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RECENT DISCOVERIES IN THE ARCHIVES OF  
CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

A NOTE ON THE CRAFTSMEN

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IN spite of extensive exploration in the past, it is clear that there is still much to be learnt from the vast archives of England's Mother Church. Mr. Blore's discoveries are a pleasant surprise, but it is to be hoped that they are only a foretaste of even better things to come, when the bulk of the documents, in hiding during the years of war, are once again unpacked.

The information now forthcoming is of considerable interest for several reasons. First, the extracts are valuable examples of a special type of mediaeval record, of which all too few are in print; second, they provide further detail for the dated history of the great monastery; and thirdly, there is a wealth of names of craftsmen and other individuals connected with the works. One point which may lead to revision of the technical vocabularies is the use of the terms "carpentaria" and "carpentarius" to mean not what we understand by carpentry and carpenter at all, but rather the work of structural maintenance, and the administrative officer responsible. The parallel usage of "carpentarius" in the same accounts with the sense of "working carpenter" gives a salutary warning to all students of original records.

Another item from the accounts of 1254 is rather striking: ten shillings were paid for boards from Ireland. Can this be a clue to the source of the widespread tradition (almost as prevalent as that which transforms English oak into "chestnut" when used in church roofs) that many of our old buildings contain "Irish oak"? That timber was imported from Ireland in the Middle Ages is known,<sup>1</sup> but it is surprising to find it in use so far off as Canterbury.

Simon the glazier was evidently a permanent official of the convent, since he received a corn allowance; another glazier of his name appears in an early 13th-century Rental of the Priory as residing in St. George's parish.<sup>2</sup> Other rentals and lists of rent-arrears<sup>3</sup> show that many craftsmen resided in Canterbury: painters named John (1266, c. 1278) and William (1261, 1292); glaziers, Thomas (1233), John (dead by 1266), John (1277), and Richard (c. 1278, 1288); Walter plumber (1275); Arnold, Robert, and Terrius, goldsmiths (mid-thirteenth century), and Eustace and Michael (1290); John le Kerwere, no doubt

a sculptor (after 1231); carpenters, Radulf (dead by 1254), Elyas (dead by 1266), Eylwin (1275, 1277), Elyas (1275, 1290), William (c. 1278), William de Bedeford (1290), Henry (dead by 1288), Warin (dead by 1290), and Simon (1290). The last named may be identical with the Master Simon de Canterbury, carpenter, who resided in London from 1299 to his death in 1341.<sup>4</sup>

The early masons included Eudo (1233), Anselm (1254), Luke (dead by 1261), Alwred (died c. 1250), Robert (1288), Nicholas (1290), and Master Michael, of Northgate Ward (1275, 1290). This Master Michael was clearly a man of importance, for to him alone is the prefix "Magister" awarded. It is tempting to identify him with that Master Michael of Canterbury who made the Cheapside Eleanor Cross for Edward I between 1291 and 1293, and in 1292 began St. Stephen's Chapel in the Palace of Westminster. This may well explain the close resemblances which have been observed between the tomb of Archbishop Peckham (†1292) at Canterbury, and that of Edmund Crouchback (†1296) in Westminster Abbey, as well as to the extant fragments of the Cheapside Cross.<sup>5</sup>

The list of "tradesmen" (*Homines de Mestier*) of 1334 does not include the important craftsmen, who ranked as esquires (*Armigeri*) but gives the name of the resident carpenter, Elyas, and mentions the Master Plumber and the (eternal) plumber's mate. The accounts of 1338, 1340 and 1341 refer to John Gildene, mason, who appears to have been a local builder in a fair way of business, since he built a new chamber at Eastry as well as working in the Cathedral.

In the second half of the fourteenth century occur several important items, particularly in connection with the earthquake of the 21st May, 1382, which seriously damaged the Infirmary Chapel and the east walk of the old cloisters. The repairs mentioned in the account of 1383 did not last long, for in the twenty years priorate of Thomas Chillenden (1391-1411) the Cloisters were entirely rebuilt and vaulted in stone.<sup>6</sup> Probably the earthquake led to the stoppage of work on the new nave, which had been in progress since 1378.<sup>7</sup> This, too, was taken in hand by Chillenden and carried to a triumphant conclusion; in the account for 1396/7 we see in brief the activity of a single year. The working staff comprised 20 freemasons (*latomi*), 3 setters (*leggeres*), and 4 labourers to assist them, all hired by the year at a total cost of £167 0s. 8d. This allowed for three unpaid holidays of a week each at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun, as well as certain unpaid feast days. The current rates of pay would be approximately 3s. per week for freemasons, 2s. 6d. for setters, and 2s. for labourers, which would work out at rather less than 45 weeks' work in the year, or a total of some 30 unpaid festivals in addition to the three weeks' holidays. The masons were less fortunate than those employed on the King's works, where approximately half the 40 to 50 feast days in the year were paid

for, though no work was done.<sup>8</sup> At Canterbury the masons had to bring their own tools, but they were sharpened at the employer's cost.<sup>9</sup>

From other sources it is possible to name a few of the men who were engaged on the work, for in 1390 exemption from jury service and other duties was granted for three years to Thomas Hoo, mason, James Gylot, mason, John Brien, mason, and John Woller, carpenter, "employed in certain works round the church of Crichurche, Canterbury<sup>10</sup>; in 1393 a further exemption for five years was granted to James Gilot and John Brian, masons, John Wolward, carpenter (no doubt identical with Woller), John Broun, plumber, John Bernesale, smith, and John Piry<sup>11</sup>; and in 1397 another exemption of five years to John Brian, mason, John Broun, plumber, and John Pirye, surveyor and clerk of the works, "at the supplication of Thomas Prior of Christ Church Canterbury and for the speedier completion of the works of that church."<sup>12</sup>

A mason named Thomas de Hoo had worked at Westminster in 1352 during the completion of St. Stephen's Chapel at 5½d. a day,<sup>13</sup> and was very likely the same man that we find at Canterbury; in 1380 Thomas Hoo, Richard Cook, Richard Weyland, John Asshe, Geoffrey atte Well and James Gylot, masons of Canterbury, were all at work "on the fabric of Christ Church Canterbury" and received exemptions for two years<sup>14</sup>; in 1381 William Londoneys, a mason working for the Archbishop on the new city wall was given exemption for one year<sup>15</sup>; and in 1387 Londoneys, Cook, and James Gilet were appointed "to take and set to work on the city enclosure of Canterbury the necessary masons and other labourers, at the wages of the commonalty of that city, and to provide stone, lime, etc. with carriage" for one year.<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Hoo, John Wolward, and John Pirye all appear at Christmas 1398 as esquires of the Prior in receipt of robes of his livery, and with them were Henry Yvele (Yevele) and Stephen Lote.<sup>17</sup> Yevele was the King's Master Mason, a very important architect, and an influential citizen of London; Lote, his junior partner (for example in the making of tombs for Richard II and for Cardinal Langham in Westminster Abbey) and successor in office. In the account for 1396/7 Yevele appears selling lead and stone to the Prior to a total value of over £90, a very considerable sum. This may imply that he carried on a business in building materials on a large scale, but not necessarily so, for from 1385 and probably earlier he had been in charge of work on the walls of the city and close of Canterbury,<sup>18</sup> and since 1390 upon the donjon of the castle,<sup>19</sup> and may have had surplus materials to dispose of officially.

During the fifteenth century, at the building of the south-west tower, there was again a large staff of masons engaged, under the direction of Master Thomas Mapilton, "magister Lathomorum", who

like Yevele and Lote was at the same time Chief Mason to the King. The "custos de la Loygge Lathomorum," warden or resident master of the works (as Hoo had probably been), was in 1429 John Morys, while under him were 16 masons working in the "Loygge," and 3 apprentices; in 1428 there had been 20 masons, 6 setters, 2 apprentices, and 4 labourers, an even larger staff than that working on the nave in 1396.<sup>20</sup> It is nowadays recognized that the term "lodge" was not in the Middle Ages used in any esoteric sense, but meant simply the shed or workshop in which the masons hewed the stone. None the less it is a matter of some interest to learn (from so impartial a document as a lease) the precise position of the "Masons' house called le loygge" at Canterbury.<sup>21</sup>

Of the later craftsmen named, the most important was William Bonville, marbler of Corfe. The Bonvilles were a large and influential Purbeck family at this time,<sup>22</sup> and it has not so far been possible to identify the marbler, but he evidently had an extensive business, in spite of the competition of the alabastermen and freestone masons, whose products had for many years been tending to supplant those made from the native marble. Bonville's "marble stones" for three Priors of Christchurch were among the last representatives of their kind.

#### NOTES.

<sup>1</sup> H. C. Darby, etc.: *Historical Geography of England*, 1936, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C. Woodforde, "Glass-Painters in England before the Reformation," in *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass-Painters*, VI (October, 1935), p. 64. Chapter Library MS. R.33, pt. i.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter Library, Box D., Rentals, etc.

<sup>4</sup> I have assembled what is known of his career as an appendix to "The Education of the Mediaeval Architect" in *Journal R.I.B.A.*, June, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> A. Vallance: *Old Crosses and Lychgates*, 1933, p. 102, and Figs. 130-131; F. H. Crossley: *English Church Monuments*, 1933, p. 54; Count Paul Biver in *Archaeological Journal*, LXVII, 1910, p. 51 ff.

<sup>6</sup> R. Willis: "Conventual Buildings of . . . Christ Church in Canterbury" in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, VII, 1868.

<sup>7</sup> R. Willis: *Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, 1845, p. 117 ff; cf. A. Oswald: "Canterbury Cathedral: the Nave and its Designer," in *Burlington Magazine*, LXXV (December, 1939), p. 221 ff.

<sup>8</sup> D. Knoop and G. P. Jones: *The Mediaeval Mason*, 1933, pp. 118-121. The ancient custom of assigning alternate feast days to the King and to the masons, found in the Westminster Abbey fabric roll of 1253 (Willis in G. G. Scott: *Gleanings from Westminster Abbey*, 2nd ed., 1863, p. 232) is explicitly defined in an account of 1329, P.R.O., E.101-467-7(1): "When any workmen of whatsoever condition or craft they may be shall stay upon the King's work continuously as for a fortnight, three weeks, a month or more, and two or more feast days shall occur . . . within the same time, Sundays only excepted, the King shall have one feast day beginning at the first and the workmen the other in this manner, namely that the same workmen shall take from the King on each such alternate feast day their full and entire wages notwithstanding that they have

not worked upon it as upon a day on which they shall have worked (*sicuti in die quo operati fuerint*).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Knoop and Jones, *op.cit.*, pp. 62-69.

<sup>10</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1388-1392, p. 196. John Bryan's will of 1401 shows that he had been a mason upon the new work of the cathedral church for 20 years, and that he left the sum of 20 marks (£13 13s. 4d.) to the fabric. (W. Sommer: *Antiquities of Canterbury*, ed. Battely, 1703; cf. A. Hussey: *East Kent Wills*, 1907, pp. 57, 133.

<sup>11</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1391-1396, p. 271; cf. *Ib.*, 1401-1405, p. 23, where John Bernesale, "of Canterbury, smith," appears as a vendor of premises in Fordwich conveyed to St. Augustine's Abbey.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1396-1399, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> J. T. Smith: *Antiquities of Westminster*, 1807, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1377-1381, p. 530.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1381-1385, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1385-1389, p. 271.

<sup>17</sup> Bodl. Tanner MS. 165; I am indebted for these names to the kindness of Mr. Arthur Oswald.

<sup>18</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1385-1389, p. 103; *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1385-1389, pp. 121, 207.

<sup>19</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1388-1392, pp. 249, 261, 294; *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1392-1396, pp. 45-46.

<sup>20</sup> Bodl. Tanner MS. 165; cf. C. E. Woodruff: "The Rebuilding of the South-West Tower of Canterbury Cathedral," in *Arch. Cantiana*, XLV, p. 37 ff.

<sup>21</sup> There is an account for making a "logge" (i.e. boat-house) for the safe keeping of the King's Barge in the lake at Kenilworth in 1438-1439, in P.R.O., D.L., 29/463/7540.

<sup>22</sup> J. Hutchins: *History . . . of the County of Dorset*, 3rd ed., 1861-1873.