

**Medieval Choir-stalls at Leighton Buzzard
Church, Bedfordshire.**

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SUMMARY

For some 50 years now, the thesis of Frederick Gurney, buried in the pages of the Leighton Buzzard Observer, about a St Albans Abbey provenance for the choir-stalls in the guardianship of the parish church of All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, has enjoyed general acceptance. This paper re-examines the issues, in particular the heraldic evidence, formerly adduced. Also the appropriateness of the Leighton Buzzard furniture for use in a greater church, and in particular at St Albans Abbey, is considered. It emerges that there are too many inconsistencies in the arguments for the traditional view to be tenable any longer. Unfortunately, one can still only speculate on the furniture's origins. With our present state of knowledge, it is only possible to say that the stalls were made, a little later than had previously been supposed, for a greater church in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire areas.

The tradition that the early fifteenth-century choir-stalls now at Leighton Buzzard Church, Beds are from St Albans Abbey, I have always treated with some scepticism.¹ It is true that, where at the Dissolution a monastic church was converted to parish use, there is always the faint hope that some fragments at least of the choir furniture may have been saved by being employed elsewhere. In practice, this rarely occurred. There is the case of the thirteenth-century misericord at Hemingborough, North Yorks, which quite possibly came from Selby Abbey,² and the fifteenth-century misericord at the V & A, said to have come from Malmesbury Abbey,³ but these are exceptions to prove the rule. In practice, most of the fragments of woodwork that were saved from abbey choirs at the Dissolution are from houses that were altogether suppressed. Even so, the number of instances is still very few.⁴ The stalls at Leighton Buzzard are considerably later than those that are known to have been part of the early fourteenth-century east-end refurbishment at St Albans. Moreover, there is no recorded evidence to suggest that the abbey choir-stalls were burnt or replaced at any time before their removal after the Dissolution.

The documentary evidence for a substantial re-

furbishment in the liturgical choir at St Albans in the early fourteenth century is unequivocal. In 1314, during the abbacy of Hugh of Eversden, Edward II gave one hundred marks and some timber "*Ad stalla sua in choro monasterii sui ibidem emendanda*".⁵ It is clear from this that the abbey had not commissioned a completely new set of stalls. But, as at Exeter Cathedral a few years earlier,⁶ a serviceable set of seats was probably salvaged and then fitted with new canopywork. The name of the master-carpenter in charge is recorded. The *Gesta Abbatum* states that he ". . . and his servant (*garcio*) were paid a joint fee of 4s weekly, and that Geoffrey received a yearly robe of the suit of the Abbot's esquires, as well as other profits and fees". In view of the fact that the former liturgical choir was removed long ago, how much can be conjectured about the original arrangement? According to the local historian, Frederick Gurney, in an undated article published in the *Leighton Buzzard Observer*, probably during the 1930s, the archaeological excavations inside the abbey in 1874, in the crossing and at the east end of the nave, revealed the foundations of a single row of stalls each side, running between the eastern boundary of the crossing and the second bay of the nave.⁸ They extended about seventy-eight feet on the north side and some sixty-four feet on the south, the abbot's throne being, apparently, isolated on the south side. Gurney reported that there were sixty-eight stalls in total. The way that the pilasters on the west side of the crossing die into the walls at about eighteen feet from the ground, has been taken as suggesting the use of tall canopywork. Above the stalls between the clerestory windows there are traces of large painted figures. The thirteenth-century pulpitum, in the third bay from the east, continued in use until the late fourteenth century. It seems to have had an "ante-choir" to the west of it in front of the former rood-screen. On the south-west face of the second nave pier from the crossing, where the pulpitum began, there are the remains of the steps of a staircase to the loft above.

There seems to be no reason for the monks to have needed to change their recently re-furbished



Fig 1 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. View of choir-stalls from West

choir-stalls in the early fifteenth century. Apart from the rood screen, the collapse of the south wall of the nave in 1323 does not seem to have affected the liturgical choir. The stalls could conceivably have been replaced as part of a wholesale re-furbishment *ensuite* with the new stone rood screen, usually dated around 1380. But this seems unlikely, since the monks had already been put to considerable expense by the costly failure of the masonry in the nave.

As is well known, St Albans Abbey was reduced to the status of a parish church on its dissolution in 1539. The liturgical choir was adapted as far as possible to the needs of the Reformed Use. By the end of the eighteenth century, at least, a gallery had been interposed on the north side of the crossing, and a pulpit on the south. In addition, box pewing was fitted from the east side of the crossing probably as far back as the stone rood-screen.⁹ Wooden panelling clothed the walls to just below capital level at the east end. Presumably, the western portion of this preaching-box-within-a-church was panelled also. Unfortunately, there seem to be no views

surviving with a westerly aspect. Certainly, it would have been very inconvenient and illogical for the parish to have retrained the abbey's choir-stalls, which would have simply got in the way.

Quite reasonably, histories of St Albans Abbey have assumed that the medieval choir-stalls were ejected at the Dissolution. In these circumstances, it is normally supposed that such woodwork would have been burnt for firewood, or left outside to rot, there being no incentive for the town to find a new home for it. By contrast, in the case of a fully suppressed rural institution, a former benefactor and landowner might arrange for the transfer of some of the contents to certain parish churches in his patronage.¹⁰

The choir-stalls at All Saints, Leighton Buzzard (Pl 1) are an incomplete set, and they are clearly refugees from a larger building. There are eleven lateral stalls each side, with six on the returns, making a total of twenty-eight seats in all. They can never have been canopied, since there are no mortises in the seat capping extensions for any uprights.¹¹ The evidence for their re-use is the fact



Figs 2a & 2b All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds and Lincoln Cathedral. Lateral choir-stall junctions



Fig 3 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Human bust choir-stall elbow figure with crozier



Fig 4 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Angel bust choir-stall elbow figure

that the doubled seat standards at the corner of the returns, which were formerly carved in the solid, have been sawn right through on each side (PI 2a). The junction of the seat capping in the corner on the south side does not match, and there are slots for more seats visible at all four ends. The desking, where returned on the north side, does not fit together properly as it does on the south, a clear indication of some later interference with the original scheme. Presumably, in the first place, there would have been four return stalls each side, a possibility quite beyond the capacity of the Leighton Buzzard choir.

In terms of carving, the furniture is only of run-of-the-mill quality. On the other hand, it contains a number of interesting stylistic features. The human bust elbows, some of them with their personal emblems, are of the common fifteenth-century type (PI 3).¹² The winged figures (PI 4), with their feathers tucked under, along the seat standard moulding, and long fingers running down the edge of the divider, probably occur for the first time at Lincoln, c1370.¹³ The stone plinth upon which the stalls sit is, again, an example of a convention that was ubiquitous in the fifteenth century. It is comparatively shallow with discreet ventilation holes, as again found for the first time at Lincoln Minster. The corner seat junction standards at Leighton Buzzard are both of the Lincoln type (PI 2b) with a crowned head above a column. In both cases the treatment of the hair, with the cork-screw curls, conforms to the late fourteenth-century type. The misericord of a face with brimmed hat (PI 5) displays the fleuron, the "trade-mark" of the Lincoln stalls. On the other hand his forked hair-style seems to point to an early fifteenth-century date. An example in some ways comparable would be the head of a bishop on a misericord (N7) at Ludlow Church, carved c1415-25.¹⁴ Finally, the lion's head misericord (N6) strongly recalls the Lincoln treatment of the same motif. All these stylistic characteristics point to the date of manufacture in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

There have been a number of different theories put forward as to the origin of these stalls, the most plausible based on the heraldry displayed on the misericords. In 1930 a somewhat fanciful suggestion that the furniture came from Fountains Abbey was made by a Mr Joseph Procter, whose ancestor was living at Leighton Buzzard at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁵ His father, having acquired Fountains Abbey, dismantled the church in 1609. Without a shred of evidence in support Mr Procter

suggested that his ancestor might have arranged for the Yorkshire choir-stalls to be shipped down to Leighton!

In 1913 the local historian Mr R. Richmond wrote to the College of Arms for advice about the heraldry on the misericords. The response suggested a number of lines of investigation.¹⁶ However, it was not until the 1930s that there was an attempt to draw any conclusions. At that time Gurney's article, which set out to solve the problems of the identity of the coats and the origins of the stalls once and for all, was published.¹⁷ He pointed out that the stalls must have been inserted after the destruction of the rood-loft in 1562. He observed that, as there must originally have been eight return stalls, a choir very much wider than the one at Leighton Buzzard, of almost twenty-nine feet, would have been needed to accommodate them. Finally, on the basis of his identification of the coats on the misericords he claimed that the stalls originated from St Albans Abbey.

The shields with a chevron between three lions' masks (S2; PI 6) were the arms of the Frowick family, of South Mimms, Middlesex.¹⁸ It was correctly postulated that the devices on the misericords were the arms of two brothers, Thomas and Henry Frowick. Usually, the shield of the younger brother, Henry, bearing a molet for distinction, are displayed on the dexter side. A molet should be the mark of the third son, not the second. On the other hand, at this juncture, a fully consistent system of cadency marks had probably not been worked out.¹⁹ In any case, Henry's priority in this context probably tells us something about the relative prestigiousness of his social position, and his role as artistic patron. Gurney correctly states that Henry, who lived at Gunnersbury, was a wealthy merchant. He was a mercer, and alderman of the City of London 1424-57. Unfortunately, Gurney, apparently not realising that the brothers' father and grandfather were both called Henry, inadvertently skipped a generation in the pedigree, confusing the grandfather with the father.²⁰ He associated the family closely with St Albans, pointing out that Thomas Frowick held the manor of South Mimms in his wife's right. He also stated that the Henry Frowick, who died in 1384, was active on the town and monastery's behalf during the Peasants' Revolt.

The shield with the roundel and rings (S8; PI 7) was identified by Gurney as that of a Thomas Thorneburgh. He was born at Selside in Westmorland, and being a younger son became a lawyer and, in 1391, took up the office of Steward of the Abbey



Fig 5 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Misericord with man in brimmed hat

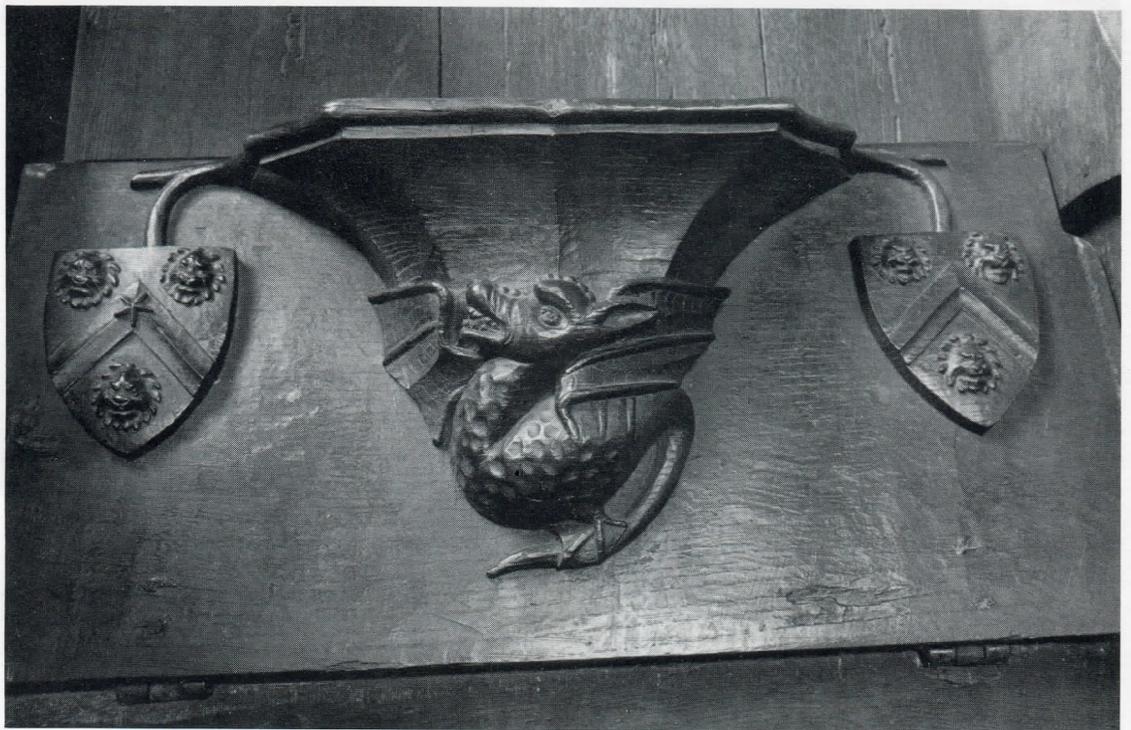


Fig 6 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Misericord S2



Fig 7 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Misericord S8

of St Albans. He also worked for the fourth Earl of Warwick "himself the hereditary friend and protector of the Abbey".²¹ On moving to London in 1402 he kept his house in St Albans. Gurney claimed to have found his will and stated that Thorneburgh was buried in the abbey. The fleur-de-lis in the central ring at the top of the shield, it was claimed, was used to distinguish his arms from those of his brother, although it was normally the cadency mark of the sixth son.²²

The arms on the sinister side of this misericord were identified as the older shield of the earldom of Warwick. This belonged in the first place to a thirteenth century earl called Neubourg. It was pointed out that there should have been ermine spots on the chevron, and, indeed, claimed that one of them could still be made out. Its position alongside the Thorneburgh shield was seen as entirely consistent with the relationship of the two parties. The identity of these coats agreed with the College of Arms opinion.

The shield on the sinister side of misericord N1 (Pl 8) was associated with John Aynel of Pendley, who died before March 1402. It was claimed that the carving on the left side was an *Agnus Dei*,²³ which has been split away. However, after looking carefully at the damage, it seems much more likely that there

was originally a heater-shaped shield in that position. This is another family closely connected with St Albans, this time, by land holding. The shield on the dexter side was attributed to that of John Crowmer or Cromer of Aldenham, Herts. His dates are not known but his son was Lord Mayor of London in 1413 and 1423. The Crowmers' land at Aldenham belonged to the abbots of St Albans. The first crow on the shield faces sinister, unlike the other two which it should follow. Certainly, the three crows face to dexter on the Crowmer monuments at Aldenham Church.

The misericord S1 (Pl 9) bears the swan badge of the Earls of Warwick and the arms of Beauchamp – the fess and six crosslets – on the dexter side. The shield was associated by Gurney with Earl Thomas, who died in 1401. In summing up his arguments, Gurney states that the name of St Albans keeps occurring throughout the series "like a refrain". "We have the personal emblems of its chief tenants – of its hereditary friend and chief lay-patron, the earl – and of the steward and judge of its courts" (Thorneburgh). Finally in his view, the identity of the saltire cross on the sinister side of S1 cannot refer to the Nevilles. It can only be the attribute of St Albans Abbey.

Gurney suggested that the choir-stalls were made



Fig 8 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Misericord N1

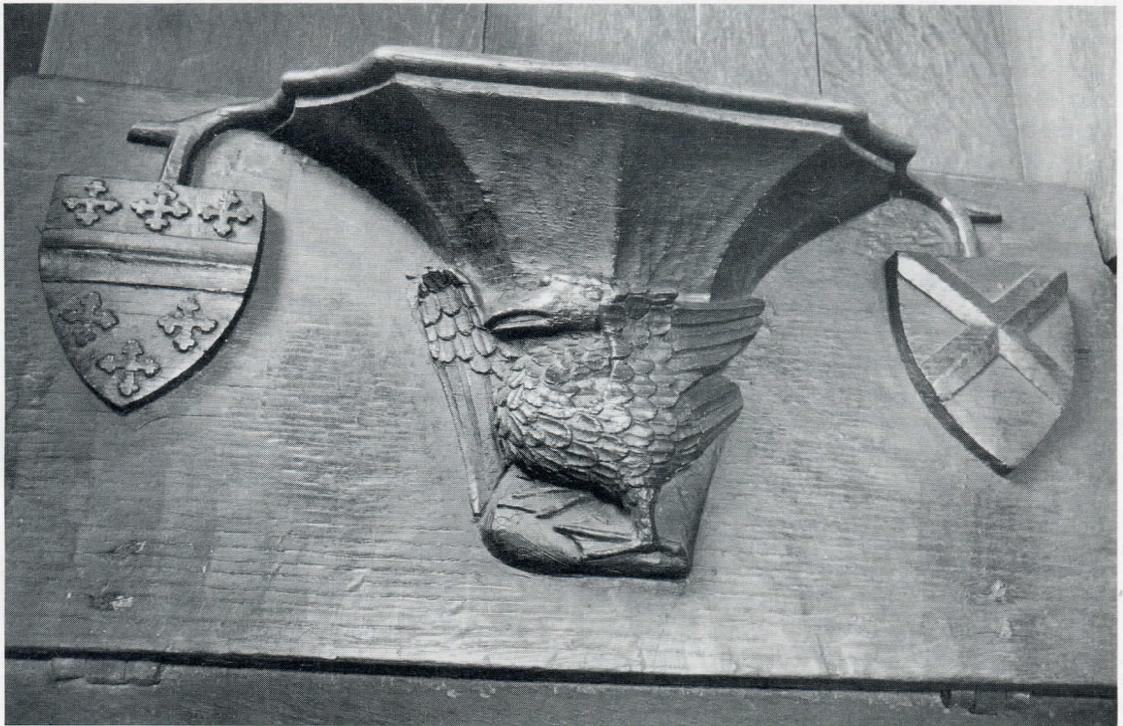


Fig 9 All Saints', Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Misericord S1

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at the very end of the fourteenth century, perhaps a little earlier than they would be dated on stylistic grounds. He states that the furniture must have come from the abbey itself, because there was no other building within its jurisdiction big enough to take it. Gurney's arguments have been given a full airing here because they were not properly published at the time. More importantly, they were the source of the improbable tradition that the Leighton Buzzard stalls came from St Albans Abbey.

John Goodall has pointed out that the College of Arms in 1913 would have been unable to judge instances of arms as early as these, as their records are entirely post-medieval.²⁴ The records on which they would have had to depend at that time, the late fifteenth-century grants and the Herald's Visitations from 1530 to the late 1680s, were far too late for this purpose. He goes on to refute nearly every one of Gurney's heraldic attributions in the following terms: "The arms of Thorneburgh of Selside (S8, dexter) were not as suggested (their's was a fretty coat). The identification of the checky coat with a *plain* chevron (S8, sinister) as the arms borne by the Beaumont earls of Warwick seems unlikely. I do not recall ever seeing carved heraldry with ermine spots just painted on when all the other parts of the design appear in relief."²⁵ He could find no evidence for the use of the coats ascribed to Aynel in medieval sources (N1). Goodall has warned that any argument based on the Aldenham tombs, said to be connected with the Crowmer family, must be prey to doubt, because the monuments have been comprehensively restored. In any case, the chevron at Aldenham is engrailed. It might refer to the Kent Crowmers. Finally, Goodall says "Beauchamp and the saltire coat (S1) should be read together as referring to Richard (Neville) earl of Salisbury who was recognised as earl of Warwick *jure uxoris* in 1449". Thus a modern historical gloss has fatally undermined a traditional and accepted thesis!

We are left with two pairs of identifiable coats, the Beauchamp/Neville (S1) and the Frowick (S2) misericords. The components of each pair have filial or marriage connections. Doubtless, the other two misericords would show similar features if they could be identified. Richard Neville married Alice, only child of Thomas de Montacute, fourth earl of Salisbury in 1425. Alice was heiress of the Beauchamp title. Although he was not recognised as earl of Warwick until the death of his aunt in 1449, he could have used the Beauchamp coat of arms as on the misericord at any time after his

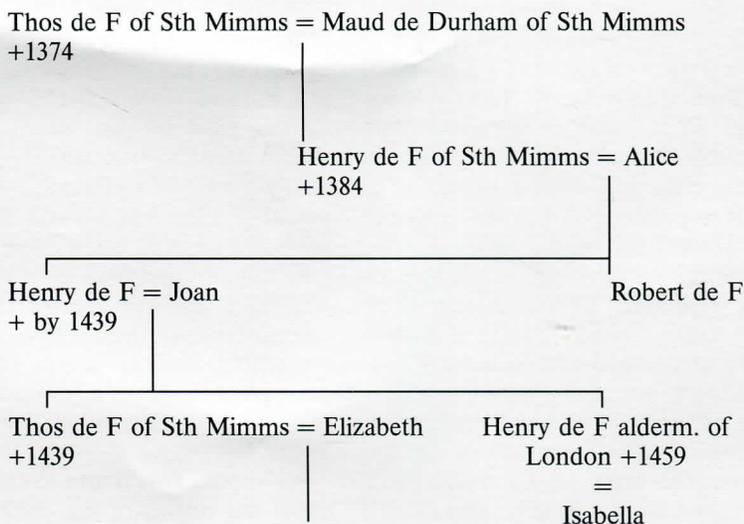
marriage.²⁶ About the adduced Frowick coats, Goodall says: "Henry Frowick mercer and alderman of London bore the arms with a molet for difference and died in 1459. There are, of course, other families with the same basic design in medieval records but, given the location, I would think that Frowick is the most likely."²⁷ Thus Gurney's interpretation of this misericord, and the Beauchamp identification on S1, are the only ones allowed to stand. Henry Frowick's aldermanic period of office was 1424-57. Thus the two identifiable misericords could have been made at any time from around 1425. On stylistic grounds a date of c1430 is probably appropriate.

Unfortunately, there are no comparable surviving sets of choir-stalls in the area. The only other Gothic furniture is at St Paul's, Bedford, but the choir-stalls there on stylistic grounds must be considerably earlier.²⁸

We should now return to Gurney's speculations about the origins of the choir-stalls. In his arguments he got himself into difficulties over the matter of canopywork. He noticed, correctly, that there were no uprights on the Leighton Buzzard stalls, to carry a superstructure. He surmised that they must have been "of the type of the magnificent work at Chester". But the Chester stalls did have columns on the seat capping in the first place, as is shown in the measured drawing by R.C. Hussey, of c1850.²⁹ These were subsequently removed by George Gilbert Scott. The Leighton Buzzard stalls were probably of the single-screen type, being provided with panelled, traceried and corniced wainscoting behind. Ambitious canopywork in England was in any case a characteristic of north-country joinery, for instance in this context the lost choir-stalls at York Minster, probably finished by 1420.³⁰ The height of the chamfering on the western arches of the crossing at St Albans at about eighteen feet, is considerably greater than would have been required for choir-stall canopywork, unless the design followed the formula of Lyngwode's early fourteenth-century furniture at Winchester Cathedral, which is very unlikely. In any case the alterations referred to are more comprehensive than simply a chamfering off of the pilaster, as the masonry is stripped right back to the core of the pier. The method is very crude, and is more likely to be a post-medieval modification, probably connected with the parochial fitting out of the former liturgical choir.

The proposed dating of the Leighton Buzzard furniture falls within the abbacy of Wheathamp-

Fig 1 Pedigree of the Frowick family



stead, at St Albans. The last-named, during his first abbacy 1420-40, was an active patron.³¹ But there is no record of any call for new choir-stalls, or for their manufacture.

Unfortunately, the plan of Gilbert Scott's excavations of the crossing and the eastern part of the nave at St Albans, referred to by Gurney, cannot now be found. But if the arrangement of the stalls was in two straight lines, as he intimates, it would have been very unusual for an English choir.³² On the other hand, it seems unlikely that he would have been mistaken in his interpretation of the plan, and it certainly rings true for a monastery that there was only a single row of stalls each side with no substalls. If, indeed, there never were any return stalls at St Albans, clearly the Leighton Buzzard furniture could not have come from there.

It now seems that the received idea that these stalls came from St Albans Abbey can no longer be sustained. Neither Richard Neville, nor Henry Frowick seems to have had any close ties with the abbey, and in any case the form of the stalls themselves mitigates strongly against the thesis. It would be satisfactory, in conclusion, if the original location of the furniture could be pinned down. It would have to have been a substantial building, not too far away from Leighton Buzzard. However, there is so little to go on that it seems unlikely that the problem will ever be solved. There were ten "greater monasteries" in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, within the definition

laid down at the time of the Dissolution, as those institutions with an annual income greater than two hundred pounds.³³ Two of the Bedfordshire houses had Beauchamp connections. At Cistercian Warden, Simon, Hugh and William de Beauchamp were among the benefactors.³⁴ Augustinian Newnham was founded by Simon de Beauchamp in about 1166.³⁵ But, of course, these were the Bedford Beauchamps, who bore quarterly gold and gules a bend gules, not the fess and crosslets coat. Therefore, for the time being at least, the origins of the Leighton Buzzard choir-stalls are an enigma.

NOTES

- 1 Most recently reiterated in John Lea, *Grotesque Wood Carvings in Bedfordshire Church Stalls*, *Beds Mag*, 4, 25, 27-28.
- 2 Hemingborough Church did not become collegiate until 1426. See *VCH, Yorkshire East Riding*, III, 42.
- 3 Charles Tracy, *English Medieval Furniture and Woodwork, V & A Museum*, London, 1988, Cat 87.
- 4 One could cite the Osney Priory, Oxon stalls (now at Kidlington Church, Oxon) from the thirteenth century. There is hardly a single example from the fourteenth century, whereas rather more from the fifteenth century, such as the Whalley Abbey, Lancs stalls (now at Whalley Church), Jervaulx Abbey, Yorks desk ends (now at Aysgarth Church) and Bridlington Priory, Yorks desk ends (now at Leake Church, North Riding, Yorks). The last three examples are discussed in Charles Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400-1540*, Woodbridge, 1990.
- 5 Close Rolls, Edward II, m.6.
- 6 Charles Tracy, "The early fourteenth-century choir-stalls at Exeter Cathedral", *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXVIII, Feb 1986, 99-103.

- 7 Quoted from John Harvey, *English Medieval Architects*, Gloucester, revd ed. 1984, 114-15. The source is H.T. Riley, ed., *Gesta Abbatum Mon. S. Albani* (Rolls Series, 1867-69), II, 281.
- 8 Frederick G. Gurney, "Leighton Choir Stalls. Origin Traced. Removed from St Albans Abbey", n.d., see County Record Office, Bedford, P91/2/32.
- 9 See Cat 136 in T. Girtin and D. Loshak, *The Art of Thomas Girtin*, London, 1954, where two similar watercolour views of the nave and crossing looking east are listed. One was drawn between 1795 and 1796; the other is dated 1796. There are photographs of each in the Gerald Cobb archive at the NMR. In the eighteenth century there was a Georgian gallery west of the rood-screen with an organ above.
- 10 An example is the adduced intervention of the Yorkshire Scrope family. See J.S. Purvis, "The Ripon carvers and the lost choir-stalls of Bridlington Priory", *Yorkshire Archaeological Jnl*, XXIX, 1929, 157-201.
- 11 There are mortises behind the dignitaries' seats in the return stalls, presumably for a backing screen and entrance arch.
- 12 Saints with their attributes which have been identified at Leighton Buzzard are St Paul, with his sword; St Andrew, with the saltire cross; St James the Less, with his fuller's club; St Bartholomew with a flaying knife; and St Jude, with a missionary's preaching cross.
- 13 See M.D. Anderson, "The choir-stalls of Lincoln Minster", Lincoln, 1967, Fig 27.
- 14 At Ludlow the head-band of the mitre is also decorated with fleurons. See Charles Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls. 1400-1540*, Woodbridge, 1990, Pl 37.
- 15 Letter to Mr R. Richmond of Leighton Buzzard, dated 14 June, 1930. County Record Office, Bedford, P91/2/32.
- 16 It is worth quoting the reply in full:
 "1 (S8; Pl 7). Azure on a fess or three torteaux in chief as many annulets gules in the centre on a fleur de lys of the second, a (apparently) coat of Thornborough. It is not recorded and is quite different from the authorised coat of the Yorkshire family of that name but I find it mentioned.
 2 (S8; Pl 7). Chequy a chevron — chequy or and gules a chevron of the first, is a coat of Boteaux of Co. Warwick, chequy or and azure a chevron ermine, is Newburgh, Earl of Warwick.
 3 (S2; Pl 6). Sable a chevron between three leopards faces or is the coat of Wentworth.
 4 (S1; Pl 9). A fess between six cross crosslets. Gules a fess between six crosslets or is Beauchamp Earl of Warwick. Azure a fess between six crosslets argent is coat of Haversham. Gules a fess six crosslets argent. Sir Piers de Arderne.
 5 (S1; Pl 9). A saltire. Gules a saltire argent. Neville. Azure saltire argent. See of St Albans. But there are many others and it is impossible to identify.
 6 (N1; Pl 8). Two chevrons. Impossible to identify as there are many.
 7 (N1; Pl 8). A chevron between three birds. "I do not find any recorded coat with the two birds chief respecting one another and apart from this it is quite impossible to identify."
 Letter from G. Woods Wollaston, Bluemantle, College of Arms, October 13 1913, in the County Record Office, Bedford, P91/2/32.
- 17 See Note 8.
- 18 For the genealogy of the Frowicks, see Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300-1500)*, Chicago, 1948, 342-44.
- 19 A suggestion made by Mrs Frances Robson.
- 20 John Goodall has kindly provided a Frowick pedigree for this period. See Fig 1.
- 21 "The Lord Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and his Countess Margaret, bore great affection to this church; and gave some timber for the repair of the refectory." See Peter Newcombe, *The History of the Ancient and Royal Foundation called The Abbey of St Alban, London, 1795*.
- 22 Information by letter from Mrs Robson.
- 23 In old French, "agnel".
- 24 John Goodall's heraldry expertise has been invaluable to the preparation of this paper.
- 25 This and other quotations, below, are from a letter to the writer.
- 26 On 3 May 1429 the judges and peers of the Great Council confirmed Neville's claims to the title of Earl of Salisbury, in right of his wife, until the king came of age. See DNB, 1894, XL, 279.
- 27 Goodall has suggested that Henry's priority on the misericord carving probably reflects his high status as a Mercer.
- 28 They were dated by Remnant as probably early fifteenth-century. See G.L. Remnant, *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain*, Oxford, 1969. 1. Here, Remnant was following the known building history at St Paul's, the chancel probably being rebuilt at the beginning of the fifteenth century. However, this sadly-mutilated furniture, which is of considerably higher quality than the Leighton Buzzard work, cannot have been made later than c1390, and could be anything up to twenty years older. The treatment of foliage is reminiscent of the choir-stalls at Lincoln Cathedral of c1370. The bearded profile head on a misericord, now mutilated, is very close indeed to the one on a misericord from the Carmelite friary at Coventry and is related to another on a misericord from the choir-stalls at St Katherine's Hospital-by-the-Tower, London. Both these monuments are of the mid 1360s. (See Tracy [1987], Pls 181 & 182, and Chapter 9.) The charged shield on misericord S4 at Bedford is referred to by Remnant as displaying the town arms. He describes the decoration as "diapered a cross fleury". The shield is certainly diapered but the foliage is closer to a rose or flower on a stem with leaves either side. This is more likely to be the artist's conceit rather than an accurate rendering of any specific heraldry. Blades gives the arms of Bedford as "An eagle displayed looking to the sinister with wings inverted sable, ducally crowned or, on the eagle a large castle surmounted by two more one above the other or" (see F.A. Blaydes [ed], *The Visitations of Bedfordshire, The Harleian Society*, XIX, 1904, 1. They are illustrated in G. Pedrick, *Borough seals of the Gothic period*, London, 1904, Pl 43). Although the Bedford misericord has been mutilated at the top and curtailed at the bottom, it is clear that it could never have taken the form of the town arms. The castle may once have been double-storied, but was never backed by an eagle. Castles were depicted on misericords in the fourteenth century at Lincoln and Chester cathedrals, and at Enville, Staffs and Boston, Lincs. These examples are all associated with an illustration of the popular legend of Sir Yvain, who became trapped in a castle portcullis. The Bedford misericord may very well refer to a particular castle. Unfortunately the other heraldry on the misericords at Bedford (N4) has not yet been identified with any certainty. At this moment, therefore, we cannot be sure that the extant stalls were intended for this church, particularly as they do not coincide with any known building activity in the later fourteenth century. (See also remarks about this misericord in F.W. Kuhlicke, "A Bedfordshire Armorial", *The Bedfordshire*

- Magazine*, 2 no. 15, Winter 1950/51, 270-72.)
- 29 See Charles Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls. 1200-1400*, Woodbridge, 1987, Pl 177.
- 30 See Tracy (1990), 24, Note 46, Pl 80.
- 31 He put in a great window in the west front, a chapel at the south-east corner of the Lady Chapel, and a chapel, no longer extant, south of the first bay from the east of the south aisle of the presbytery.
- 32 The early fourteenth-century choir-stalls at Cologne Cathedral are ranged in two straight double lines.
- 33 Elstow, Dunstable, Warden, Chicksands, Newnham and Woburn (Beds); Missenden, Nutley and Ashridge (Bucks); and St Albans (Herts).
- 34 *VCH*, Beds, I, 1904, 46.
- 35 *VCH*, Beds, I, 1904, 48 *et seqq.*

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