

Jot & Tittle

No.123 September 2023



A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.

Editor: Mark Brandon: markandsuebrandon@outlook.com

WEBPAGE: jot-and-tittle.com Please note that all editions will best be available by joining the subscribers mailing list, either via the web-page or by e-mail to the editor.

CADAVER TOMBS - 2

In the last decades of the 13th century, human dissection had been practised in northern and central Italy to help the understanding of the nature and structure of human bodies, and by 1300 it was being used for researching and teaching by anatomists such as Guillaume of Salicet, who was working in Bologna around 1275, and Brunus in Padova in 1252. The late 13th and early 14th centuries were therefore rich times for anatomical research in Europe, with publications by French surgeons Henri of Mondeville, (1306-1320) and Guy of Chauliac (1298-1368), but these are unlikely to have been available in England, where a strict 'no dissection' law prevailed. In 1315, the first public dissection was held in Bologna, but it would take until 1477 for such things to happen closer to home at the University of Paris.

I have a working hypothesis that the sculptors who made the anatomically detailed cadaver tombs found on main pilgrim routes in England, including the two in Salisbury, must therefore have either gone to Italy to train, or were themselves Italians who came to England on commission specifically to make these tombs. Bennett's Will might conceivably contain information on the construction of his tomb. I'm waiting for the National Archives to furnish me with a copy.

I have visited cadaver tombs in churches sited away from main pilgrim routes and interestingly, these are often noticeably less anatomically correct than those on the more well-travelled routes; they have comically long necks or the wrong number of ribs or the details of the fingers and toes are clumsily done. Perhaps the sculptors or masons who made them had seen the finely detailed cadaver tombs on the pilgrim routes of Salisbury, Lincoln, Bury St Edmunds and Winchester and done their best to copy them, one hopes for a somewhat reduced fee!



Figure 4 Unknown Cadaver at St Marys, Stalbridge. Note the elongated neck and the simplistic carving style of the face.

Figure 5 John Baret's cadaver tomb (1467), St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds, on a main pilgrim route. By comparison, correct proportions, detailed expression, anatomically correct



Figure 6 John Baret's cadaver tomb.

St Mary's church is located beside a hugely influential medieval abbey where the Barons met in 1214 and swore an oath to compel King John to accept the Charter of Liberties which led directly to Magna Carta. As such, it was on a central pilgrim route and would have received a lot of visitors.



Figure 7 These images from Baret's tomb show the quality of the sculptor's work. Note the fine lines in the skin of the fingers, the detail of the bones in the hands and the feet, and the definition of the nails.



Figure 8 Sydenham's tomb in Salisbury, also on a pilgrim route, showing the correct number of ribs (7 true pairs), the detailed musculature of the arm and bone detail on the hand.

The great irony of cadaver tombs is that, for all their efforts to demonstrate that status and worldly riches mean nothing once death, the great equaliser, has got hold of you, they were extraordinarily expensive to commission and only the very wealthiest in society could afford them. Edward IV intended to have one. He left instructions in his will of 1475 that "oure body be buried lowe in the grownde, and upon the same a stone to bee laied and wrought with the figure of Dethe"". His wish for a cadaver tomb was never carried out, presumably because the country entered a turbulent phase immediately after his death in 1483 and by 1485 the Crown had moved out of Yorkist hands into Lancastrian ones.

Cadaver tombs can be single, like Bennett's and Sydenham's (showing just the cadaver effigy), or they can be tiered (with a life-like effigy above and the cadaver effigy below). A superb example of a fifteenth century tiered cadaver tomb can be seen at St Mary's in Ewelme, Oxfordshire. It belongs to Alice de la Pole and is the only surviving cadaver monument to a woman in this country.

Alice's tomb is made of high-status alabaster as befits an extraordinary woman who led an extraordinary life, much of it around the high politics of the Wars of the Roses. She was the granddaughter of Geoffrey Chaucer and wife of the Duke of Suffolk and in 1472 was made custodian of Henry VI's defeated Queen, Margaret of Anjou. You have to contort yourself to see them, but there are some beautifully preserved medieval paintings on the roof portion above her cadaver. If you get the chance to visit, do seek out Stephen, Alice's chantry priest. He's a font of knowledge about Alice, her legacy, tomb and chantry chapel.



Figure 9 Alice de la Pole's magnificent 15th century tiered cadaver tomb
 Figure 10 Alice de la Pole's tomb, life-like effigy above...



Figure 11cadaver effigy below
 Figure 12 Medieval painting on the roof of the cadaver effigy
 To be concluded in next edition.

THE LAVINGTON MISSAL

Quentin Goggs writes: A book that fell out of the wall in the Becket Chapel of All Saints Church, West Lavington, sometime in the 1850s

Q The book itself

The Missal is a collection of three, possibly four, sections of the prayer book written on vellum, in Latin, all in accordance with the Use of Sarum. It is small in size, 6" x 4", and about one inch thick. Originally there were two covers but the bottom one is now missing. The top one is of oak covered with doeskin and has a strap of red leather nailed to it. At the other end of the strap is a hole that might have been part of a carrying device.

Of the three surviving sections the first is of fifty nine leaves (or pages). It was written between 1330 and 1340. The second has six leaves of the 13th century and the third twelve leaves of the 15th century. Between the cover and the first section is a fly leaf of the 15th century. It looks as though originally there was a fourth section but this has now been lost. They were bound together towards the end of the 15th century with three twisted leather bands.



The church of All Saints West Lavington, courtesy of The Church of England.

Its Discovery

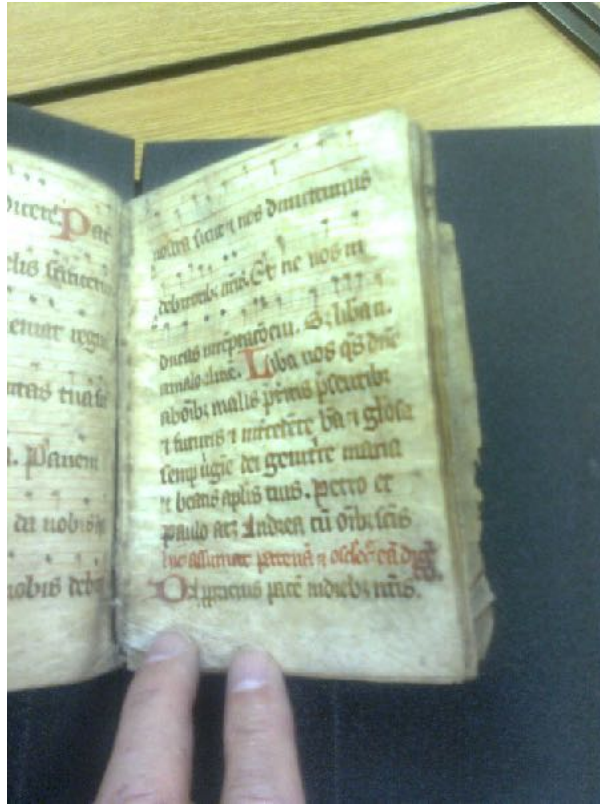
Sometime in the 1850s repairs were being carried out to the walls of the Becket Chapel of All Saints Church in West Lavington. In the course of that work the missal fell out of the wall. It went through a series of ownerships by distinguished private individuals. In 1916 it passed to a Mr Eustace F. Bosanquet whose account of its history and significance forms the basis of this article. It was he who bequeathed it to the Bodleian Library in 1941. He refers to examinations of the document by Sir E. Maunde Thompson, The Rev'd Dr H.M. Bannister and Canon Christopher Wordsworth, a distinguished liturgiologist and brother to John who was Bishop of Salisbury and the founder of Bishop Wordsworth school in 1890.

The exact spot where it was found in the Becket Chapel is unknown; but was likely to have been behind a loose stone rather than walled up completely. If it had been walled up completely the person who did the concealing would no longer have had access, and the want of air and damp would have caused the vellum to decay.

Its form and significance

The Missal is written in Latin and records the Orders of Service according to the Use of Sarum. I describe the Use of Sarum in more detail below; but it was that Order of Service that Henry VIII had to abolish when he was establishing the Church of England as a body independent of the Catholic Church of Rome.

In 1565 Bishop Bentham issued the following injunction in his diocese of Coventry and Lichfield 'All manner of idols, which be laid up in secret places in your church where the Latin service was used, and all manner of books that were used in the church be destroyed: and that you beat down all manner of stones or blocks wherever images were set; and that you do up all manner of hollow places in your chancel or church walls, and that you whitelime your church, and make it decent and fair'.



A picture of the Missal taken by myself in about 2010 when a party from the parish visited the Bodleian Library.

It seems reasonable to assume that something similar was issued by Bishop Jewel in the Salisbury Diocese too. The old forms of service and the Latin language had to give way to the services set out in English in the then comparatively new Book of Common Prayer. But on a more human level, all of us enjoy the routines and objects we have used for many years; and it is easy to understand the reluctance of a priest to jettison everything he and his flock had known in the past. Many, including probably myself, would have wanted to secrete a copy either for personal use or with parishioners when they felt the need. Who knows, but perhaps this was why he walled it up.

Why the book was a binding together of three different sections will also never be properly known; but Canon Wordsworth speculates that the full Church Manual was perhaps too large for everyday use, and that the priest had taken out the excerpts he used most and had them bound together in a format that was easier to carry around.

The Three Sections

The first and longest section sets out forms of service covering four different events, for pilgrims going to Jerusalem either in peace or on a crusade, for the visitation of the sick, for the burial of the dead and, finally, for the departed. The last fifteen leaves (pages) are written in a different hand and contain the prefaces and Canon of the Mass. It was completed between 1330 and 1340.

The second section has been added to complement items missing from the first one. It incorporates six leaves of a 13th century Missal containing the four Votive Masses, with, on the last page, the priest's concluding devotions.

The third portion was taken from some late 15th century missal. Of its twelve leaves eight are a set with the other four added from elsewhere. Two out of the last four have been re-written. Its general condition is poor; and it seems that the end portion may have been cut away. It contains

The Placebo or Evensong of the Dead and the beginnings of Matins ending with the first verse of its second psalm, Ps VI Domine, ne in furore...

The Use of Sarum

After the Battle of Hastings in 1066 William the Conqueror was keen to have Bishops of Norman origin running the church. In 1078 he appointed Osmund, a Norman nobleman, to become Bishop of Salisbury, at that time still known by its Roman name of Sarum. For the previous six years before that Osmund had been William's Chancellor. He was known for his chaste lifestyle; and founded a scholarly, multi-cultural community in Salisbury based on morality and discipline. He initiated the foundation of the first Cathedral at Old Sarum in 1092; and started both the Cathedral library and the Salisbury writing school or Scriptorium.



Illustration from a manuscript Book of Hours titled Horae Mariae virginis (use of Sarum) courtesy of Harvard University and in the public domain.

Spiritually he brought together both the Norman and Anglo Saxon religious traditions; and compiled a new missal, breviary and other manuals that came to be used generally throughout southern England, Wales and parts of Ireland. There were exceptions, e.g. Hereford, York, Bangor and Aberdeen, but what was called The Use of Sarum became the common basis throughout much of the country.

He died in 1099; and unusually was canonised in 1457, 358 years after his death. A stone coffin lid marks the position of his grave in the Trinity Chapel. The Use of Sarum is the pattern of worship developed by Osmund in his time as Bishop. It is all in Latin, probably based on earlier practices in Normandy; and had to be replaced in Anglican churches when the Book of Common Prayer was introduced in English.