GADDESBY: A DECORATED CHURCH IN ITS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

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This article places the Decorated work at the church of Gaddesby in both its architectural and social context. The architectural context is pursued through a detailed consideration of the form of the buttress, which leads to connections between Gaddesby and the chapel of Merton College, Oxford. These connections are related to the social context, specifically to the career of Robert de Gaddesby. This professional administrator carried out a number of important roles, being steward for the Merton estates at Kibworth Harcourt and also at times steward for the Earl of Leicester. He also held a number of other official positions and, though the patronage of Roger Belers, was connected to the Despenser family during their period of influence over Edward II. These connections enabled de Gaddesby to accumulate considerable wealth, much of which was lavished on the church and contributed to its fine architectural heritage. Gaddesby is thus an intriguing example of the rise of secular administration and its influence on cultural developments.

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to put the Decorated work at the church of Gaddesby in both its architectural and social context. Accounts which seek to do this for churches of the period are surprisingly rare. An exception is the exemplary (but unfortunately unpublished) consideration by Veronica Sekules of the church at Heckington, Lincolnshire. She places the unexpected scale and architectural sophistication of this rural church, together with the cosmological scheme revealed through close analysis of the abundant sculptural images, in the context of the incumbency of Richard de Potesgrave and his patron Isabella de Vesci. Potesgrave was a King’s Clerk during the troubled reign of Edward II, an advisor so trusted that he led the funeral procession at Tewkesbury in 1327. A similar connection is claimed by John Quarrell in his discussion of the rich imagery in the chancel of Hawton, Nottinghamshire, including its famous Easter Sepulchre. He suggests that this can be attributed to Thomas de Sibthorpe, another of Edward II’s King’s Clerks. The emphasis in the cosmological scheme on martyrlogy can be related, Quarrell argues, not only to the putative cult of Edward as martyr, but also to the

tribulations of Sibthorpe in the years of Mortimer’s control of power. Similar connections to national political events can be made in the case of Gaddesby, but this time to secular rather than clerical administration.

This article suggests that the magnificence of the work at Gaddesby owes much to the career of Robert de Gaddesby, a career of not only skilled estate administration but also of involvement with key figures in the Despenser camp. By 1320 Sir Hugh Despenser the Younger had become influential in the affairs of King Edward II, influence which was to cause considerable turmoil during the 1320s, as we will see below. That Gaddesby was successful in profiting from this connection, and in avoiding the potentially dire consequences, may have much to do with both the existence and form of the church in his home village. This contention is made on architectural, social and political grounds. The architectural evidence is considered first. The case for the distinctiveness of the built form is made through consideration of an often neglected feature, the buttress. This requires a brief diversion into the development of the form and function of buttresses, a diversion justified by the ways in which it enables a link to be drawn, on aesthetic grounds, between the work at Gaddesby and that at Merton College, Oxford.

This architectural connection can be supported in the historical record by the Gaddesby family’s stewardship of the Oxford college’s Leicestershire estates at Kibworth Harcourt. This connection to important royal circles can then be linked to the complex politics of the reign of Edward II, in particular to two important Leicestershire supporters of the Despenser cause, Roger Belers and Edward Segrave. The deserting by men like these of the cause of the Earl of Lancaster (also, of course, Earl of Leicester) gave an additional edge to traditional local rivalries like that with the notorious Folville family, not only Lords of the Manor of the neighbouring village of Ashby Folville but also feudal superiors of half of the manor of Gaddesby. These factors, it will be suggested, may explain why the Gaddesby family channeled their considerable wealth into the conspicuous display that is their village church. The case of Gaddesby, therefore, is an important one of the development of secular administration in the context of political instability. However, we need to start with a brief description of the church.

ARCHITECTURE: TRACING PATTERNS VIA BUTTRESSES

Gaddesby is situated ten miles south west of Melton Mowbray in the lush pastoral north east corner of Leicestershire. It shared in the prosperity of the wool exporting trade of the area in the thirteenth century. The church was an important dependent chapel of Rothley, located centrally in Rothley’s extensive but fragmented parish. Although a chapel, because of its location it possessed all the functions of a parish church. The village was also economically important to Rothley, being the site of a grange, land directly farmed to supply the Knights

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Templar who held the manorial rights at Rothley until their suppression in 1307. The rights held by the Templars to a market at Rothley were transferred to Gaddesby in 1306.\(^4\) The manorial rights of Gaddesby were shared between the Crown and the Folvilles of Ashby Folville. This split ownership and dependent position makes the magnificence of the church even more in need of explanation.

It is the exuberance of the west front of the south aisle which makes the church of national remark. The architectural history of the church was outlined by Albert Herbert in 1923, who supplied the floor plan reproduced in Fig. 1.

This plan was extended by David Parsons who, based on surviving internal evidence, suggested that the church was sub-divided into self-contained chapels in both aisles, making the area available to the parishioners limited to the nave.\(^5\) He suggested that the south aisle was split into two chapels, with the western of these having the status of a private chapel entered by the west door. The extent of this chapel is marked by the finely worked limestone ashlar which stands in contrast to the ironstone of the eastern bays of the aisle. The west end of the aisle is covered in exuberant carving with many niches (Fig. 2).

At its centre it features a window in the shape of a spherical triangle, linked into the door below it with a curving string course. Herbert suggests that the carved head of a female wearing a gorget on a hood mould on the south aisle dates this work to the reign of Edward I (‘say 1290–1307’).\(^6\) He further suggested that the south west doorway itself is earlier than this at about 1280 but then suggested a staged process. ‘A close examination of the wonderfully rich canopy work’, he argued, ‘suggests that added elaboration was carried out subsequent to its original construction. The date of the upper portion, including tabernacle work and embattling, is about 1330.’\(^7\) This was then followed by the ‘ox-eye’ window that is such a dominant feature of the west end, connected as it is to the doorway by elaborate strings. This dating is supported by the second edition of the Buildings of England, and we also have to bear in mind the much more restrained but still imposing north aisle, suggested by Pevsner as dating from between 1330 and 1350.\(^8\) This is a design of considerable sophistication, achieving its effect by careful articulation of design elements rather than by the overwhelming exuberance of the south aisle. It is one of these design elements, the buttress, that leads us from Gaddesby to Oxford.

One of the limitations of any account based on architectural elements is that our evidence is based on survivals. This has two problems. One is that examples might not have survived, so that our conclusions might be based on partial

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\(^6\) Herbert, 1923–4, as n. 4, p. 247.

\(^7\) Herbert, 1923–4, as n. 4, p. 252.

Fig. 1. Plan of Gaddesby from Herbert, 1923.
Fig. 2. West front of south aisle, Gaddesby, showing rich Decorated work.
Fig. 3. Comparative buttresses.
evidence. The second is that those examples that have survived may represent the attentions of Victorian restorers. These caveats need to be borne in mind in the following discussion. The literature also has limitations in that the buttress is rarely discussed. The following account is therefore a synthesis of elements from the literature and observations based on the built record, especially that of the East Midlands. However, there is enough evidence to indicate the distinctiveness of the buttresses and the design at Gaddesby.

The structural function of the buttress enabled a greater proportion of the wall to be devoted to windows. This meant larger windows with more complex tracery. The development of the buttress from the shallow pilasters of the Romanesque saw it gain increasing bulk and depth, with stepped projections protected from weather damage by sloping covers. A typical example is that in Fig. 3a, from the Decorated south aisle at Ashby Folville. This pattern of buttress is by far the most common to be encountered on English medieval churches of all periods. However, as designers became more comfortable with the structural possibilities brought by the buttress, they also began to pay attention to its possibilities as an object of decoration and design in its own right.

One manifestation of this shift is the appearance of the gabled buttress, as in Fig. 3b. This example is from the north aisle at Hallaton, Leicestershire, a major early fourteenth-century construction in another market centre, likely to have been inspired by the desire to commemorate the local cult of a saint. This example simply takes the stepped buttress and finishes with a gable. The distribution of buttresses along the length of the aisle also seems determined by structural requirements. However, a cluster of chancels in Nottinghamshire, at Woodborough, Sibthorpe and Hawton (Fig. 3c), show further developments. Here the buttresses are taken up to the roof line and divide the chancel into even bays. They are an integral part of the overall design, giving verticality by their scale. They remain simple in decoration, however, unlike the examples at Newark and Heckington (Fig. 3d). These examples feature a niche under a gabled canopy at the level of the window springer as well as a gable at their termination. These more elaborate examples can be related to more general design elements which Sekules characterizes as ‘casket-like’. That is, elements found in small items such as jewelry caskets are carried through on larger scale into tomb design and, notably, the Eleanor Crosses created on the command of Edward I. As Bony points out, this was part of


12 Sekules notes the strong similarity between these buttresses but suggests that internal evidence indicates these ‘are parallel developments by a related group of masons, rather than the work of one mason moving from one building to another’: Sekules, as n. 1, p. 64.
that fin de siècle romanticism which flared up everywhere, and especially in England, in the 1280s and 1290s. The fanciful marginal scenes and spiky arabesques of the Tenison Psalter, the heraldic displays of Kirkham Gatehouse and of the Westminster tombs, the crenellated cornices and oriental ogees of the Eleanor Crosses are all part of a style of life that had been prepared by the open-mindedness and curiosity fostered by the ever-widening international connections of the reigning families and of the aristocracy.13

Sekules notes that this trend was particularly associated with the court and notes the chapel at Merton College as a specific example, a building to which we will return.14 In these examples, the buttress plays an important part in articulating the overall design. It has moved from being a simple structural component to being an integral part of a design which is deliberate rather than organic in development.

If we now turn to the Gaddesby buttresses we can see their distinctiveness on a number of levels. This can be seen most clearly in the north aisle, in which the buttresses play a central role in a composition which bears many of the marks of a casket design. What is particularly distinctive about the buttresses is the positioning of the twin gables. One set is at the level of the foot of the windows, with a moulding running the length of the aisle to tie these elements together. The second gable is at the springer of the window arch, again tied in to a moulding which runs above the window heads. The buttresses then continue past the battlemented roof line to terminate in crocketed pinnacles. Part of the distinctiveness is thus how the buttresses articulate the rhythm of the façade, the key elements of which are illustrated in Fig. 4.

If we compare this to two other significant Decorated aisles in Leicestershire this role becomes clearer. We have already noted the substantial north aisle at Hallaton, an aisle also constructed of limestone in an area where the common building material is ironstone. Here the aisle feels organic rather than designed, with no attention to symmetrical placing of elements. By contrast, there is clear attention to design in the aisle at Stoke Golding (Fig. 5). Here there is also a continuous moulding which runs between and over windows. Unfortunately this draws attention to the different heights of the windows, giving a rather clumsy feel. There is no clear relation of this moulding to the buttresses, which do not play the same role in delineating individual bays.

If we are to look for a comparator for the overall design and the individual elements of the north aisle at Gaddesby then this is to be found in the chancel at Merton College, Oxford. This is clearly earlier work as can be seen both in the window tracery and the proposed dating of c1296. However it is the detail of the buttresses and of the overall design which is important (Fig. 3f). Not only are there two gables with the lower being in a similar position to its equivalent at Gaddesby,

14 Sekules, as n. 1, p. 65.
but the upper gable is tied in to the windows by a moulding. As we have seen, this is a distinctive combination and one which it is hard to trace elsewhere. The standard works have no other examples of the positioning of a lower gable. In the local built record only one example comes close and this in a much more vestigial form. Intriguingly this is at the church of Kibworth Beauchamp (Fig. 3g), nearest parochial church to Merton’s Leicestershire estates at Kibworth Harcourt. This aesthetic connection is given added weight by the fact that the Gaddesby family supplied estate stewards here during the period and it is here that we turn from architectural to social and political history.

**ESTATE ADMINISTRATION AND NOBLE PATRONAGE**

Cicely Howell, chronicler of the Merton College estates in Leicestershire, reports a Robert de Gaddesby as the steward of college lands at Kibworth Harcourt and Barksby at two periods, from 1295 or earlier until the second decade of the
fourteenth century and again from 1323 to 1345.\(^5\) Given that we know that the
Robert Gaddesby who is the main focus of this discussion was dead by 1352 this
suggests that this refers to two individuals, possibly father and son. Robert was,
according to a historian of the University of Oxford, the longest serving of all of
the stewards of Merton’s estates.\(^6\) He was followed in 1346 by Simon Pakeman,
but returned for a further term of office in 1348–9 to help the new steward. It
would appear that Robert was able to parlay some of his long service with the
college into educational provision for his sons, for William and Edmund Gaddesby, sons of the college seneschal are recorded as students at Merton in
1330 and 1334 respectively.\(^7\) The evidence on which this account is based
contains a degree of ambiguity about individual identity, but it does suggest the
Gaddesby family as being concerned with estate administration and the law. It
also points to their connection with nationally influential patrons.

An interesting indicator of these connections and of a further important
connection in the context of the church is found in a document of 1318.\(^8\) This
records the grant of land from Sir Nicholas Kiriel to Sir Stephen de Segrave.
Another member of the Segrave family, Nicholas, was among the witnesses, as
were other individuals whose names will be significant in what follows. Among
these were Sir Robert de Holande and Roger Belers, but there were also the names
of Robert Dovertone and Ralph de Gaddesby. If we take, as seems reasonable from
other documents, Robert to be the same as the individual variously styled De
Overton or Overton, then we have the first indication of a close connection
between the two families which would bear fruit in the fabric of the church.
Robert was bailiff of Goscote hundred,\(^9\) and frequently acted as attorney for
dealings involving the Segraves.\(^10\) Our earliest reference to him is as ‘clerk’ in
1306, again in connection with the Segraves. Ralph de Gaddesby appears a year
later in the Leicester town records as an attorney, a role he plays again in 1322.\(^21\)
The connection with national politics comes through the dominance of Leicester
and much of the surrounding county by the Earl of Lancaster, also Earl of
Leicester.\(^22\) Thomas of Lancaster was the cousin of Edward II and the most
powerful magnate in the country. He was involved in the murder of the king’s
favourite Piers Gaveston in 1312 and then in 1321 allied with other nobles,
including Roger Mortimer in pressing for the banishment of Hugh Despenser the

16 A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500, Vol II, F to O*,
17 Berkeley Castle Muniments Catalogue accessed via Access to Archives (www.a2a.org.uk) [accessed
30 December 2005]. BCM/D/5/20/6 14 April 1318.
18 As n. 18 BCM/D/5/16/1 25 November 1321.
19 As n. 18 BCM/D/5/46/3 19 March 1319; BCM/D/5/46/3: 19 March 1319.
Mayor’s Account, p. 260; Merchant Gild Roll, p. 338; p. 341.
University University Press, 1970.
younger, who had taken Gaveston’s place in the king’s affections. Part of the settlement in the wake of Lancaster’s victory was that those who took part in the rebellion should be pardoned. Amongst the eight pages of those whose names are listed are those of Nicholas and Stephen de Seagrave, Robert de Holland and Roger Belers. Also making an appearance in close proximity to Belers is a ‘Roger le Clerk of Overton’. Making due allowance for problems of recording and transcription, it seems suggestive of the possible close connection of Overton with these noble rebels.

Belers, Holland and Segrave were clearly trusted aides of Lancaster. Grants of lands from Thomas are recorded to Roger Belers ‘for good service’ in 1319 and to Robert de Holand in 1320. In 1320 Nicholas Segrave was sent by Lancaster to represent him in Parliament. Yet all these men were to betray Lancaster when the King took his revenge for the humiliation of 1321. In 1322, having split the rebels and captured Mortimer, the king marched against Lancaster, defeated him at Pontefract and had him ignominiously executed. This paved the way for the dominance of the Despensers and for the rise of many who turned against the Duke. This not only included the nobles we have considered, but also Robert de Gaddesby. Our first mention of Gaddesby in the records comes some 20 years earlier, when, along with 17 other men from Gaddesby, he was accused by John Folville of Ashby Folville, that ‘they broke the houses of John Folville at Newbold, beat, wounded and ill treated his men there and took away John’s goods to the value of 100 shillings against the peace.’ This involvement in local disputes did not prevent his rise in estate service and by 1320 he is recorded as receiver to the Earl of Leicester. The evidence is not clear as to the precise status of Gaddesby as either retainer of the Earl of Leicester or as a more independent administrator hiring out his professional services to a number of influential clients. The range of activities he engaged in seems to suggest the latter.

He was clearly by this time a man of some substance, as in 1319 Fox has him ‘returned as knight of the shire for Leicestershire to the two Parliaments of 1319’. There is also a suggestion that during this time he had connections with Roger Belers, the ambitious landlord of neighbouring Kirby Bellars. This connection might have been the significant one that saw Robert appointed in the

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25 CPR 1317–21, as n. 24, pp. 334, 431.


27 G. F. Farnham, ‘Notes on the Manor’, TLAS 13, 1923–4, p. 266, extract from De Banco Roll 142, Easter, 30 Edward I, 1302, m. 165, Lec.

28 Bateson, as n. 21, Mayor’s Account, p. 326.

29 L. Fox, ‘Ministers’ Accounts of the Honor of Leicester (1322 to 1324), TLAS 20, 1937–39, n. 23, p. 82.

year after Lancaster’s defeat as keeper of the lands of Leicestershire rebels, and his name appears frequently in the Close, Fine and Patent Rolls in connection with the administration of these lands until his involvement finished in 1324. What is significant is that this excluded the lands of the Earl, which were controlled by Belers. Robert Gaddesby, then, appears to have been the trusted local lieutenant of this important figure in the Despenser administration, although the evidence does not enable us to be conclusive on this point.

Roger Belers had already played an important role as an auditor for the Parliament of 1318 that Robert Gaddesby attended. By 1322, following his change of sides ‘in circumstances that are obscure but which endeared him greatly to Edward and earned him a royal gift of £200’, Belers was appointed as baron of the exchequer. The following day he was appointed as attorney by the younger Despenser. Waugh has suggested that Belers was a key client of the Despensers and in this way the influence of that group reached deep into Leicestershire. Belers used his position to begin a programme of land acquisition, gaining estates in six counties. In 1325 he was appointed acting treasurer for the king and launched a programme of administrative reform by splitting the treasury into a northern and southern half – the northern half of which was under his control. During this time Roger also sought to build up a collegiate foundation at the church of Kirby, grants of land to which were witnessed by both Robert de Overton and Robert de Gaddesby. In this way both were linked by ties of patronage with one of the most powerful men in England, ties which might also have brought with them considerable financial rewards. In 1323, at the height of their connection with Belers, both received confirmation of grants to support chantries at Gaddesby. We know that in the same year payment was made by the town of Leicester ‘To the carpenters and masons of Rob. of Gaddesby (working) there, 6d.’ In this way, at least part of the work at Gaddesby has to be seen in the context of events of national importance in political life.

However, this connection could also pose its problems. The first came with the escape of Roger Mortimer from the Tower of London in August 1323. This was achieved by the drugging of the guards and help from the inside to break out of his cell. The Constable of the Tower was Stephen de Segrave. As punishment, he and

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32 Fox, as n. 29, p. 82.


34 Fryde, as n. 23, p. 101.


38 Herbert, as n. 4.

39 Bateson, as n. 21, p. 342, 27 July 1323.
his father were sent to fight in France, where they were to die. Mortimer fled to France, where he was later to link up with Queen Isabella and the young future Edward III. However, worse was to befall Gaddesby closer to home when, in January 1326, Roger Bakers was murdered on his way into Leicester to visit Henry, Earl of Leicester. The murder was carried out by a group involving members of the Folville and Zouche families. In the context, this seems to have been part of the Mortimer-inspired resistance. Belers was a visible and much disliked symbol of the Despenser regime and there were longstanding local rivalries, particularly with the Folvilles. This notorious family operated a form of noble protection racket, having several murders to their name. The speed with which they were often pardoned seems to indicate, as the DNB suggests, that they retained usefulness for carrying out the dirty work of others. Their pardon came after the successful return of Mortimer, which was to see the imprisonment of the king and the fall of the Despensers.

In September 1326 Isabella and Mortimer landed with a small force in Suffolk. The Despensers’ support crumbled and Isabella swept to victory, winning the support of Lancaster in the process. As Waugh notes, ‘... most subordinates weathered political crises and carried on the work of the government, whatever their political affiliations’. This seemed to apply at local level, too, for Robert Gaddesby is recorded as the steward of the Earl of Leicester in late 1326 and as receiving in Easter week 1327 ‘bread, beer and pigeons to Sir Rob. of Gaddesby’. However, this must have been a difficult time for one so closely associated with significant figures in the hated Despenser administration, particularly when Lancaster mobilized his forces to challenge the new regime in 1328. Mortimer marched on Leicester where

... he ordered the town and all the earl’s property to be destroyed by sword and fire, including the property of his dependents. Over the years Roger’s men had grown experienced in the art of wanton destruction. They took the earl’s deer, cut down his woods, emptied his fish ponds, emptied his granaries, took his sheep and cattle, and destroyed his manor houses, barns, fences, sheds and cottages. The entire town and hinterland was devastated in a few days.

With Lancaster’s fellow nobles deserting him, he surrendered to Mortimer at Bedford few days later. While the Earl was spared, and while Gaddesby continued to undertake a few judicial duties, these seem sparse compared to what had gone before. One might suggest that these would be nervous years for Gaddesby.

In 1330 twenty-four knights led by John Neville took Mortimer by surprise at Nottingham Castle. Gaining access by a secret tunnel and with the connivance of

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40 As suggested by the DNB.
42 Waugh, as n. 36, p. 46.
43 Bateson, as n. 21, p. 353, 18 October 1326, p. 354 Easter.
44 Mortimer, as n. 23, p. 218.
the young Edward III they seized Mortimer in front of Queen Isabella. Mortimer was hanged after a show trial in November 1330. Almost immediately Gaddesby’s judicial commissions restarted. Of more significance was his appointment in 1331 to a commission to inquire ‘on complaint of oppressions by the ministers of the late king and the king’ in Leicestershire and Warwickshire. ⁴⁵ In the following year, he was to investigate, with Richard de Edgebaston, the reasons for the failure to build a prison at Leicester, despite money being assessed and raised on townships for the purpose. They were charged that ‘although the timber of the hall has been got together out of such assessment, the hall itself is still without any roof and unfinished because the collectors have kept a great part of the money raised in their own hands, to audit the accounts of the said collectors, to distrain for all arrears and to complete the work.’ ⁴⁶ In 1333 he was granted further permission to endow a chantry in the village church. This was a sole grant. Farnham suggests that Overton had died by 1341, although connections with the family appear to continue. In 1349, for example, John de Segrave had appointed Sir William de Overtone, parson of Sileby, Robert de Keggworth, Robert de Gaddesby and Richard le Deye to ‘make an extent of his entailed land to £100 of land’. ⁴⁷ However, we are now more likely to find the pairing of Richard Gaddesby and John Overton carrying on the family connection.

By 1352 Robert was dead, with a grant recording ‘one carucate in Belgrave which Matilda, sometime wife of Rob. de Gaddesby, and Tho. son of the late Robert, held for life’. ⁴⁸ We can surmise that he may have had another son, Richard, who took over his administrative and judicial functions in the county. In 1358 Richard de Gaddesby was appointed to the commission of the peace in Leicestershire; he was also appointed a commissioner ‘to keep the ordinances and statutes of labourers made in councils, and of weights and measures made in parliaments’. ⁴⁹ He also appears to have acted as coroner, for in 1362 the Close Rolls record an ‘Order to the sheriff of Leycester to cause a coroner to be elected instead of Richard de Gaddesby, who is disqualified by sickness and age, as the king has learned.’ ⁵⁰ However, he continues to be involved in the commission of the peace until 1368, when a rather poignant entry records that a new commissioner is required ‘as the said Richard de Gaddesby is so feeble and broken by age that he is not sufficient for the premises’. ⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 292 April 1 1331.
⁴⁷ Berkeley Castle Muniments as n. 18, BCM/D/1/1/12 13 March 1349, Marriage of John, Lord Moubray and Elizabeth Segrave.
ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS: DRAWING THE CONNECTIONS

How are we to draw together the evidence of the built record and what the surviving documentary evidence tells us of Robert Gaddesby’s participation in the politics of the day? One good starting point is with Parsons’s observations about the nature of the interior created at Gaddesby by the building campaigns associated with the chantry grants of Overton and Gaddesby. Based on evidence in the church, he suggests that the south west chapel partook of the character of a private chapel, screened off from the rest of the church and with an altar against a wooden screen close to where the present south door is (and where vestiges of a piscina survive). This might explain the emphasis placed on the west front of the aisle, with its great ox-eye window and collection of niches. Inside the chapel are three sets of heads (Fig. 6). A man and woman on the label stops above the door itself are clearly earlier and cruder than those on the label stops of the two windows of the chapel (Fig. 6a). The man wears a hood and wears his hair in a simple bob with a curl at the end. The woman has her hair in two curls high on the forehead and had her face covered with a gorget in similar fashion to the head we have already noted on the outside of the aisle. This then dates the door to the earlier period and suggests that this might either be the parents of Robert Gaddesby or, perhaps, Robert and Alice Overton. The male head on the western window wears his hair in just the same fashion and also wears the same all covering hood. His wife, however, wears her hair in a looser style, with her headdress now keeping her face clear (Fig. 6b). In this it is much more akin to the woman on the eastern of the two windows. The couple here clearly wear crowns and are, one suggests, intended to represent Edward III and Phillipa (Fig. 6c). The other couple one would suggest are Robert and Matilda Gaddesby, celebrating their success at surviving the grim years of the Mortimer regime.

The years of not only successful estate administration but also those connected with the Despenser regime had brought Gaddesby the wealth to beautify his part of the village church. His connections with Merton suggested a particular model for his work, expressed in particular in the way in which the buttresses articulated the external work. His national dealings gave him access to masons and awareness of national trends, trends which he was determined to see reflected in the Gaddesby work. One might suggest that this was amplified by two factors. One is the manorial position at Gaddesby. Much of it was under the control of the bitter enemies the Folvilles, with the balance being controlled from Rothley. This meant that the possibility of parlaying liquid assets into long term land holdings in his home village was slim. So one way of preserving the family name and getting one up on the Folvilles was to lavish this wealth on building projects. If the souls of Gaddesby and his family could be released from Purgatory then so much the better, but by contrast with the work at Hawton and Heckington the underlying motives seemed more secular in character. Of course, we are missing much of the sculptural evidence, but that which survives seems profoundly secular in

52 Parsons, as n. 5.
Fig. 6. Internal label stops, south aisle, Gaddesby.
character. This would require more detailed evidence to confirm, but the parade of green men, mermaids, pigs and bishops does not seem to contain any significant cosmological message.

Rather, what the work at the south west aisle seems to indicate is both a sense of relief at having survived the tricky years of the Mortimer regime and the flamboyance of the newly wealthy. Clearly, these are speculative judgments and one based in part on aesthetic judgments, but the contrast between the elaborate, impressive, but slightly overwhelming riot of decoration of the western end of the south aisle with the carefully controlled sophistication of the north aisle is striking. Perhaps the building there owes more to the influence of the son, possibly Merton educated, more comfortable with wealth and keen to make a statement that resembled and developed the Oxford example.

CONCLUSION

There are many more aspects of the work at Gaddesby that are intriguing and deserving of further study. An analysis of the remaining sculpture, for example, might yield further indications of the motives behind the work. There is an intriguing parallel between the great spherical triangle in the west façade and an earlier example in window tracery in the chancel at Market Harborough, itself a church under royal patronage with connections with Isabella. However, sufficient has been said to indicate the links between the architectural work found at Gaddesby and the social and political history of its times. It is often tempting to attribute cultural works to the prosperity of a particular region. There is no doubt that the economic prosperity of the East Midlands in the early fourteenth century, owing much to the wool trade, forms an important backdrop to the rich architectural works. However, Robert Wuthnow, in his studies of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, has counselled caution in attributing such movements to either an emergent bourgeoisie or existing rulers. Rather, he suggests, we should look to administrative élites, who had both the ability and the desire to encourage new forms of cultural production. This finds an intriguing parallel in the East Midlands in the early fourteenth century, where the magnificent works at Hawton, Heckington and Gaddesby seem to owe their forms to administrators tied in particular to the Despenser regime. Even in the case of an urban church such as Newark, closely associated with wool merchants, we have the intriguing connection by Sekules of Thomas de Sibthorpe with a chantry there in 1349.

What is distinctive about Gaddesby is that the driving force behind it seems to have been a secular rather than a clerical administrator. Robert de Gaddesby

56 Sekules, as n. 1, p. 62.
seems to have marked the emergence of that class of skilled local administrators who formed the basis of successful state administration in England which was to lead, argues Wuthnow, to the particular form of the Reformation in England. Blocked from advancing further by land ownership patterns, he chose to immortalise his family name in the fabric of his local church.

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