

Hanbury in Staffordshire to Chester and placed in the Saxon Church.

Domesday Book, the record which William the Conqueror compiled of all his subjects' property, tells us something of the clergy who looked after this Saxon Church.

They were not monks for they lived in separate houses. Monks have all their belongings in common and live altogether in obedience to a rule and to the Abbot or head of their monastery.

The Normans were great admirers of monks and Hugh Leepus (Hugh the Wolf) the first of the Norman Earls of Chester, turned St. Werburgh's into an Abbey.

St. Anselm, a very great man, came from the Abbey of Bec in Normandy to help him and it was on his way home from Chester that Anselm, much against his own will was made Archbishop of Canterbury.

More than five hundred years before the founding of the Abbey at Chester, St. Benedict had drawn up, in Italy, his famous book of rules and directions for monks. Picture them, in their black robes, going about the various duties of their daily routine for the Chester monks were Benedictines. We have cause to be grateful to the monks for many things. Some of the Chester monks wrote the Chester Miracle Plays, plays about the Bible which used to be acted round the streets by the trade guilds of the city, and it was in the Miracle Plays that English drama had its beginning.

The greatest period in the history of the Abbey was the end of the 13th century when Simon of Whitchurch was Abbot.

Edward I, who was then engaged in his Welsh wars, was a good friend to St. Werburgh's.

Some of the later Abbots were less admirable people and, whatever may be thought of the methods used by Henry VIII in turning out the monks, the Abbey had certainly lost much of its former discipline and perhaps, in a new age, something of its former usefulness.

However, St. Werburgh's did not become a ruin like so many other Abbeys. It became the Cathedral of the newly-formed Diocese of Chester, the monks being succeeded by the Dean and Chapter, and here is installed the Bishop's Throne. (*Cathedra* is a Greek word meaning Throne). The last Abbot of St. Werburgh's became the first Dean of the Cathedral.

Probably the most exciting time in the history of the Cathedral was during the siege of Chester in the Civil War. On one occasion Charles I was nearly killed on the Cathedral tower.

The building of Chester Cathedral commenced in 1093 in the reign of William II. Parts of the Norman Church of Hugh Leepus and St. Anselm still remain, but most of it has been replaced by work of various periods.

In and around the Cathedral are to be seen evidence of work representing work of every century from Norman times to the present day. The last hundred years have seen extensive work of repair. For centuries the daily services have been carried on here, first by the monks, then by the clergy and then by the Cathedral.

English Cathedrals are justly proud of their great musical tradition and the singing here is particularly beautiful.

The Nave is used for big services. Beyond the screen is the part of the Cathedral called the Quire where the daily services are held. The Cathedral is thus like all old Cathedrals and Abbeys, divided almost into two separate churches. This was more obviously the case, when as in the old days, the Nave was divided from the Quire by a solid stone screen or screens.

Such a solid screen stood till the middle of the 19th century between the pillars nearest to the present pulpit and lectern and the Quire stalls were then immediately behind it under the central tower.

The monks were afraid that the devil would come and peep at them over the screen during their services in the Quire. So, they carved a little devil in chains to frighten him

away. This little chained devil is still to be seen at the bottom of the window immediately above the pulpit.

Chester Cathedral is built in the shape of a Cross and the South transept is a remarkable feature for here the transepts are of very unequal size. The North transept is tiny, but the South transept is immense.

The North transept is the original transept of the Norman Church and could not be extended without pulling down the buildings which were built against it where the monks lived.

So the 14th century monks, when they wanted to enlarge their church and especially to make room for more altars, built this exceptionally large South transept to make up for the fact that they could not extend the North transept.

In doing this they disturbed the parishioners of St. Oswald's parish who had acquired the right of using the old South transept as their parish church. The monks provided them with a new church, remains of which can be seen in the wall of the cinema close to the Cathedral in St. Werburgh Street.

However, when the new South transept was finished the parishioners insisted upon coming back and won their case. Until the middle of the last century the South transept was walled off from the rest of the Cathedral and used as St. Oswald's Parish Church. It is now open to the Cathedral again and contains four chapels.

Behind the High Altar is the Lady Chapel which is reached by going up the north aisle of the Quire. The Lady Chapel was built before the present Quire.

It is the home in the Cathedral of the Mothers' Union and other women's organisations in the Diocese.

At the west end of the Chapel stands the shrine of St. Werburgh, the Saxon Princess—saint after whom the Abbey was named.

Her festival, a special Chester festival on June 21st called the festival of St. Werburgh in the summer is still kept as a great day in the Cathedral.

The present shrine is, of course, much later than her time. It was made in the 14th century and became the chief object of many pilgrimages to Chester.

Some people came in the hope of being cured of their illnesses, some out of devotion to the Saint, many largely for the sake of the outing.

The pilgrimages of the Middle Ages were in many ways very like our modern outings, and here at this ancient centre the pilgrims would purchase souvenirs and little badges which they wore, just as we do today.

A badge now in the British Museum is probably one which could be bought at the shrine of St. Werburgh.

The most popular of all these pilgrimages was that to the shrine of St. Thomas (Thomas à Becket) in Canterbury Cathedral; the background of the first great poem in the kind of English which we speak, Chaucer's Canterbury tales.

One of the carvings in the roof of the Lady Chapel here at Chester, above St. Werburgh's shrine, represents the murder of Becket. A girdle which had belonged to him was among the treasures of Chester Abbey.

There are few places in which it is possible to get such a good idea of the arrangement and appearance of one of the old monasteries as here at Chester. Not only are the Abbey buildings exceptionally complete; they are in good repair and they follow closely the normal standard plan.

These Chester buildings may be taken as typical of the hundreds of monasteries which once existed in England, some now in ruins and some entirely vanished.

Here the Abbey buildings are again in daily use, several of them serving more or less the same purposes as in the days when they formed the monks' house.

For a present-day diocese to have attached to its Cathedral such a splendid range of buildings is, apart from their historic interest, an obvious and practical advantage. In them meetings and gatherings of all kinds are held and hospitality dispensed to those who come from all parts of the Diocese to their Cathedral.

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