



Extracts from the Chapter minutes from 1701 onwards
Mark Brandon markandsuebrandon@outlook.com

EPIGRAPHY

I have mentioned before about the Medieval scribes using Tironian Notes (Shorthand) and that the 7 in Magna Carta is the symbol for 'et' (and). I tried to discover the derivation of more symbols and found myself in a different world which taxed my Latin and grammar to well beyond the limit. Scribal abbreviation is really a separate branch of Palaeography and extremely difficult to put into simple words; they even have their own vocabulary which includes minuscule, sigla, ligatures, macrons and tildes (now used for the 'ny' sound in Spanish). For the enthusiast there is even an App - *Abbreviations™ Online* – Medieval Abbreviations on the Web in which you can use your 'phone to help translate documents.

A macron is a suspension mark, some form of line above a word, that usually indicates a missing *m, n, i* or *ion*. A tilde is a curled macron and usually denotes a missing *a*. A symbol looking like a 9 denotes a missing terminal *us* or in the middle of a word a missing *e* or *er* - and this is just scratching the surface! The ostensible reason for scribal abbreviations was that parchment was so expensive but I think it rather developed a life of its own. It was almost a secret language that excluded all but the cognoscenti. In fact in later Medieval times it was regarded as related to witchcraft and so fell out of favour.

When I talk to visitors they often mention the ampersand. The logogram & in fact means *and per se* or *and by itself and*. Recitations of the alphabet would conclude with the '27th letter' *and per se and*, which became slurred by the nineteenth century to *ampersand*. Incidentally, the ampersand can be traced to the Carolingians in the 1st Century but it was superseded in early Medieval times by the Tironian 7, with the situation reversing when printing became standardised. The Irish however still use the 7, no doubt due to their large monastic influence.

REFORM

I am going to start by quoting from British History on-line: A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 3. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1956. 'The biggest changes in revenues and organisation ever made in the long history of Salisbury chapter were imposed by the Cathedrals Act of 1840. In comparison the Reformation changes appear conservative in the extreme. Yet continuity in cathedral life was maintained. Moreover, the survival of the cathedrals was due not solely to the effectiveness of parliamentary intervention, but largely to reforms and new ideas of the purpose of a cathedral expressed from within. Administrative reforms had already begun in the late Georgian Church, and the influence of the Oxford movement became powerful at the cathedral in the late 1830's.

The first two of the four royal commissions which investigated conditions at the cathedrals in the 19th century were concerned almost solely to discover how large a part of their revenues could reasonably be taken from them to establish new parishes in the industrial towns and to supplement the stipends of the poorer parish clergy. The first commission, inquiring into Ecclesiastical Revenues and Patronage, concluded that the net income of the whole church was under £3,500,000 a year, of which the bishoprics had about £157,000, and the cathedral and collegiate churches about £284,000; the second, investigating Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues, decided that the most drastic transfers of cathedral property to a central Ecclesiastical Commission could produce only about £134,000 a year for use in the parishes. Salisbury was among the chapters whose revenues were tending to decrease, because of the agricultural depression. From being one of the richest English chapters in the Middle Ages it had by 1835 become one of the poorest, at least in the yield of its common fund.'

In 1836 Berkshire was removed from the Diocese and given to Oxford whilst Dorset was added to Wiltshire.

The EC started by asking for a list of the Chapter's *Impropriations* (laymen in possession of a benefice), location, rack-rent (extortionate) or lease for years or lives, and are the tithes commuted? I won't go into the detail now but many leases were set up for a number of tenant's lives not number of years. Secondly, the EC proposed to transfer the Dean and Chapter's patronage to the Bishop - an idea that was strongly rejected in April 1836. Memorials (memos) were sent to the EC expressing *surprise and regret* about the loss of privileges, emphasising that they went back to *The Conquest*.

The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury convene a meeting to discuss the EC proposals and in July 1836 two Archdeacons are sent as representatives. As a result, in the October, both Houses of Parliament are petitioned on the subject of patronage. Then in the following January a four and a half page memorial was sent to the EC accusing them of not being representative of all ecclesiastical interests. The existing system *maintained a well-ordered gradation in our ecclesiastical institutions. It was exceedingly pernicious to the Church to reduce the number of Canons and Prebendaries. Also, if canonries were sold, improper persons would not be excluded from the Close!!!. No provision was being made for the sustentation of the venerable fabric of the Cathedral; whereas currently the Chapter were subject to an eighth part of dividends to the fabric. Fifty copies of the above were printed and sent to the other chapters in the country.*

Interestingly, according to the Clergy of the Church of England Database: *Only Lichfield and York were poorer than Salisbury among old foundation cathedrals in terms of their common fund; on the other hand the dean's income was only surpassed by that of his equivalents at St Paul's and Lincoln.*

HISTORICAL CHANGE

Two other trends were very much on the Chapter's radar at this time. Emancipation of the Catholics and the demographic change brought about by the industrial revolution.

In 1850 they wrote to Queen Victoria as Defender of the Faith: *Diffusion of sound scriptural education among all classes of your Majesty's subjects will be the most effectual means under Divine Blessing of opposing corrupt doctrines, the superstitious practices and the spiritual tyranny of the Church of Rome.* It was noted in the minutes that the Precentor declined to add his name to the document

1843: *It was resolved that the Chapter Seal be affixed to a petition to the proper authorities praying the immediate establishment of a Bishop of Manchester.*

1853: A Royal Commission of Archbishops, Bishops, Senior clergy and Lords (including Winston Churchill, Marquis of Blandford, Conservative cabinet minister and grandfather of our Winston). *Further extending the efficiency and usefulness of the Established Church.* Extending the means of public worship and religious education and in enforcing ecclesiastical discipline. This resulted in the construction of new Sees.

PAST THE POST

In 1864 it was minuted that *the Post Master General has sanctioned the erection of a pillar box for the inhabitants of the Close and it is proposed that the letterbox shall be cleared three times daily; except on Sundays.* Unfortunately this was not our Blind Postmaster who was not given the position until 1880.