coventry                        | 106s. 8d.         |
| „ from the Prior of Brisham Montacute <sup>3</sup>                | 40s.              |
| Total £13 13s. 4d.  |                   |

<sup>1</sup> Hen. Penwortham was collected to Wittersham Rectory 18 March, 1418, and to Earde=Crayford 3 Nov. 1430. *Chichele's Regr.* ff. 100<sup>b</sup> and 157<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Lewis Robsart married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Hugh, Lord Bouchier; he was made a Knight of the Garter by King Henry V.

<sup>3</sup> A Cluniac House in Somersetshire.