

Reports on the first phase of Cottingham's restoration and one unexpected result of it – the rediscovery of the tomb of John de Sheppey.

(1) *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1825, 76–7

Rochester Cathedral. – Among the numerous improvements now making in our Cathedrals, we are happy to find the Archdeacon, Dean, and Chapter of this truly interesting fabric have determined to restore the interior of the building to its primitive state, as

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far as the existing authorities will allow. Mr. Cottingham, the architect employed on the occasion, commenced the improvements last week by taking down the Corinthian altar-piece, put up at the time of the Reformation, which has brought to view the whole of the original composition of the East end of the choir, consisting of three beautiful gothic arched recesses and windows, in the purest style of the thirteenth century, and on scraping off the white-wash, the decorations of the high altar appeared nearly all in their pristine glory; consisting of birds and beasts, fleurs de lis, lilies, crescents, stars, scroll-foliage, fleury-crosses, lace-work borders, &c. arranged in the most beautiful order, and finely contrasted in the colours, which consist of the brightest crimsons, purples, azures, greens, &c. In addition to this interesting display of architectural elegance, another antiquarian treasure has been discovered of equal curiosity. This is a monument, with the effigies, of one of the early Bishops of Rochester, in his pontifical robes, judged to be of that period when the arts of sculpture and architecture were at their zenith of splendor, the reign of Edward the Third; when every power of the human mind seemed so pre-eminently conspicuous. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the workmanship of the statue before us is so excellently brought forward in the crozier, mitre, and robes, which are tastefully disposed and gorgeously

enriched – the crozier with gilded foliage, and the mitre in diamonded compartments of jewellery work, the execution of which is in the highest degree elaborate. The outer robe is crimson, with gold embroidery and jewels; and the under robe purple, relieved by a vest of a pink colour with gold fringe. The gloves have jewels, and the shoes are embroidered. A part of the architectural decorations of the tomb have also been found; the beautiful carving, gilding, and colouring of which place them among the most perfect specimens of Gothic art. Of this elegant monument and its incomparably fine effigy not the slightest mention has ever been made. It is therefore fair to conclude that to the various able and laborious antiquaries who have written on the antiquities of this Church they were utterly unknown. The intense curiosity excited by these discoveries soon filled the choir with a number

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of gentry in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral. The Dean and several of the Prebendaries were present during the time the workmen were employed in taking down the masonry which enclosed this genuine specimen of ancient art. We understand Mr. Cottingham is engaged in making a perfect restoration of this tomb from the fragments found on the spot; until which time both tomb and effigy will be covered up, in order to prevent their sustaining any damage.

(2) *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sep. 1825, 225–6

Sept. 17.

Mr. Urban,
YOU have already recorded (Part i. p. 76) the discovery in Rochester Cathedral, of the Effigy of Bishop John de Shepey, who died in 1360. Splendid indeed must have been the monument to which the effigy and the disjointed fragments discovered with it belonged (though I entertain great doubts whether the last-mentioned are

at all connected with the effigy). There is a finely preserved statue of Moses holding the tables of the law, on which are singularly enough inscribed the name of the law-giver himself – MOYSES. The remains of the group next this statue appear to have been formed for a holy family, containing reliefs of the Virgin, Joseph, St. Anne, and an angel crowning the former; the whole of this group is dreadfully mutilated. Some beautiful mouldings in frieze, &c. remain in high preservation, and the care taken of them reflects the highest credit on the Dean and Chapter. The tomb on which this effigy now lies, is of inferior workmanship, and differs in length from the effigy. The robes, mitre, and other habiliments of the prelate are superbly coloured, and afford a splendid specimen of the state of the fine arts in that magnificent æra, the 14th century. The discoveries at St. Stephen's Chapel are alone worthy to compete with it. The face is finely coloured; the close shaved beard a most correct

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imitation of nature, supposing the effigy to be a likeness. The Prelate may be imagined to have been a man about forty, with a dark complexion, and handsome features. He held the see about eight years. In the aisle, North of the choir, there is a monument affixed in the wall, which separates it from the choir; it has a lofty single-arched canopy, in which may be seen the remains of foliage closely resembling the mouldings discovered; and though this monument has suffered very much from wilful dilapidations, still the remaining carvings are of the most elegant description. An angel on the wall at the back, in high relief, is nearly perfect, and from the uneven surface of the wall appears to

have formed part of a group. The altar tomb has been broken; the present covering is quite rough and uneven. There is little doubt an effigy was once laid upon it. This tomb was pointed out to me by the vergers, and I think there is great probability in his conjecture, that the effigy belonged to it.

The triple stalls in the South side of the altar nave have been assigned as a monument to this prelate. They are posterior, in point of date, by many years; and our increased knowledge will at this time inform us that they were never intended for a sepulchral monument. The fragments of sculpture now discovered probably formed the decoration of a splendid altar in some part of the Cathedral. The old and ugly oaken altar-screen is removed for ever, and with it a picture of two angels bearing their message to the shepherds on pieces of paper in their hands, the work, I believe, of Benjamin West. One of the angels appears to be of the masculine, the other of the feminine gender; an absurdity too common in angelic representations. It was worthy of the screen it decorated, and it will, I trust, in future occupy an humbler place. The wall which was concealed by the old altar, shows three pointed arches resting on clustered columns in relief attached to the wall, and sustaining a gallery even with the sill of the upper East window fronted with a parapet of pierced quatrefoils. In the intercolumniations are windows, and below each is a cross in a circle painted on the wall. The windows are re-glazed in plain glass, the design

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of which is taken from the Mosaic pavement of an altar in St. William's Chapel. The removal of the old panneling in the choir allows the columns

which support the groined roof and their carved corbels to be seen to perfection; on the walls of the choir, brought to light by removing the wainscot, are a series of painted niches, with columns and entablature, in the taste of the seventeenth century.

The spire, built in 1749, is taken down, and it is in contemplation to case the tower on which it stood with Bath stone, and raise it twelve feet higher, with attached pinnacles at the angles. I think the loss of the spire, poor as it was, will not be compensated by any additions of that description. The tower is not grand enough to stand alone as a decoration of a cathedral. As a pinnacled tower, it will be scarcely grander than a parish church; it could have been rendered an object of eminence only by the spire being rebuilt on a loftier and improved plan. From the appearance of height such an object always possesses, there can be little doubt but that the city would then possess an object far superior to the present tower, in the most improved state in which as a tower it can be placed.

I have mentioned the chief alterations in this Cathedral; the other repairs are merely substantial: when the whole is finished I may have again to address you. E. I. C. <Edward John Carlos>

(3) *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sep. 1825, 226

A more minute description of Bp. Shepey's figure has been furnished by "An Admirer of Ancient Effigies," <Alfred John Kempe> who was present at the discovery.

The Bishop lies in a recumbent posture under an elliptical arch in the North wall of the choir, which wall divides the choir from St. William's Chapel. A large piece of the mitre had been broken off, and the nose, upper lip, and chin, greatly mutilated, evidently by a sword or other sharp

instrument. An extremely beautiful band attached to, and part of the mitre, adorned with an imitation of precious stones, encircles the forehead. The head reposes on two superb cushions with tassels, the face painted of a flesh colour, the hair of the eye-brows distinctly marked, and the pupils of the eyes coloured. The hands of the Bishop, which had lost the fingers, are closed in the act of prayer, and the

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feet (great part of which had been broken off) rested on two dogs, both damaged, the head of one being wanting. The external robe, called the *Dalmatica vestis*, or dalmatic, was decidedly of a pink colour, and represented as lined with some other colour which was scarcely visible: on the robe were figures of a diamond within a square, the collar being most beautifully ornamented. Underneath the dalmatic is the stola, but the elegantly figured and painted border at the bottom is only seen. Under the left arm is the staff of the crozier, the head of which was gone. Round it a napkin beautifully bordered was wrapped, and to this staff the curved part of the crozier was fastened by an iron or brass pin, as the hole appeared in which the pin was riveted; the manipule, adorned with jewels, hangs from the left wrist. The following inscription is round the effigy:

“Hic jacet d’ns Joh’nes Cheppeie epi’s
istius eccl’ie.”

Two drawings were made by a person of the name of Harris, employed by Mr. Cottingham the architect, one of which represents the effigy as it was found, and the other as Mr. Cottingham supposed it to have been, with the features perfect, and the figure highly coloured. After this, Mr.

Cottingham resolved on restoring the colours on the figure, in conformity with the latter drawing, which was accordingly done.

The top of the mitre, nearly all the fingers, the feet, and one of the dogs' heads, have been subsequently found, and joined to the effigy; the mitre is therefore now complete. The painted beard is also an addition, as it was not there when first discovered. The dalmatic, instead of being a pink, is now of a dull scarlet, with a *green lining*, and the shoes are painted *yellow*.

(4) *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sep. 1832, 482

E. I. C. says, "Mr. Kempe having referred to a description by me of the effigy of Bishop Shepey at Rochester, which appeared in your Magazine at the time of the discovery, I am happy to have an opportunity (though somewhat late in the day) of corroborating my former statement respecting the beard of the effigy; it having been stated in your pages that such beard was added after the discovery was made. Now, as I have lately had an opportunity of seeing not only the drawing by Mr. Swaine, which Mr. Kempe exhibited to the Antiquarian Society, but also an elaborate series of drawings by Mr. Cottingham, the architect of the cathedral, I am enabled to state that my observations were accurate, which perhaps at this period I should not have deemed necessary to assert but for the recent reference to my description."