

By MR. NEVINSON: a coin which was supposed to be a Nuremberg token, but not of the usual type, found in the churchyard of All Saints', Leicester.

By MR. BARWELL: an ancient tile found in Cank Street, Leicester, apparently heraldic, but too much abraded to be decyphered; also a half-crown of William and Mary, a half-crown of Charles I., and a small bronze coin of Constantine, in good preservation.

MR. NORTH, F.S.A., contributed the following Paper upon

THE MAYOR'S SEAT IN THE CHURCHES OF LEICESTER.

BEFORE the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835, it was usual for the Mayor of Leicester, as well as of most other Corporate towns, to attend Divine Service in the church of the parish in which he resided. He went in state, preceded by the mace-bearer, and attended by his brethren the Aldermen, and by the members of the Council all attired in their official robes. This attendance of the Mayor in the Leicester churches, as the Chief Magistrate of the Borough, necessitated—as conducive to order, and to a due recognition of “the powers that be”—the setting apart of a special seat for his use upon those occasions. We accordingly find that in each parish church of Leicester there was not only “The Mayor's Seat,” with an arrangement by which the mace could be set up at his back or over his head, but, in one case at least, a seat for the Mayoress, and others for the Aldermen, and for the “Forty-Eight,” as the Councillors were then called. As most of these seats have in late years been removed, it appeared that a record of their positions accompanied by a few brief notes might not be out of place as a contribution to the Transactions of this Society. S. Martin's, as the central church in the town, first claims attention, but as I may have rather more to say about that than some of the others, I will place it last on my list.

S. MARGARET'S CHURCH.—The situation of the Mayor's seat here was against the second pillar from the east on the south side of the nave. It was of oak, classical in design, and capped by a pediment. It was removed about twenty-five years ago, and was, it is believed, destroyed.

S. MARY'S CHURCH.—The Corporation being the Lay Rectors of this parish, the Mayor's seat here was placed within the chancel. It stood against the north wall a little way from the western end. It appears to have been taken down about the year 1845, when the restoration of the church was commenced, and it was not preserved.

In the accounts of the Chamberlains of the Borough for the year 1649-50, I find a payment to Thomas Cartwrite "for mending the place for the newe mace att St. Marie's Church."

It is well-known that each Mayor of Leicester, after his election, attends a Court of the Duchy of Lancaster, at the Royal Castle of Leicester, and there, before the Constable (or his deputy) appointed by the Crown as representing the ancient Earls of Leicester, makes oath as to the pre-eminence of the Duchy. It was customary for the Mayor to go in state with the mace borne before him. This symbol was carried erect until the gateway leading into the Castle yard was reached, when the mace was lowered or "sloped" in recognition of the supremacy of the Royal authority, and was so carried whilst within the immediate precincts of the Castle. This custom was never agreeable to the Corporation of Leicester, and when it was sought—as it was occasionally—to be enforced upon the Mayor whenever he appeared officially within any portion of the Newarke, it was stoutly, and generally successfully, resisted. Upon one occasion an altercation appears to have taken place respecting the observance, which has an immediate reference to the subject now before us. It is well told in the Hall Book of the Corporation under date of 8th October, 1678. "Whereas Henry Dyson, Gen., did upon Sunday last, being the sixth day of this instant October, stop Mr. Mayor as he was going to hear divine service at his Parish Church of St. Mary in Leicester, and caused the sergeants and mace-bearer (after an unusual manner) to sloop their maces, and also when they came to y^e church door, and would not suffer the great mace to be sett up in the case where it usually did hang. It is ordered at this Hall that if Mr. Dyson shall ever hereafter offer the like affront, Mr. Mayor shall consult with persons learned in the law, in what manner y^e Town may proceed to vindicate their Ancient Rights and Privileges."

S. NICHOLAS' CHURCH.—The Mayor's seat here stood against the wall which then blocked up the eastern arch on the north side of the nave. It was of oak, in the Jacobean style, but with a pediment of a later date. The carving was good, but painted. It was removed when the church was restored, and the arch opened about two years ago.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH.—The seat here originally stood against the north wall of the north aisle, rather eastward of the middle. It has now (since the restoration of the church) been placed against the same wall more eastward, and so almost adjoining the tower arch. It can there be seen. There is nothing attractive in its design, being "Carpenter's Gothic" with cherubs' heads and ornaments in composition.

S. GEORGE'S CHURCH.—This church, which was consecrated in 1827, is the only modern church in Leicester which possesses a Mayor's seat. It stands against a pillar about the middle of the south side of the nave.

S. MARTIN'S CHURCH.—The Mayor's seat in this church stood against the first pillar from the east on the south side of the nave. It was removed when the church was re-seated about twenty-four years ago, and a portion of it now forms the seat in the Archdeacon's Court at the east end of the great south aisle. It is of oak, in the classic style. Two Corinthian columns support a rounded pediment in which are the Royal arms. This being the central church of the town, and being more closely connected officially with the members of the Corporation than any other, it might be supposed that special care would be taken to provide here ample accommodation for them when attending divine service. This supposition is found to be correct by several entries in the local and parochial records relating to the official seats erected in this church. It appears from these records that not only was there a seat here for the Mayor, but one for the Mayoress, and others for the Aldermen, and for the members of the Council. The first notice I find of these seats in S. Martin's Church is in the accounts of the Churchwardens of that parish, who under date of 1547-8 say:—

“Itm p^d. for mendynge Mestres Mayrye seyt..... iiiij^d.”

In the accounts of the Chamberlains of the Borough for the year 1551-2 are these entries:—

“Itm p^d. to John Wryght for payntyng in Mr. Meres
Chappell for the Mace xij^d.
“Itm p^d. to Robert Hore for an yorne (iron) to hang the
mace in ther iiiij^d.”

If anything more is meant here than the usual official seat, I incline to think that “Mr. Mayor's Chapel” was at the eastern end of the great south aisle. It was there the altar of the Guild of Corpus Christi stood, the Guild which in pre-Reformation times owned, and used, for its own purposes, the Guild Hall, which has now, for so many years, served the purpose of a Town Hall for Leicester. What more natural than that the Corporation having, upon the suppression of the Guild, purchased the Hall for municipal purposes, should also occupy, in some way, the chapel where formerly the altar of the Guild stood, and where its priests served? This is called in the Churchwardens' accounts

“o^r lady’s quere,” and moreover in that choir the Mayor and others used to assemble on “Palm Sunday” to audit the Wardens’ accounts. In 1553-4 the Churchwardens charge:—

“Itm̄ p^d. to Mr. Manbe for ix yards & half of sey* for
Mr. Mayres seate and Mestres Mayrs x^s. iij^d.
“Itm̄ p^d. to Mr. Heyrek for a red skyn for the same .. x^d.”

In 1561-2 sixteen-pence was paid for “garnyssyng of Mr. Mayres sete.” In 1569-70 “a matt in Mayr’s seat” cost fourpence, and in 1583-4 the seat was “trimmed” at a cost of eight shillings and sixpence.

In 1586-7 I find the first mention of the Aldermen’s seats in this church. The Churchwardens say: “Paments for the Mayor’s brethrens’ Chappell,” and amongst other payments charge:—

“Imprimis paid for tenn yarde of seellinge to Henrye
bringhurste at ij^s. the yard xx^s.
“Itm̄ for viij yarde and a q. and a dq. (8³/₈ yards) of
green flannell at xj^d. the yard vij^s. viij^d.
“Itm̄ payd red lether to set the same on the seats ... vj^d.”

There are charges for “a seat dore,” “hingels for the chappell dore,” &c.

Most of the seats in the church were then probably simple benches with uprights at the ends. The Aldermen, however, were provided with desks for their books:—

“Itm̄ for a deske borde to lay there bookes on vj^d.”

And, as marking the degeneracy of the race, or the length of the sermons—

“Itm̄ for two peeces to leane there bakes to viij^d.”

The next reference to the official seats here points to a provision for the members of the Council, or the “Forty-eight” as they were generally called. It is under date of 1593-4:—

“7 Nov., 1593. Itm̄ paied to Willm Greene for iiij^{or}
dayes worke and his boy in and aboute the makinge
of the seats for the xlviijth iij^s. iiij^d.”

In 1614-15 the Churchwardens charge:—

“Itm̄ payd for a matt for the Chamberlyn’s sheate ... ix^d.”

* I suppose Say, a thin silk.

Mr. Mayor's seat appears to have been furnished up in 1627-8, when the Churchwardens paid sixteen shillings for "gilding and triminge" it.

When King Charles the First and his Consort visited Leicester in the summer of 1634, the Churchwardens of S. Martin made great preparation to receive him in their church on Sunday the 10th of August. They cleaned, painted, and whitewashed the church, painted the King's arms, purchased rushes to spread on the floor, and "boughs" to decorate the building. They not only removed two rows of ordinary seats, but also the Aldermen's seats, to make room for a proper seat for the King, which they provided with a cushion, upon which was placed a "Comon prayer booke" which cost fifteen shillings, and a bunch of flowers which cost fourpence. After the King's departure, the Aldermen's seats were replaced.

The last circumstance connected with the Mayor's seat in S. Martin's Church I would mention is a melancholy one, which, however, gave rise to a question of etiquette as to the use of the seat, and the position therein of the mace. It is told very clearly in the Hall Book (page 713). I am indebted for this extract (not having it amongst my own) to Mr. Kelly's interesting Paper on *The Great Mace*, p. 33-4.

"Memorandum—that upon Wednesday, the 17th day of November, 1658, Mr. Samuel Wanley, Mayor, dyed.

"Thursday, the 18th of November.

"This day divers of the Ancients that had been Mayors mett att the Guild Hall, to advise what was fitt to bee done as to the Eleccion of a new Mayor, and how things should be carryed on in the meane time, and agreed that Mr. Richard Ludlam, being the senior Justice, should bee in the nature of a Deputy Mayor until the Eleccion of a new one, and should have the Mace carryed after him, lying upon the Mace-bearer's arme,

"Friday, the 19th of November.

"Both Companies appearinge att the funerall accordinge to invitation, the funerall proceeded thus:—

"The Two Sergeants att Mace, having their Maces covered with blacke Tifany,* went before the Corpes, Mrs. Wanley being led by her Sonne, and attended by the Town Clerke; and divers Mourners followed the Corps, and after them the Aldermen, Gentry, and the Forty Eight.

"The body being interred, Mrs. Wanley, attended as before, returned into the Maiorress her seate, it being hung with mourninge, and the greate Mace was carried into, and laid downe in the Mayor's Seate, it being likewise hung with mourninge; Mr. Ludlam sitting

* Called "Tayfetta" in old records: a thin silk.

alone in the next seate to it; and the Sermon being ended, was carried after Mr. Ludlam to his house and lodged there and Mrs. Wanley returned to her house attended as before.

“The Lord’s Day, being the 21st day of November.

“Mr. Ludlam went to the Church, attended by the Mace Bearer, where he sat as on Friday before, the Mace lying as before, Mrs. Wanley, attended by the Town Clerk and Mourners, went to Church and satt in the Mayores(s’) seate, it still continuing covered with blacke.”

On the following day Mr. William Franke was elected Mayor for the remainder of the term.

May 29th, 1876.

THE REV. J. H. HILL in the chair.

The following NEW MEMBERS were elected:—The Right Honourable the Lord de Clifford, and Dr. Mutch, M.R.C.S.

The Right Honourable the Earl Howe, and The Right Honourable the Lord de Clifford were elected Vice-Presidents of the Society.

The following antiquities, &c., were exhibited:

By MR. G. H. NEVINSON: Five Roman coins (Maximianus, Constantine, &c.) and a weight, all found in Leicester. Also a button of copper plated with silver, inscribed “Loyal Leicestershire Volunteers.” Silver coin of Charles II. (For Mr. T. Nevinson.)—An encaustic tile, found in the excavations for S. Leonard’s Church, Leicester, being on the site of the ancient church destroyed in the Civil Wars. The tile was remarkable for its unusual size, having been, when perfect, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches square. It was of a red colour, the pattern being left in relief, and the ground being filled in with green glaze. The pattern was a shield (set anglewise) in a square of five inches, the bearings being a cross potent between four Maltese crosses, the two upper ones being larger than the lower ones. The corners of the square were filled in with foliage in relief. The broad border beyond the five inch square was quite plain.

By MR. HUNT: a manacle of the early part of the seventeenth century, found in an old bureau at Smockton, March, 1876.

By the CHAIRMAN: a large paper illustrated copy of Blore’s East Hundred of Rutland.