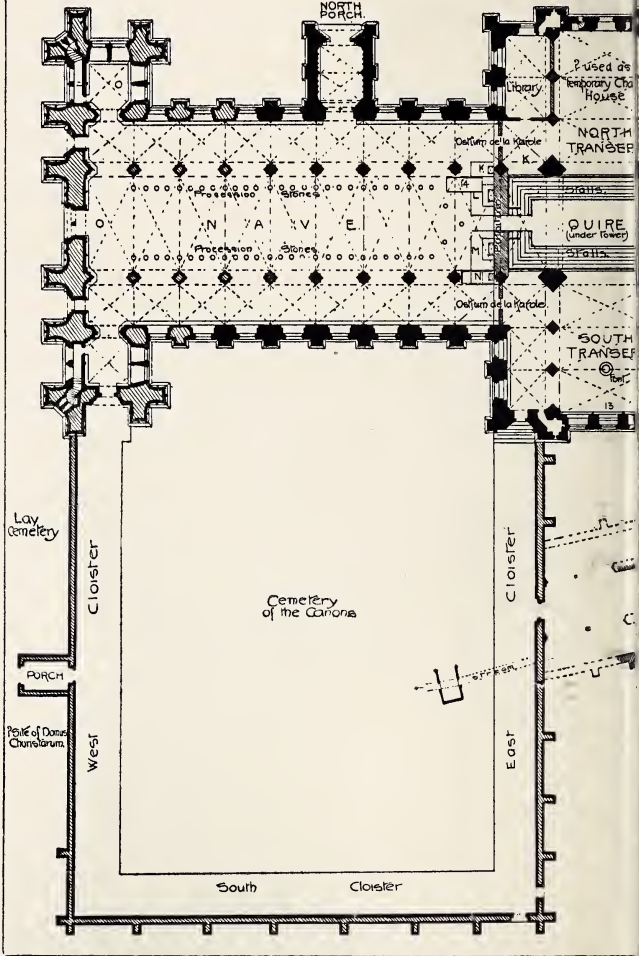
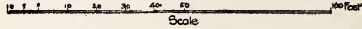
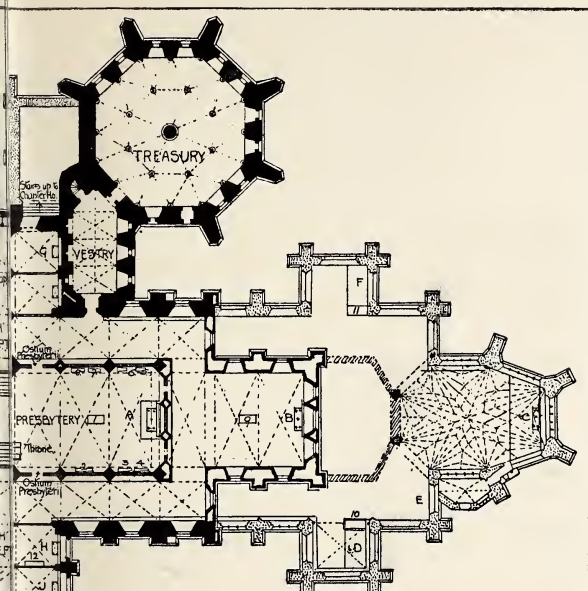


# WELLS CATHEDRAL CHURCH

Ground Plan as in the Thirteenth Century





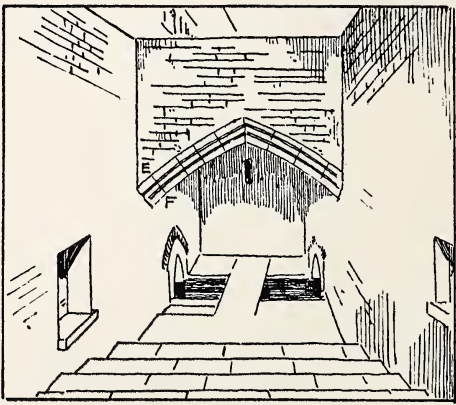
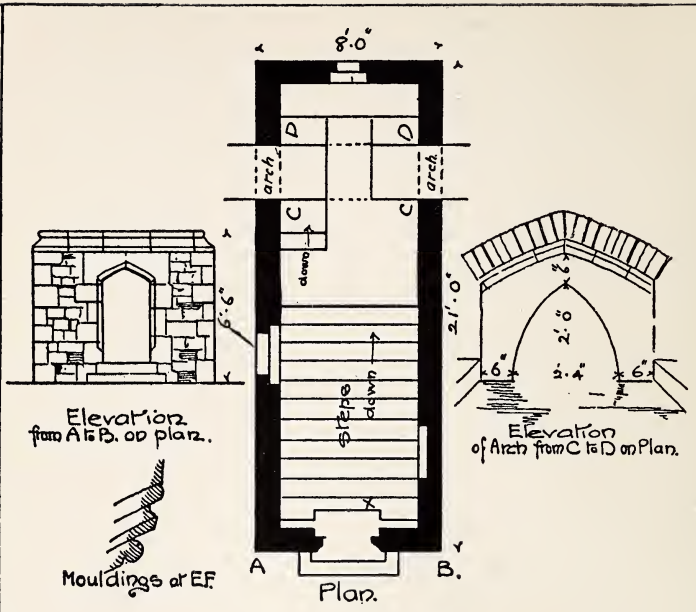
- Monuments
- 1 Bishop Jocelin
  - 2 " Bilton 2nd
  - 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Early Bishops
  - 9 Bishop Bilton 1st
  - 10 " Drokenesford
  - 11 Dean Godley
  - 12 " Hulse
  - 13 Bishop W. de Marchia
  - 14 Habelshawe

Cemetery  
of the Vicars

Foundations  
discovered 1894.

- Altars.
- A. High Altar
  - B. Conjectural site of altar of Lady Chapel
  - C. Altar of later Lady Chapel.
  - D. St. Catherine & others
  - E. St. John Baptist
  - F. Corpus Christi (altare dedicandus 1555).
  - G. Holy Cross
  - H. St. Calixtus
  - J. St. Martin
  - K. St. Saviour
  - L. P. v. m.
  - M. (St. Andrew)
  - N. St. Edmund
  - O. Holy Cross
  - P. Altar of the Virgin "Justa Claustrum"
  - Q. St. Nicholas

- First Period
- Conjectural form of East End
- Second Period
- Third Period



View looking down the Steps taken at about X on Plan.

BUILDINGS OVER OLD WATERCOURSE IN "PALM CHURCHYARD," WELLS.

Documents bearing upon late Excavations on the  
South Side of the Cathedral Church of Wells  
in 1894.

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BY THE REV. C. M. CHURCH, M.A., F.S.A.

(*Sub-Dean and Canon Residentiary*).

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IN the Report of the *Proceedings* of the Society for the year 1888 (vol. xxxiv, p. 104) I was responsible for a plan of buildings supposed to have stood in the burial ground south of the Church and near the east cloister.

That plan was based on very limited excavations made in 1851 and 1875, and on rather vague inferences. It represented foundations of two buildings, one octagonal, the other rectangular, abutting upon the cloister wall, both of small dimensions.

The desire to be satisfied as to the form and dimensions of these buildings led to the commencement of excavations in January, 1894: the interest grew as the blocks of old foundations unexpectedly appeared in the soil, and the Dean and Chapter determined to complete the excavations under the superintendence of Mr. E. Buckle.

The results of the work will appear in Mr. Buckle's plans which he will explain in the paper which will follow.

The foundations of two buildings have been laid open.

- (a) One small and rectangular (not octagonal), of a different orientation from the great Church.
- (b) The other of much larger dimensions, upon the foundations of the earlier building and in the same line of orientation as the Church.

There can be no doubt that we have at (a), the site and foundations of an early Lady Chapel. (*vide* plan). A chapel of the Blessed Virgin stood here certainly in the middle of the thirteenth century, which may have been on this site in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It existed through the fourteenth and to the middle of the fifteenth century, when it was pulled down and a larger Lady Chapel built upon its foundations.

I proceed to give documentary evidence in support of these statements, tracing the history from the middle of the thirteenth century, first backward and then forward.

In July, 1243, a Chapter memorandum records the laying out of the burial grounds round the Church—(1) the western ground was assigned to the lay people, (2) the Cloister ground to the canons, (3) the ground 'to the east behind the Chapel of the Blessed Mary' to the vicars.<sup>1</sup> This chapel is more definitely described in charters from 1250 onwards as the "Chapel of the Blessed Mary, which is set in the southern part of the great Church near the cloisters."

In that year, Godfrey of Bridport covenants that in return for the gift to him of the manor of Kerchel (Critchell) in Dorset, by the Lady Agatha de Meysy, he and his heirs will pay £20 annually during her life to herself, and 100 shillings of annual pension to two priests, vicars choral, who shall celebrate for her soul and her family, *in capella beatæ Mariæ quæ sita est ex parte australi majoris ecclesie Wellensis*.<sup>2</sup>

(1). R. i, f. 64.

(2). Carta 85.—R. iii, f. 292. Cf. Carta 95.—R. i, f. 85.

A chapel, so definitely described yet thus incidentally noticed, must have stood here for a long time, and it is not an unreasonable surmise that on this south part of the Church, where Giso [1061—1088] built his semi-monastic buildings of cloister, refectory, and dormitory, the chapel remained standing when John of Tours destroyed the conventual buildings and transferred the See to Bath.<sup>3</sup>

A chapel of St. Mary endowed by Giso with a virgate of land in Wotton, is enumerated among the grants which Bishop Robert confirms in 1136;<sup>4</sup> and in 1196 a grant for the restoration of the Chapel of St. Mary is enregistered.<sup>5</sup> The possibility, at least, that this chapel of 1250 may have been on the site of this much earlier Lady Chapel, is strengthened by the discovery, during late excavations, of a stone bearing marks of early workmanship, which Canon G. F. Browne considers to be "of rather rude late Saxon character."

Passing onward from 1250, we find that this chapel was the favourite mortuary chapel of rich families during the next century. It was a place of such fashionable devotion that a strife for the offerings and perquisites of wax candles here, was going on from 1260 between the treasurer of the church and the custodians of the chapel, which was settled through the arbitration of the bishop in 1269, by a division of the gifts—the grant of the wax to the treasurer for one whole day in the year, the feast of the Purification, and to the custodians for all the rest of the year.<sup>6</sup> In curious connection occurs the grant by the bishop of leave of absence to the treasurer for three years to study theology.<sup>7</sup>

It was the mortuary chapel of the Bytton family, where obits were endowed and celebrated for Bishop William I, in

(3). *Historiola*, p. 22.

(4). R. i, *f.* 31. See text quoted in Appendix A, Early History of Wells, p. 352.

(5). R. i, *f.* 41. "ad emendationem capellæ beatæ Mariæ ejusdem loci."

(6). R. iii, *f.* 293 ; *f.* 282.

(7). R. *f.* 393 ; Cf. R. i. *f.* 84.

1271, and 1273—1276,<sup>8</sup> by his brother Provost John, when the altar of St. Nicholas was constructed there by him and rich endowments made for memorial services of himself, his brother the first bishop of the family, and his nephew the second bishop, who died in 1274. Additional endowments were made in 1301 by dean Thomas of the third generation of the Byttons, afterwards bishop of Exeter, for his own obit and that of his family in past generations.<sup>9</sup>

It was one of the places where the obit of dean Godley was to be celebrated by decree of the Chapter in 1330.<sup>10</sup>

Though variously mentioned in Chapter acts of the fourteenth century, it probably declined in honour as the great church grew, and other chapels and altars, especially the eastern Lady Chapel, obtained greater endowments. It had become the court of the official of the dean, and wills were proved there in 1390 and 1403,<sup>11</sup> and finally it may have fallen into dilapidation and neglect when Bishop Stillington (1466—1491) conceived the idea of building his chantry, and found that site and the endowments belonging to it, convenient for the erection and support of a new Lady Chapel near the cloister, in which his tomb and chantry were to be placed.

Ordinations were not infrequently held here, but there is no record of ordinations here between the years 1469 and 1492, and it may have been in that interval that the new and magnificent chapel, ‘speciosissima capella,’ was erected by Bishop Stillington on and beyond the old chapel, this *vetusta ecclesia* of the thirteenth century and perhaps of Bishop Giso’s time. There is no doubt that we have now discovered the foundations of this chapel of Bishop Stillington’s time, of which you will see the form and dimensions and the architectural history in Mr. Buckle’s plan and paper.

(8). R. i, f. 22. R. i, f. 90. R. i, f. 124.

(9). R. i, f. 127.

(10). R. i, f. 179.

(11). Carta 512.

I have now to prepare the way for the paper of the Dean of Wells on Stillington's history, by giving the documentary notices of his episcopate.

Robert Stillington, was bishop, March 16th, 1466, to May, 1491.

Bishop Stillington's *Register* is a folio of about 250 pages, of which 170 are numbered; the rest, unpagged, contain ordination lists throughout the time of the episcopate, and appendices, viz.: registers of elections of officials. The first is headed: "Decretum electionis decani Wellensis," 1472.

Institutions to rectories, vicarages, chapelries, etc., form the subject matter of pages 1-170. There is little of general historical interest.

These are the most important items.

1.—*f.* 84. Election of Dean.—Chapter petition to elect a dean in place of William Wytham, late dean, September 28th, 1472.

The document is dated from Cheswyk (Chiswick), London diocese.

Licentia concessa, October 5th, 1472. In appendix the text of the decretum is fully given. Dean Gunthorp was elected.

2.—*f.* 84. In that same year Stillington signs another deed, "in hospitio nostro extra barram novi Templi in parochia Sancti Clementis London." (The bishop's house in London.) August 11th, 1472.

3.—*f.* 140 in dors.—Order of Archbishop of Canterbury for celebrating the feast of the Transfiguration, and for making solemn processions with prayer for the tranquillity of the kingdom. April 2nd, 1487.

4.—*f.* 163 in dors.—Certificatio mandati domini archiepiscopi Cantuar. pro declaratione et confirmatione matrimonii domini nostri Regis Henrici Septimi. June, 1490, bishop Robert then "extra suam diocesim in remotis agente."



The marriage of Henry VII with Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, took place January 18th, 1486; the coronation in 1487.

The latter part of Bishop Stillington's register contains the list of ordinations held in the diocese from 1466 to 1490.

The ordinations were held in different places, and by other bishops acting for bishop Robert, who is described throughout as "extra diocesim in remotis agente."

*Places of Ordination.* Between 1466-1469 they were held, among other places, in the "capella beatæ Mariæ juxta claustrum," but never after the year 1469 in that chapel until 1492, the second year of bishop Fox's episcopate.

The other places of ordination were, most frequently the chapel of the hospital of St. John Baptist in Wells: occasionally the Lady chapel in the great church of Wells: also St. Cuthbert's, Wells; St. Mary Magdalene, Taunton; the church of the priory of Bruton; the parish churches of Bishop's Lydeard, Axbridge, and St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol; and once the chapel in the Palace, which is thus described, March 29th, 1483, "capella Sti Marci infra palatium Rev. patris in Xto. Roberti Bathon. et Wellen. Episcop. Wellie situata."

*The ordaining bishops* were: *John* (Cornish) Bishop of Tenos (episcopus Tinensis), from 1466 to 1479. *John* (Alcock), Roffen (Rochester) to 1482. *Thomas* (Barret) Enachdinensis (Enaghdun in Ireland) to 1486, *Thomas* (Cornish) Tinensis until 1490.

These suffragan bishops are thus described in Stubbs' 'Episcopal Succession,' App. 5.

1. *John* "Tinensis"; Canon Regular of St. Austen; Vicar of Devizes; Suffragan of Wells, 1459-1479, died, 1480.
2. *Thomas* Barrett; Bishop of Enaghdun, Ireland; Suffragan of Wells, 1482-1485.

3. Thomas Cornish, "Tinensis Episcopus"; Master of St. John's Hospital, Wells, 1483; Suffragan of Wells, 1486-1513; of Exeter, 1487-1505; Provost of Oriel College, Oxford, 1493; Vicar of St. Cuthbert's, 1497; Chancellor, 1499; Precentor, 1502, died 1513.

The only notices that I have found in the *Chapter Records* of general interest, during Bishop Stillington's episcopate are the following.

a. In the Eschaetor's Roll for 1469, there are the following entries under head of *Receptiones oblationum*.

"De oblat. in nundinis Sti Kalixti nihil hoc anno."

"De xx denariis de oblat. in nundinis S. Andreae."

"Et de ii s. iiii denariis et ob. ex pixide S. Andreae."

"Et de pixide Will. de Marchia nihil hoc anno et ii s. iiii d. et ob. de oblat. in die Paraskeues."

"Et de 5 den. de oblat. in die Pasche."

"Et de x s. de oblat. illustrissimi Regis Edwardi,"

"Et de 5 s. de oblat. illustrissimi Principis ducis Clarancie,"

"Et de 5 s. de oblat. domine Clarancie,"

"Et de 5 d. de oblat. comitis de Barwyke, in capella domini decani: et de ii s. iiii d. de oblat. mortuorum hoc anno."

This notice may tell of a visit of the court of Edward IV to Wells, with his brother, Duke of Clarence, just married to Isabel daughter of Earl of Warwick, and with Warwick.

There is no day or month named in this entry, but it occurs in the Eschaetor's account which closed on Michaelmas, 1470. The visit must have been made between July, 1469, when the Duke of Clarence married Isabel, daughter of Earl of Warwick, and March 31st, 1470, when the King denounced Clarence and Warwick as traitors, and both parties flew to arms.

There is nothing to indicate the course of the progress which the court was making at this time, but, as the "Paston

Letters" show, Edward IV was continually moving about the country. The oblations are made in the "capella domini decani," but carried to the Cathedral account.

Was the King in the Deanery?

Was there a private oratory in the dean's house?

William Wytham was then dean, and until 1472, in which year Dean Gunthorpe succeeded, and extensive changes were made in the house of the dean.

Was the "capella domini decani" one of the chapels in the Cathedral church?

Was it the capella, which was the place of business, the court of the dean's official, where wills were proved, etc.? *e.g.*, in 1403, the will of John Mylwarde of Dinder, was proved before the dean's official, "in capella B.M.V. juxta claustrum" (Charter 512).

Was the "capella domini decani" the same as the "capella B.M. Virginis juxta claustrum"?

*b.* Charter 717. Another document belongs to the later years of Bishop Stillington—his mandate to the archdeacons and clergy to call upon their parishioners to become members of the confraternity of St. Andrew, and to aid the building of the fabric by their benefactions, with the promise of Indulgence of forty days.

The document is in the usual form of episcopal letters missive, in behalf of the fabric.

"Datum in manerio nostro de Dogmersfeld vicesimo die mensis Novembris anno Mcccc octogesimo nono, et consecrationis nostræ anno vicesimo."

The date of the document shows that while in disgrace and in custody at Windsor from 1486 to his death, 1491, he was allowed to go to his manor of Dogmersfield.

There is a fragment of his seal attached.

*c.* On May 15th, 1491, Thomas (Cornish) Episcopus Tinnensis, obtained leave from the Dean and Chapter as the ordinary, to bury bishop Robert Stillington.

(R. ii, f. 34, in dors.)

“Quinto decimo die maii anno domini supradicto circa horam quartam post meridiem in quadam magna prelora infra domum residencie sue habitationis venerabilis viri magistri Johannis Gunthorp decani ecclesie Cathedralis Wellensis, venerabilis pater dominus Thomas dei gratia Tinensis Episcopus venit coram venerabilibus viris magistris, prefato decano, Thome Ouvray precentore, Thome Harries thesaurario, Johanne Austell, Willelmo Bocat, Johanne Vowell, et Johanne Stevens, et licentiam petiit ab eisdem ad exequendum officium circa sepulturam corporis presentis bone memorie Roberti nuper Bathon. et Wellen. Episcopi.

Et tunc prefati decanus et confratres sui unanimi illorum consensu potestatem et licentiam suam ad sepeliendum dictum corpus eidem domino Tinensi Episcopo prebuerunt et concesserunt, protestantes quod in prejudicium statutorum seu laudabilium consuetudinum prefate ecclesie Cathedralis vel suorum aliquid agere vel facere non intendebant.”

The vacancy of the See was declared on May 28th.

(R. ii, f. 35.)

“Vicesimo octavo die Maii anno domini 1491 venerabiles viri magister Johannes Gunthorp decanus, Thomas Harries thesaurarius, Johannes Austell, Willelmus Bocat, Johannes Vowell, Willelmus Chokke, Johannes Hyll, et Johannes Stevens, canonici residentiarii ecclesie Cathedralis Wellen. in domo capitulari ejusdem existentes, et capitulum facientes, unanimi illorum voluntate decreverunt fore denunciandum religiosis viris priori ecclesie Cathedralis Bathon. et ejusdem loci conventui vacationem episcopatus Wellen. et Bathon. per mortem reverendae memorie domini Roberti ultimi possessoris ejusdem, et decreverunt eandem denunciationem sub sigillo eorum emanere ut est moris.”

Among the oblations of that year, in the Eschaetor's Roll, are the following :

“Et de iii s. iv d. de oblat. reverendi in Xto patris et domini Johannis Morton archiepiscopi Cantuariensis.

Et de xx s. de oblat. christianissimi et illustrissimi principis regis Henrici Septimi ad tres vices.

Et de iv s. ob. de oblat. in die sepulture reverendi in Xto patris domini Roberti Styllington nuper episcopi hujus loci.

Et de uno annulo pontificali pretio XL s. proven. de mortuario ejusdem.”

Stillington's chapel, large and costly as it must have been, had not a long existence, and came to an unworthy end.

Godwin gives this account ;

“He built that goodly Lady Chappell in the Cloysters that was pulled down by him (Sir John Gates) which destroyed also the great hall of the palace.

“He died a prisoner in the Castle of Windsor, whither he was committed for four yeeres before his death (for what cause I know not), in the moneth of October, 1487, and was intombed in the said Chappell, but rested not long there ; for it is reported that divers olde men, who in their youth had not onely seene the celebration of his funeral, but also the building of his tombe, chappell, and all, did also see tomb and chappell destroyed, and the bones of the bishop that built them turned out of the lead in which they were interred.”

By the Act of the first year of Edward VI, 1547, all endowments for the support of chantries were to be given over to the king. When the uses for which this chantry chapel had been built were forbidden, and the endowments appropriated by the Crown, the bishop (Barlow) and the chapter, burdened by the responsibility of maintaining the costly fabric, and suffering under the late spoliation of their own property, saw no other

means of dealing with it but to pull it down to the ground. Sir John Gates, the successor to Somerset in the possession of the palace, who had lately despoiled the palace hall of the lead upon its roof, was at hand to enter into a contract to remove the materials from the ground, as if on a building speculation. Accordingly the following remarkable indenture was drawn up, which is extant among the Chapter documents of that time.<sup>12</sup>

“ This indenture made between the ryght reverend father in God Wylyyam by the grace of God Byshopp of Bath and Wells, and the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of the same in the county of Somerset of the one partie, and Sir John Gate Knyght vycechamberlayne to the Kinges Majestie and capytaine of hys graces garde of the other partie Wytnesseth, that we the said Byshopp Dean and Chapter, at the contemplacion of our Soverayne lorde the Kinges Majestie most gracious letters to us dyrected and for the good mynde we beare to the said John Gate have gyven and granted and by this presente for us and our successors do give and grante to the saide Sir John Gate the chapple, sett, lying and beyng by the cloyster on the south syde of the said Cathedral Church of Wells commonly called the Ladye Chapple wyth all the stones and stone work, ledde, glasse, tymbre, and iron of what sorte nature kynde or quality soever the same byn belonging or appertayning to the sayd chapple at the daye and date of this presente (the soyle that the said chapple standeth upon only excepted).

“ In consideration whereof the said Sir John Gate covenanteth and granteth with and to the said Byshopp, Deane and Chapter by hym, hys heyres, executors or assyns, to rydde the grounde that the saide chapple standeth on not only of such ledde, iron, tymbre, glasse and stone that standeth thereupon but also of all such rabble that shall

syse and come of the waste of the sayd chapple and so to make the grounde fayre and playn wythin the space of fouer years and a quarter next ensuyng the date of thys presente.

“And also that yt ys covenanted and agreed between the said partyes that the sayd Sir John Gate, hys heyres, executors, or assyngs, shall at hys proper coste charge repayr and amende, the condyt pypes lying by the syde of the said chapple yf any shall be hurted in the default of hym or any of hys assyns, and that the said Sir John Gate hys heyres, executors, or assyngs, shall always duryng the said terme of fouer years and a quarter keep the severall pytte of the sayd condyte fayr, clene, and open, and so to leve them at the ende of the sayde terme in sych like case as they now byn.

“Furthermore yt ys covenanted and agreed between the said partyes that the sayd Byshopp, Dean and Chapter and theyr successors shall permytt and suffer the sayd Sir John Gate hys heyres, executors, and assyngs to have free ingresse and egressse wyth all manner of carryge for the takynge pullynge down and carying awaye the said chappell and other the premyses and to make ryddance of the sayd grounde duryng the sayd terme of fouer years and a quarter by the great gate in the palace syde commonly called the cammerys gate, without any interruption of the sayd Byshopp, Deane and Chapter or of theyr successors or of any other by theyr meanes procurements consent or agreement.

“In witness whereof the partyes aforesaide to this indenture interchangeably have sett theyr seals given on the xxth day of June in the syxth year of the reyne of our Sovereign lord Edward the Syxth by the grace of God of England, France, and Irelande Kyng, defender of the fayth and of the Church of England and also of Irelande in earth the Supreme Hedd.”—(Signed), JN. GATTES.”

The Charter (No. 773) which contains this indenture is en-

dorsed "20 Junii, A.D. 6 Ed. 6. Towards the Rubbish of the ladies chapel (wh.) stood in the cloisters."

Sir John Gates, implicated in Northumberland's plot, was executed before the time of the contract was complete. The chapel no doubt became a quarry for building-stone and paving roads. Tiles have been found under the roadway in the town. An entry in Ledger D, under 1586, contains the following order:—"No more stones to be taken out of the Camery, except for repairs of Cathedral canonical houses." 'Camera' is the description of the ground around the Church, which afterwards was let out as garden, until late years.