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SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN AND PEMBROKE CHAPEL

Peter Meadows

That Wren designed the new Chapel of Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1663, his first architectural work, for his uncle Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, has never been doubted, despite the lack of contemporary documentation. There are no drawings in Wren's hand, no letters, and no building accounts. There exist a wooden model of the Chapel;¹ a design in another hand somewhat resembling the Chapel;² full-size drawings on the plaster of a room in the College of the cartouche and swags on the Chapel's west front, and the flaming urns on the parapets;³ and contracts for the brickwork and the interior woodwork, agreed between the College and the craftsmen.⁴ So it is of considerable importance that a document has been found, in the College archives, concerning the marble needed for the Chapel floor, in the hand of Sir Christopher Wren.

Matthew Wren (1585-1667) was elected a Fellow of Pembroke in 1605 and rose to be President (Vice-Master) before becoming Master of Peterhouse and successively Bishop of Hereford, Norwich and Ely. A chief supporter of Archbishop Laud, he was imprisoned in the Tower from 1642 to 1659. While in prison he resolved that if Crown and episcopacy should be restored he would build a new chapel for Pembroke College.

The document, from the Hardwick box,⁵ is in two parts, in two different hands. The main part is a draft of the fourth codicil of Bishop Wren's will, appropriating the revenues of the manor of Hardwick to the upkeep of the Chapel.⁶ The other part is a sheet of notes of quantities, prices, carriage and design of the black and white marble needed for the Chapel floor. Textual evidence suggests a London-based writer of these notes; and comparison of the hand with examples of Sir Christopher Wren's writing shows clear similarities.⁷ The notes were written originally in pencil, but were reinforced carefully in pen, probably by Wren himself (or else by someone careful to decipher the words and to follow the calligraphic style).

The notes are as follows:

"A 100 foot paving will make a tun & 14 foot steps a tun. The Carriage of a tun from Lond[on] to Lyn at 14s per tun & from Lyn to Camb[ridge] 6s per tun.

"Securing⁸ it the Seas, valueing the marble at 100£ will be 5£. 1s per pound, if there be warr w[i]th the Hollander twill be . . . at . . .⁹ 2s6d per pound, securing it.

"Lead 3s per hundred casting, the plum[be]r bearing the waste, finding fuell, molds & sand & to returne weight for weight.

"Mr Adrian May in St James park at the duck pond.

"Mr James Flory w[i]th Mr Scott at the Minneries demands for pavement marble, white & black at about 13 or 14 Inches square, 2s4d per foot polished fit for glazeing & setting it, & 2s8d glazed per foot square, he finding all materials about setting. he says the polished shall look as well as glazed w[i]thin a shorte time, the altar &c glazed, the body polished.¹⁰ For the steps w[i]th astragon molds A¹¹ to be about 14 Inches tread, polished & glazed & 5 Inches & 1/2 in height or thereabouts, he demands 8s per foot running measure.

"A course of black in from the entrance to the first step, of about 18 or 20 Inches breadth, & 2 margent[s] of black by the seats halfe as broad as the Course in the midst."

James Flory was a London mason who is recorded supplying a black and white marble floor for Wren's chapel at Emmanuel College in 1676.¹² The "Minneries" or Minories is a street in the City of London running from Aldgate to Tower Hill. "Mr Scott" has not been identified. The note about Adrian May probably has nothing to do with the marble. It is likely that Wren was noting

an appointment to meet the brother of the architect Hugh May (1621-84), Wren's contemporary and colleague. Adrian May (d.1670) was inspector of the French and English gardeners at Whitehall, St James's, Greenwich and Hampton Court.¹³ King Charles II was constructing a duck pond and decoy in St James's Park in 1664-65.¹⁴ A naval war with the Dutch broke out in the summer of 1665.

The contract for the Chapel woodwork, dated January 10, 1664 (1665 in modern reckoning), stipulated that the carpentry work should be finished "in a readinesse for the laying of a marble pavement before the dedication of the said chappell, wh. is intended to be upon the 21st of September next . . ." So the marble floor must have been laid in late spring or summer 1665. The draft council urged the Master and Fellows to "endeavour with all convenient speed to obtained that the New Chapell . . . shal be built, finished and dedicated"; but when Bishop Wren completed his will on July 4, 1665 the words "built, finished" had been omitted. The draft codicil was therefore written in late 1664 or early 1665.

Bishop Wren's usual residence was Ely House, Holborn. We can surmise that when the draft codicil relating to Hardwick was written, Sir Christopher Wren, at his uncle's house, inadvertently used the paper, folded into two sheets, to record notes useful for the marble-work for the Chapel. The draft codicil was later revised and the paper was of no further use. Fortunately, it was not discarded, and Wren's notes were not torn away.

Bishop Wren came to Cambridge for the consecration of the Chapel on September 21, 1665, bringing with him his will and papers relating to Hardwick. On that day the papers were placed in a chest under three locks, entrusted to the Masters of Pembroke, Peterhouse and Jesus Colleges, and to be opened after Bishop Wren's death. They were trustees for the time being of the Hardwick estates, and were to keep an account book. Matthew Wren died on April 24, 1667. It is thought that when Ely House was being cleared and his papers sorted, a number of Hardwick documents were gathered up and sent to the College. On September 23, 1667 the three Masters listed in the Hardwick account book 13 documents relating to Hardwick.¹⁵ Item IX was "In a sheet of papyr, a Copie of his L[ordshi]p's Declaration concerning his gift of Hardwick to the Chappell", the paper bearing Sir Christopher Wren's notes.

By chance these notes were never discarded, and they therefore provide a contemporary record of Sir Christopher Wren's work at Pembroke.

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I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College for allowing publication of this document. Jayne Ringrose, College Archivist, discovered the sheet of notes, and made valuable suggestions on this article. Professor Kerry Downes stated that it is "extremely probable" that the notes are in Wren's hand. Robert Ferguson, preparing a Cambridge Ph.D. thesis on Wren and Hawksmoor in Cambridge and Oxford, gave useful advice on the text of the document and its context.

I have referred throughout this article to Sir Christopher Wren, but he was not actually knighted until 1673.

NOTES

1. This was discovered in the Chapel in 1923. See Ellis H. Minns and Maurice Webb, "Pembroke College Chapel, Cambridge, Sir Christopher Wren's first building", *Sir Christopher Wren A.D. 1632-1723. Bicentenary Memorial Volume*, 1923.
2. The drawing poses considerable problems. Its very awkward execution rules it out as a design by Wren. It was, however, preserved among the Chapel papers in Hardwick E, and must therefore bear some relation to the Chapel project. There are no annotations. It is one bay longer than the Chapel as built, but the windows are similar, the door is in the correct position and pineapple finials are suggested for the parapets. In execution these were replaced by flaming urns and reduced in number. It *could* represent a preliminary idea suggested to Wren, and much altered and improved by him.

3. These drawings were described by Denys Spittle in an article in the *Pembroke College Annual Gazette* in 1965, shortly after their discovery. The room had been fitted up with panelling about 1700, and later divided by partitions to make a set for Thomas Cray. It was on removing the partition and renovating the panelling that the drawings came to light. Spittle suggested Robert Grumbold, a Cambridge mason much employed by Wren, as the master-mason for the Chapel and the person who drew these details, presumably with some direction from Wren; but no evidence of Grumbold's employment for the Chapel has been found.
4. Pembroke College Archives (PCA), Hardwick F2, F4. The contracts were published in R. Willis & J.W. Clark, *An Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, I, 155-156. The carpenter responsible for the woodwork was Cornelius Austin (who was employed by Wren at Emmanuel Chapel and Trinity Library) assisted by Richard and William Billopps. Austin often worked to designs of Edward Pearce and John Oliver of London, who made their designs under Wren's direction. The contract mentions "a certain forme and draft of Joyners work", but it is not known who drew the "forme" and composed the "draught" or specification.
5. PCA, Hardwick E6.
6. Matthew Wren purchased the Manor of Hardwick, Cambridgeshire, in 1662, and conveyed it in 1664 to trustees (the Masters of Pembroke, Peterhouse and Jesus) to hold for the College. The revenues were to be used for the upkeep of the Chapel.
7. Compare especially Wren's annotations on a plan for Trinity Library, and a note of explanation by Wren, in *Wren Society* V, pls. XI and XV.
8. Pencil version is "ensureing", scored through in ink.
9. Words here are in pencil only and mostly illegible.
10. 'The words "the altar . . . polished."' are in pen only.
11. 'A' refers to a profile of the moulding drawn at the end of the document.
12. Willis & Clark, II, 707.
13. Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 1978, 543.
14. See Peter Cunningham, *A Handbook for London*, 1849, II, 434, for accounts of costs of this work.
15. PCA, Hardwick accounts, M e 1.