



Extracts from the Chapter minutes from 1701 onwards
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TEMPUS FUGIT

I hope you have all read Paul Smith's excellent monograph on the Cathedral clock. I actually understand its workings for the first time. Incidentally, the first literary reference to a clock that struck the hours was Dante Aligheri's *The Divine Comedy*, 1320. The gentleman shown right is Jost Burgieven who is credited with inventing the minute hand in 1577. Now a regular reference for me is *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England* which is full of good things. I was interested to know what use was made of our clock by the townspeople. The main meal of the day was apparently taken between 10:00 am and 11:00 am followed by a lighter supper between 4:00pm and 5:00pm. The Prime bell triggered the opening of shops and permission to start the market.



Before clocks, time was based on the sun and I expect an expertise was built up in being able to make a good guess at the time. In Chaucer's *Sergeant-at-Law's Tale*: *Our host saw that the bright sun had traversed a quarter part, plus roughly half an hour, of the arc it covers from sunrise to sunset.* The host confirms this by noting the length of each tree's shadow is equal to its height implying the sun is at 45 degrees in altitude, which he knows is the equivalent of about ten o'clock in April. When tower clocks (such as ours) arrived, the time was referred to as *hour of the clock* which has been condensed into our *o'clock*. People awoke at daybreak (Prime) and had to be back in the City by Curfew. All this regulated by the Clock's bell but imagine what it was like in London with so many church bells?

SCRIBING

I have in past editions referred to the reputation of the Scriptorium at Old Sarum. Emily showed me an excellent book in the library written as a thesis and called *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral c1075 - c1125* by Teresa Webber.

Teresa points out that Old Sarum was not in the same class as some of the famous monastery scriptoriums where the illustrated manuscripts were works of art. Salisbury tended to use poor quality parchment, were undecorated, contained long lines rather than the usual two columns and bound between un-bevelled boards covered in thinnish whittawed leather. Whittawed I believe is leather that has been Tawed to produce white leather by using alum instead of tannin. Incidentally the quire of parchment was usually pricked down the left and right sides and then, using a ruler and drypoint (stylus), joined to make lines to carry the writing.

Cum esset desponsata
mater eius maria
ioseph. antequam
conuenirent inuenta
ē. in utero habens

Although there was no official house style the scribes used a distinctive form of *miniscule* derived from the Carolingian standard (above) which was used to make Jerome's Vulgate Bible easy to read throughout Europe. Miniscule is lower-case. Each scribe had his own *duct* or distinctive manner, including angle of quill and amount of pressure. By this means Teresa can identify the individual scribes, some 17 in the early days, some of whom had studied abroad. Many documents were completed by more than one scribe. *Osmond himself did not disdain to copy and bind books*. He oversaw the production of at least 50 books/booklets in 20 years.

Osmund (bishop from 1078 to 1099) was at one time Royal Chancellor and probably as one of the Chief Commissioners involved in the *Liber Exoniensis* (Exon Domesday), the land and tax register of the south-west and the earliest extant survey. He may even have been in part responsible for Henry 1's education. The king also summoned his Council to a *Great Gemot* at Old Sarum in August 1086 to administer the *Oath of Sarum* and start the Domesday process.

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

I have just been dipping into Roy Whitehead's fascinating 2006 *Scrapbook of Curiosities*. I was particularly interested in the floor markings at the Crossing, below the tower. There is a small square with a dot in the centre which forms a central datum point from which all measurements were calculated in Francis Price's survey of 1737.

Apparently, it was impossible to drop a plumb line from the apex of the tower so they fixed a staple half way along one side of the octagon, 40' below the spire and near the weather door. The plumb line was tied to the staple and let down to the floor where they excavated a bowl in one of the slabs which was filled with oil to prevent the plumb bob acting like a pendulum. This bowl is now covered by a round copper or bronze plate on which is inscribed a small rectangle. This rectangle marks the half way point on one side of the octagon. The octagon could then be carved into the floor slabs as a good representation of a cross-section of the spire 40' from the apex. (Are you still with me?).

The centre of the octagon was then marked with a brass stud which is the theoretical point at where the apex of the spire should be, 404' above. To the southwest of this stud is a small hole which represents the actual position of the spire apex. The difference is 30" or 0.76 metres. The error would appear to have been caused by the southwestern support column sinking a little lower than the other three. Christopher Wren in 1668 calculated the declination to be 27.5" to the south and 17.5" to the west. In 1736 William Naish came up with 24" to the south and 16" to the west. In 1972 the Clerk of Works came to a figure within 1/8" of Price's.

Incidentally, Colonel John Wyndham in 1684 calculated the height of the spire with the aid of a barometer. He noted that the mercury had dropped 42/100ths at the weather door which was known to be 40 feet from the top of the spire. He thus calculated the height at 404 feet. This was reported by John Aubrey to the Royal Society.

JOHN ELLIOTT WRITES

In my new booklet on the restoration of the Chapter House I described how in the pre-Reformation era the Chapter House was in daily use, and that after Prime all the clergy processed to the Chapter House and the tasks which required to be undertaken were allocated there. This practice ceased after the Reformation. My source was the information Henry Clutton

had gathered when he was researching the history of the Chapter House in preparation for his planned restoration of the building in the nineteenth century. His findings were published in the *Ecclesiologist* in 1855. In addition, I drew on the work produced on the medieval frieze by the American scholar Pamela Z. Blum from the University of Virginia.

Since then I have discovered *The Church of Our Fathers* as seen in St Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury which was written by Daniel Rock (1899 - 1871) and published in 1853, and which probably was the source of Clutton's comments. It provides a much more comprehensive account of how the Chapter House was used. Rock was a leading Catholic theologian who was interested in restoring the ancient medieval practices to the nineteenth century church.

About the Chapter House he wrote:

'In every cathedral and collegiate church, at the end of prime-song, all the clergy went in procession from the choir to the chapter-house, where each one took that seat which by right belonged to him. The bishop, if there, sat in the first place; in his absence, the dean: on either hand came, in due order, the dignitaries; then the canons; in a lower row, the minor canons. The boys stood on the floor, ranged at each side of the pulpit. One of these youths, whose week for such a duty it chanced to be, got up in this pulpit, and read the martyrology, and afterwards gave out the "obits", or remembrance to pray for the souls of those who had once been members of, or benefactors to, that church, and whose deaths had happened that day of the year; and the officiating priest, when the boy had gone through these names, said: *Animae eorum et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum per Dei misericordiam requiescant in pace*. Then came a lecture out of some pious writer; for which purpose, clergyman sometimes bequeathed books to a church, as John Newton did, If any one had been slothful in coming to church for his duties, he had here to ask the forgiveness of his brethren and the dean. After this, if it were Sunday, or a holyday, the same youth read the "board"; that is, he told the names of those among the canons who had to rule the choir, to read the lessons, and chant the responses at matins, to sing the high mass, or minister as deacon and subdeacon; - among the smaller boys, who was to read at chapter, who had to carry the candles, or the holy water, or the book; - and among elder ones, who was to read the long lessons in the chapter-house, who to bear the thurible, or be acolyte, - that is, bring in, in high mass, the chalice with the corporal cloths, during all the week, or while the octave of the occurring festival lasted. To choose out and set down the names of these several officials, was the work of the precentor; and the list itself got called the "table", or "board", because written upon wax spread over a thin piece of wood, which as afterwards left hanging up in the chapter-house, within easy sight of all.

Not only before, but very long after, paper became known, the use of such tablets, which we may call the Wax-brede (see right) was kept on here, as well as abroad, for things of small note, or but a temporary service, and, in particular, for ritual purposes.'

In addition, Rock undertook a major comparison of the liturgy in the Sarum Rite and that which had



existed in Anglo-Saxon times and concluded that, to a very large extent, Osmund had not changed the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, though he had made a few limited changes on special feast days and to certain of the services.

In the medieval period it appears that Salisbury had a large contingent of script writers who transferred the new liturgy into service books which were in demand across the UK. One of these scribes was possibly responsible for producing the Salisbury Magna Carta where the handwriting is different from the other surviving Magna Cartas. However, if Daniel Rock is correct and the Sarum liturgy was little different from what went before, why was there a special interest in it? What uniqueness did it possess to thrust it to the forefront? More anon.

THE WEB

I have come across some interesting webpages that are useful for research.

English Heritage: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/old-sarum/history/sources/>

This site shows the primary sources of what is known about Old Sarum, including the Cathedral. I learned two things, firstly that they refer to the *Old Sarum Customary* which describes the duties of the clergy and its liturgy - what we know as the Sarum Rite. The second is that Royal approval for the move to New Sarum was given as early as 1194.



Raking Light: <https://rakinglight.co.uk/uk/exeter-street-salisbury-wiltshire/>

This site has some good photos of graffiti on the outside of the Close wall in St. Nicholas Road and Exeter Street, including the two shown here. I did not realise that it was as late as 1331 before the King (Edward III) gave the Dean and Chapter the stone from the Norman cathedral. Some of the marks are in the form of an overlapping double V which is believed to stand for *Virgo Virginum*, asking for the protection of the BVM.

