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Stone Coffins, Gloucestershire

by H. H. Willmore
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STONE COFFINS, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

by ENGINEER CAPTAIN H. H. WILLMORE, R.N. (Retired)

IN the following paper I purpose to deal primarily with the consideration of actual stone coffins, with but scant references to their lids or covers. As regards the former no English monograph appears to exist, whilst of the latter, with their many and varied forms of treatment, much has been written.

The word 'coffin' is defined (from the Latin, *cophinus*, Greek *κόφινος*, a coffer, chest or basket, but never meaning 'coffin' in its present sense) as the receptacle in which a corpse is confined'.¹

Gloucestershire would appear to be somewhat fortunate as regards the number of stone coffins it possesses. Its incidence with the limestone belt which traverses it is, no doubt, to some extent responsible for their comparatively common occurrence.

The great majority of both Roman and later coffins in England are hewn from a single block of stone. As regards the latter there are many cases where by using a cist-like mode of construction, but with greater exactitude, the form of a solid coffin very closely approximates. We may here note that the present-day English wooden coffin is built up of seven components in addition to the cover. Some ultra-modern coffins of English make are constructed of Bakelite and are the largest plastic objects moulded in one piece.

A brief sketch of the use of coffins in England may be given here, together with some funeral customs that appear apposite. The use of both stone coffins and sarcophagi dates back to a remote antiquity, and was practised

¹ *Ency. Brill.*, 13th ed., vi, 650 ; see also articles 'Cist' and 'Sarcophagus', 13th and 14th editions.

by the Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician, Greek and other early civilizations. They appear to have been unknown in Britain before their introduction by the Romans. It is probable that British Christians may have adopted their use before the end of the Roman era. As evidence of early orientated interments in England and Ireland may be cited :—(1) the remarkable kistvaens under the present churchyard at Pytchley, Northants., where the dead were laid on their sides, with arms crossed, feet towards the east, and their faces looking at once towards the east and also the mid-day sun ; (2) the round tower of St. Canice's cathedral, Kilkenny, may possibly date back to the close of the sixth century. Beneath its actual walls various orientated skeletons have been uncovered ; in one case those of two children interred tandem-wise, with the pelvis of the first touching the cranium of the second, within a wooden coffin.

Posterior to the Roman occupation the use of stone coffins seems to have been continued—' Nor is there any reason for doubting the at least occasional use of stone coffins between the Roman period (in which they were common) and the 7th century '.² From this we gather the usage prevailed up to the 7th century. It was continued, in all probability, right through to late Anglo-Saxon, and succeeding days. There is some presumptive evidence of the Danes conforming to the practice, e.g. Dr Nash mentions the case of a stone coffin lined with lead and discovered at Crowle, Worcs., which contained human remains, being as he supposed those of Simund the Dane. In the early 9th century there is some dubious evidence of the burials of kings Kenulph and Kenelm in stone coffins at Winchcombe. In the north porch of the Saxon church at Bradford on Avon is the base of a very small child's coffin, showing distortion of the cavity, which may indicate an early date. At Muchelney,

² *Archæological Journal*, 1870, xxvii, 111.

Somerset, there is a coffin (FIG. 2, A) of unusual form, which is probably of Saxon date and may possibly form a connecting link between the round-headed Roman coffins, so common in the Bath locality and those of medieval days. It has an even closer resemblance to the Binstead coffins (FIG. 1, E), the only main differences being the internal straight foot-end and the presence of drainage holes. Muchelney abbey is said to have been founded by Athelstan in 979.

During the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries the practice reached its zenith, with a gradual falling away till the 16th when it passed into practical desuetude, although there are a few later cases of its retention. In France the usage prevailed to the end of the 17th century in some places, e.g. in Le Maine.³ Some 14th century inhumations include those of Joanna de Bohun, 1327, with recumbent effigy at Hereford cathedral; of Abbot Cotes at Tewkesbury abbey, 1347, and of John Lavyngton, vicar of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, 1393. The association of coffins with brasses is probably much commoner than is generally accepted. Many, with coped covers, were removed from the floors of churches due to the inconvenience they caused, whilst when casements with brasses were introduced they were less liable to disturbance as they tended to form a permanent part of the pavement. Another factor which further preserved them was that by the time their use had become common many churches had largely assumed their final planning. A brass as a rule is inserted in a rectangular casement of much greater dimensions than those of a coffin. Mr T. A. Raven, F.S.A., informs me that when a brass is present in a coffin-shaped slab it is very good presumptive evidence that such is, or has been, superimposed on a stone coffin. At Adisham, Kent, a wedge-shaped slab

³ For burial of monks in stone coffins in England in the 11th and 12th centuries, see *Archaeological Journal*, 1870, pp. 110, 111.

that once contained a brass (*c.* 1325) commemorates Thomas de Upton, rector in 1310. It has a Lombardic inscription. At the 'Nun's Church', Romsey, is a very large rectangular slab, with indent, covering a small stone coffin containing the remains of an unknown ecclesiastic ascribed to the early part of the 14th century. At Etchingham, Sussex, the brass of William de Echyngam was laid over his coffin. He died about midnight 18 January 1388.

Following the disuse of stone coffins their place was largely taken by wooden ones, sometimes lined with lead for the interment of persons of eminence or wealth. Interesting evidence of this is provided by the strange memorial to the Sleigh family at Sutton on the Hill, Derby. Here is a canopied table-tomb on which is placed—in lieu of either a recumbent or reclining effigy—a marble sham stone coffin of large size painted black, and depicting a wooden coffin of the period. It is four-sided and has a ridged top. Its date is *c.* 1640, probably 1642. During this century we read of the rector of Ronaldkirke who was buried 'in linnen, without chiste or cophin'. In many churchyards may be seen sham stone coffins or coffin-shaped slabs of hexagonal form, representing wooden coffins of their period. These are mostly of the 18th century. In Gloucestershire may be cited (1) Southrop, two adjacent table-tombs (1718 and 1719) support small plain coffins, each a little over 4 feet in length; (2) at Haresfield, to the north of the church a plain rectangular stone supports a triple tier of diminishing hexagonal slabs, the uppermost of which has a ridged top with six facets—on the south long facet the earliest date is 1816. From the above we may deduce that our present hexagonal coffins were preceded by four-sided ones, observing that in France and some other parts of the continent the use of that form is still customary. In the 17th century may be noted some curious interments in lead originally within outer wooden coffins, *i.e.* at

(1) Worcester cathedral, William, Duke of Hamilton, c. 1651; (2) chapel of Farleigh Hungerford castle. In a vault, beneath the north transept, are seven members of the Hungerford family. In both the above cases the bodies were embalmed and encased within lead coffins of mummiform shape depicting the features in relief and gradually tapering from the shoulders to the feet. For some time before burial in a wooden coffin became general it was customary for many of our churches to possess one or more 'parish' or 'communal' coffins. These were used for conveying the corpse to the church and thence to the grave. It is of some interest to note that in the service for the burial of the dead in the Book of Common Prayer there is no mention at all of the word coffin: either the 'corpse' or 'body' is always referred to. These coffins are now of great rarity: on falling into desuetude the great majority probably were broken up for firewood and other purposes. I can now only cite two examples—there may be a few more. (1) Howden collegiate church, Yorks (W.R.), portion only with a hinged lid; (2) Easingwold, Yorks (N.R.), of oak and in excellent preservation. It is hexagonal and has a hinged lid. Last year the incumbent of the parish informed me that there was still one old man alive who could remember seeing it used, and that, as evidenced by entries in the church accounts, the following fees were payable for its use, viz. :—1s if covered by a woollen blanket, and 1s 6d if by a shroud.

In stone coffins showing crude workmanship it is hazardous to ascribe an early date, as in a number of cases the wealth of the family concerned may not have allowed any great outlay on their construction.

We may next consider the 'form' or 'shape' of English stone coffins.

ROMAN AND ROMANO-BRITISH COFFINS

Perhaps a majority of these can be classified under one or other of the types illustrated below (FIG. 1).

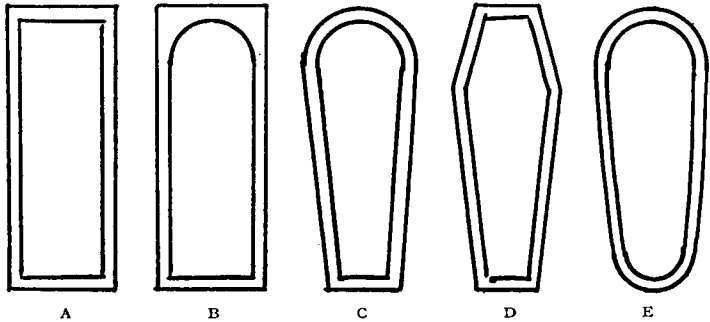


Fig. 1

(A) Rectangular or nearly so. A large number of this type can be seen at York.

(B) Head-end rounded internally. Also to be seen at York.

(C) Resembling a bath. Many of this type have been unearthed in the neighbourhood of Bath. Other examples include one at Ancaster, Lincs., and that of a child at Wilsford in the same county. R³, R⁴, and that at Bristol University are all of this type, which tends to show considerable asymmetricality, notably one in the courtyard of the Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Bath, which is tortuous to a degree. They usually taper towards the foot-end, but R¹ at Cirencester is an exception. Occasionally the head-end is 'sloped' as at Cold Ashton (R³), giving, in section, a 'prow-shaped' end.

(D) Of hexagonal form and very closely resembling our present-day wood coffins. One such is preserved at the Royal Literary and Scientific Institution at Bath, but I have been unable to discover its provenance. They appear to be of very great rarity in England: such a form was not unknown to the Greeks.

(E) Several of this type have been found at Binstead, Hants.

In addition to the above there are such exceptions as that of the famous coffin of Valerius Amandinus at Westminster abbey, where the interior is four-sided, whilst the external is hexagonal, due to two short bevells at one of its ends ; and that of the ' Eastness Sarcophagus' where the ends have low gables.

In these Roman and Romano-British coffins, head-recesses and drain holes are practically unknown.

Two oak coffins, supposed to be of the Roman period, were discovered during excavations on Castle Hill, Edinburgh : these were hewn out of the solid trunk of a tree, with a cavity shaped out for the head.

Turning now to medieval stone coffins we find in many a church and churchyard up and down the land these relics of a by-gone age, which, in many cases are being subjected to the ravages of frost and other disintegrating processes. Even when housing has been provided how, not infrequently, is their nobility marred by their present use as dumps for brush and broom, cleaning materials and even for coke for the church stove ! But these receptacles for the bodies of our forefathers, few of which lack some individual peculiarity, surely have some higher claim on our good will and charity. Humanly speaking it seems highly improbable their use will be revived, and if this be so their preservation for future generations would appear to be of the greatest possible desirability, and this apart from the fact that any modern resuscitation would largely fail to reproduce the mode of craftsmanship that went into their making. Another consideration—quite often these coffins, dating back for 400 to 1000 years, have been subjected to their present exposure for perhaps 50 to 100 years or more ; what will their condition be some 300 years hence ? A desirable way to give them some relative protection has been adopted at Box, Wilts., and at Bakewell, Derby, where they have been erected

against walls on their lower ends in the churchyards—it would seem such a method might sometimes be adopted within churches, where the floor-space is often considerably restricted.

When we consider the form of medieval coffins, we find a larger variety of types than those employed by the Romans, and usually there is but little chance of confusing the two.

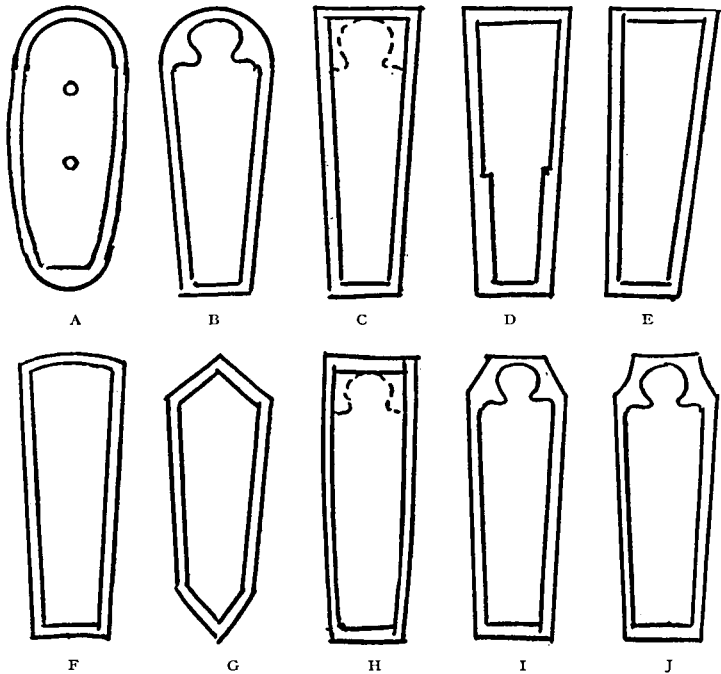


Fig. 2

(A) At Muchelney, Somerset. Probably of Saxon date. Sides slightly convex and straight-ended internally at foot (FIG. 2, A).

(B) An example occurs at Muchelney abbey, and a second built up in a 'cist-like' manner may be seen *in*

situ below ground-level in the north aisle of the nave of the Cistercian abbey of Beaulieu. Very rare. (FIG. 2, B).

(c) The common tapered form—with or without a head-recess. Of the 28 medieval coffins in Gloucestershire, illustrated, all except M⁴, M⁵, M¹⁴ and M²⁷ conform to this type. (FIG. 2, c). Of the 24 whose interiors can be seen only M²⁴ lacks a recess. At the Black abbey, Kilkenny, is a coffin of this form having an apse internally at its head-end—very rare.

(D) A curious variety of type c, Beverley Minster. (FIG. 2, D).

(E) Tapered, but with two right-angles—presumably for placing above ground within a wall or recess and maintaining a flush front. (FIG. 2, E). M¹⁴ is the only Gloucestershire example I can cite. (FIG. 3, p. 161).

(F) With segmental head. (FIG. 2, F), rare.

(G) Octagonal, and very rare. (FIG. 2, G)⁴.

(H) With sides slightly convex. (FIG. 2, H). M⁴, M⁵, and M²⁷ supply examples.

(I) Hexagonal, with bevels at upper end—the nearest approach to present-day English coffins. (FIG. 2, I). An example may be seen in the churchyard at Ross-on-Wye. Very rare.

(J) Hexagonal, with two short sides concave at the head end. (FIG. 2, J). Occurs in the churchyard of St. Benedict's, Lincoln. Very rare.

Both of the last-named types allow of conservation of weight and space, without appreciably weakening their structure, and it is difficult to know why they were not employed more often.

In addition to the above there are some of 'freak' shape, presumably due to the block of stone available. In the churchyard of St. Mary, Ely, there is a small coffin (?) of trapezoidal form, and at Beverley Minster is one where the head angles are about 80° and 90° instead of the normal 85° and 85°.

⁴ See Boutell, *Christian Monuments*, pt. 1, p. 9.

CIST FORM OF MEDIEVAL COFFINS. The following cases may be cited :—(1) Flixton, Suffolk. During the demolition of the highly curious leaning tower a large coffin built up of rag-masonry was found four feet below the ground. The cavity had a rectangular head-recess, and also shaping for the shoulders. Probably so constructed from want of other material in the neighbourhood.⁵

(2) At Chertsey abbey on the site of the south transept there was uncovered one of the most striking collections of medieval coffins in the country. Of these three were solid and possessed head-recesses. The remaining seven were constructed of blocks and slabs of ashlar: one of them had a solid head with recess of circular shape; two had rectangular recesses, each formed of three stones, whilst a fourth had a wedge-shaped recess of three components, the upper one of these also formed the foot-stone of another coffin immediately to the eastward.⁶

One of the most interesting stone coffins in England is at the Cistercian abbey, Tintern. It is four-sided and of type c, but the tapering is very slight, about 1 inch over a distance of 70 inches. In section it exhibits a 'prow-shaped' head with considerable oversailing. The cavity is highly curious—at its upper end, and close to the commencement of the sloped head-walling, is a shallow circular depression of about 8 inches diameter, which appears to be inserted to receive the back of a skull. The corresponding stature of the body would be about 5 feet, so that the extended sloping walling seems to be superfluous. Another peculiarity is a long axial groove lacking drainage holes: I could detect no signs of any having been stopped up. This coffin has apparently at one time been used as a water-trough, as evidenced by a cut-away portion of the walling. The internal depth is 10 inches, and an inch greater at the circular depression.

⁵ *Archaeological Journal*, 1857, xiv, 360-2, with illustration.

⁶ *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 1, illustrated opposite p. 114.

DOUBLE COFFINS. In the churchyard at Offord Darcy, Hunts., may be seen a stone antiquity which may be a 'double' coffin. It is of type H and is highly weathered. Its internal dimensions are approximately :—length 5 feet 2 inches, width at head 2 feet 8 inches, and at foot, 1 foot 10 inches. Present depth is from 7 to 8½ inches. In the Baptistry of St. Jean, Poitiers, is a very fine double coffin, divided into two cavities by an axial walling.

HEAD-RECESSES. Gloucestershire exhibits a fine range of varieties, the majority of which are 'raised' by an amount of from 1 to 3½ inches above the torso flooring. Shapes may be classified as (1) circular, M¹⁹; (2) semi-circular, M²²; (3) rectangular, M¹; (4) bell-shaped, M⁶; (5) elliptical, M⁵; (6) wedge-shaped, M², etc. Some curious shapes occur at Worksop priory, Notts. This raising of the head, apparently unprovided for in the structure of a great majority of Roman coffins, is an extremely common feature in medieval ones. Of the 23 Gloucestershire examples illustrated as having head-recesses, only five are not so raised.

Where such raising does not structurally occur in the head cavity, there is reason to believe that some form of 'pillow' may have been inserted; this is evidenced by a remarkable discovery at Romsey abbey 'where a leaden coffin was found in 1839, in which had been deposited in a shell or inner chest of oak the corpse of a young female; all the bones had wholly fallen to dust and nothing appeared except the scalp of a beautiful flowing hair with long plaited locks found in the position where the head had rested, as on a pillow, upon a block of oak, which may have contributed to the remarkable preservation of the hair'.

The practice seems to have been very common from Anglo-Saxon days right up to the present time—one practical result being that there is some increase required in the depth of the coffin—no mean consideration in the

case of stone coffins. The practice doubtless facilitated the custom of sometimes placing chalices, etc., on the breasts of ecclesiastics, and also added some meed of dignity to the departed. At Newent is a finely sculptured 'pillow-stone' of Anglo-Saxon workmanship associated with a burial where no coffin was employed. Curiously enough this stone, on one of its dexter sides, portrays a small figure within an open coffin having a recess—quite probably representing a type of the period.⁷ Such raising is also present in a large proportion of our monumental effigies, brasses, etc. I doubt if the custom has any religious significance. In a few cases the depth of the recess appears inadequate, and, it is possible, compensation was provided by some hollowing out of the underside of the cover. At Chertsey abbey one of the coffins referred to earlier had its recess irregularly shaped so as to accurately accord with a deformity in the neck of the occupant as proved by the vertebrae.

FLOORING OF CAVITY. In medieval coffins it is found not infrequently, that the flooring is hollowed with a slight longitudinal concave curve from shoulder to foot, thus adapting it, to some extent, to the form of the human figure: in very rare cases a popliteal ridge may occur.

DRAINAGE HOLES AND CHANNELLING. A considerable majority of medieval coffins have such drainage holes, not infrequently in conjunction with channelling. These holes are almost invariably circular; very exceptionally square as at Barrowby, Lincs. The numbers commonly vary from one to four and are normally disposed on the central axis of the coffins but there are many exceptions (M¹ and M⁶). I have speculated as regards their presence in particular ones, and was inclined once to believe that their absence indicated the coffin in question was intended to be placed above ground and *vice versa*. I have had to abandon this theory as at the Cistercian abbey of

⁷ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LV, illus. opp. p. 265.

Croxden are three coffins, *in situ*, below ground level, none of which has holes, whilst at Muchelney abbey is a coffin *in situ* and above ground which has three. The channelling takes various forms: at the Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis a St. Andrew's cross extends the whole length of the flooring as far as the shoulders. I do not think these crosses of various forms denote any religious signification. Of the 23 medieval stone coffins illustrated, and whose cavities I have been able to see, 19 possess holes and 7 associated grooving.

REBATING. Rebating of the inner edges of the walling for taking a stepped cover is seldom met with, but such occur at Compton Pauncefote, Somerset, and also, I believe, in the coffin of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, at Llanrwst.

ORNAMENTATION OF COFFIN BODY. Of very rare occurrence, but important as it assists to determine the date. At Conisborough, Yorks (w.R.), are a coffin and cover of probably early Norman date which are very richly ornamented with figures, etc. At Llanrwst the coffin of Prince Llewelyn, *c.* 1240, has its sides richly decorated with large quatrefoils, etc.⁸ In the cloisters of Lincoln cathedral is a coffin whose north side is enriched with 9 interlacing rings; probably of 13th century date. (Cf. a lid at Llantwit, South Wales, with 21 such rings on its dexter side). In Ireland at Cashel and Kilkenny are two coffins, with their sides enriched with pointed panels and quatrefoils (? 13th century). One at Llan-y-Blodwell, Salop, has an external cross.

We may now consider the classes of people who were inhumed in stone coffins. At all periods their use was of a very restricted nature, and in Roman days largely confined to high officials, warriors and persons of wealth, etc. Romans who were rich enough had them made of a limestone brought from Assos in Troas, which it was commonly

⁸ Illustrated in Boutell, *Christian Monuments*, pt. 1, p. 17.

believed 'ate the body', hence arose the name 'sarcophagus'. In medieval times persons so interred included royalty, ecclesiastics—both of high and low rank—knights and others of title or eminence, saints and others of reputed sanctity, and a limited number of seculars with some claim to notoriety, as e.g., 'William the Geometer' at Bristol cathedral, 'Godfrey the Trumpeter', Guildhall chapel, London, 13th century, etc. Coffins for children and infants are not very rare—Gloucestershire in M²⁷ and M²⁸ furnishes excellent examples. Others may be seen at St. Mark, Lincoln; Wilsford, Lincs. (one Roman and one medieval); Burford, Oxon.; Barnack, Northants; Bradford on Avon Saxon church, etc.

Occasionally exhumed coffins cannot be viewed internally as the cover has been replaced: at Ashover, Derby, the cover is suspended above, and in some other cases may be seen near at hand. More often than not coffin and cover are entirely divorced, which generally makes it extremely hazardous to attempt to date the former, as there are normally none of the distinctive features, such as mouldings, floriations, etc. that mark the successive periods of English church architecture. Sometimes a date may be assigned by type of chalice, etc., that may have been inserted.

'Open' coffins *in situ* are very rarely met with and I am acquainted with none such in Gloucestershire. Three may be seen at Croxden abbey (Cistercian), Staffs., two at Muchelney abbey, Somerset, and one at Beaulieu (Cistercian)—all are orientated.

DOUBLE BURIALS. On the east side of Portland a Romano-British coffin was found containing the remains of two adults, supposed to have been male and female. Another, discovered near St. Bartholomew's hospital, London, contained skeletons of a man and woman facing opposite ways. At Hatford Peverell, Essex, a wide coffin measuring internally about 6 feet 6 inches by 2 feet was found to contain two skeletons—possibly those of

Ingelrica, foundress of the priory at that place, and of her husband. At Ribchester, Lancs., and at Silchester, Hants., are, or were, two very wide slabs of type c, FIG. 2, commemorating in each case two persons—these may have been the lids of two double-coffins.

HEART BURIALS. Not infrequently the heart of a deceased person was interred in a stone receptacle. In Gloucestershire the only heart burial I know of occurs at Cubberley—believed to be that of Sir Giles Berkeley, but I have no information as regards the mode of its deposition. At the Black abbey, Kilkenny, may be seen a square block of stone with a cavity having the form of a *Vesica Pisces*—doubtless the receptacle for a heart. At St. Alban's abbey were interred the body and heart of Roger de Norton (abbot 1260–1290)—the latter before the altar of the Chapel of the Four Tapers in a cylindrical cavity worked in two blocks of freestone containing a wooden box, the former probably before the high altar.

SECONDARY USES. Apart from their frequent use as water-troughs many have been employed for the repairing and building of stone structures: in Gloucestershire M¹² to M¹⁵ furnish an excellent example. At Chadshunt, Warwick, the upper portion of one may be seen built into the south walling of the church internally. At Cashel, at the entrance to the chapel of the Presentation Convent (site of Hackett's abbey) is an enriched coffin now re-used as a benatura. Covers also were very commonly built into later structures. In Gloucestershire a very notable example is in the tower of Kemble church, where many such may be seen: other cases occur at Elkstone, and Valle Crucis abbey (Cistercian)—at the latter incorporated above the severies of a vaulted compartment.

STOCK SIZES. There is some reason for thinking that coffin covers were sometimes kept at certain centres where good stone was plentiful, e.g. at Helpstone and Barnack, Northants. Can these have formed the stock-in-trade

of some adventurous stone mason? Is it also possible that actual coffins at the same time were 'stored'?

Some of the vast saints' coffins in France have their bodies and covers bound together by iron straps, as in the crypts of St. Germain at Auxerre and at St.-Maixent-l'École (Deux Sèvres). The intention was doubtless to prevent theft and desecration. I can quote no such examples in this country.

It would seem almost certain that in a majority of cases the stone coffin was already *in situ* before the corpse was deposited therein, and we may infer that very often they, together with their covers, were constructed during the lifetime of the future occupants. It is well-known that certain brasses were so completed, with the one exception of the date of decease. Often the body was swathed with cerecloth, whilst occasionally it was clothed in a hair-shirt, woven to fit the body, thighs, legs and feet: probably the latter procedure was almost entirely confined to ecclesiastics and members of religious orders. The head of King John was encased with a close-fitting skull-cap, which appeared to have been buckled under the chin, whilst the boots and other portions of the royal apparel were in fair condition. It may here be observed that the presence of boots necessitated a somewhat greater length of the coffin and also that in many cases the body was clothed in the same manner as that depicted in the effigy, brass, etc. Sometimes the arms of the corpse were disposed at its sides, at others they were crossed above the breast or with the hands conjoined. Cases of cross-legged interments have been found at Hereford cathedral and at Brougham church, Westmorland. In some cases considerable time must have elapsed between death and inhumation, and there are records of bodies being gashed and salted to temporarily delay decomposition whilst the corpse was conveyed from one locality to another, e.g. in the case of the translation of the body of King John

from Newark to Worcester cathedral—in this case the viscera were separately interred at Croxton abbey.

‘ It was by no means unusual to appropriate earlier grave-stones and to disturb the remains of those they covered. The great number that sought interment in the churches rendered this appropriation necessary. Altar tombs and stone coffins appear to have been used again without the slightest scruple, and in many cases we may still observe two or three inscriptions of different dates upon the same stone ’.⁹

The following extract seems to suggest that ordinary monks were not usually interred in stone coffins and that the Requiem Mass may have been celebrated in the Infirmary Chapel and not in the Oratorium. ‘ Any monk attacked by sickness was first removed to the infirmary, and after death his body was conveyed to the “ Dead Man’s chamber in the said Farmery ” ’ and at night was placed in the infirmary chapel. ‘ At eight o’clock in the following morning it was conveyed to the chapter-house, where the prior and hole convent did meat hime, and there did say there dirges and devotion. And after there devocion the dead corpes was caryed by the monnckes from the chapter house through the parler . . . standing betwixt the chapter house and the church dour, and so throwghe the said parler in the Sentuarie garth where he was buried ’.¹⁰

ORIENTATION. In the case of medieval interments this was almost universal, but there are a few exceptions, e.g. (1) Abbot Cotes at Tewkesbury abbey; (2) Two singular chalk tombs at Westminster abbey near the original site of the burial of Valerius Amandinus—the axes of these when continued towards the southeast are said to pass directly through the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor.

⁹ *Arch. Journal*, 1855, XII, 239-40.

¹⁰ *Arch. Journal*, 1863, XX, 265.

ARTICLES DEPOSITED. As regards Roman coffins in Gloucestershire I have noted their contents later. Here one may mention, however, the case of one discovered at Combe Down, near Bath. The skeleton contained within it was in good preservation, but the jaw was discoloured by a small bronze coin, which had probably been placed in the mouth as a *naulum* for the transit over the Styx.

In the case of medieval coffins Gloucestershire does not present many remarkable discoveries, perhaps the most noteworthy being the knife found within M²⁴.

'The custom of lighting candles round a dead body and watching at its side all night was originally due to the belief that a corpse, like a person asleep, is specially liable to the assaults of demons. The practice of tolling a bell at death must have had a similar origin, for it was a common medieval belief that the sound of a consecrated bell drives off the demons which when a man dies gather near in the air to waylay his fleeting soul. For a like reason the consecrated bread of the Eucharist was often buried with believers, and St. Basil is said to have specially consecrated a Host to be placed in his coffin'.¹¹

According to the relation of Bede a portion of the Eucharist was placed upon the breast of St. Cuthbert. This usage had been adopted from very early times, although forbidden by several councils.

Part of the sword and its leathern sheath were found in King John's coffin: the crown and sceptre—if any existed—probably of base-metal (as were those found in the tomb of Edward 1), may have been removed.

In Chichester cathedral a leaden coffin was found to contain an early 15th century ivory devotional tablet.

In the coffins of ecclesiastics have been found a variety of objects, e.g. episcopal rings, pastoral staffs, chalices and patens—these latter were often of pewter or fictile

¹¹ *Ency. Brit.*, 13th edit., xi, 332.

material, exceptionally of silver. In the relation of the interment of a French bishop it is stated that a lamp was placed in his coffin, so that at the moment it was closed it might still be full of light. An ancient writer on ritual observances, cited by Martene, states that it was customary to place over the head of the corpse a 'sigillum' of wax, fashioned in the form of a cross; that the bodies of persons who had received sacred orders ought to be interred in the vestments worn by them at ordination, and that on the breast of the priest ought to be placed a chalice, which in default of such sacred vessel of pewter should be of earthenware. The name 'Coffin' appears to have occurred in Gloucestershire in the 12th century.¹² It may well indicate a connexion with the manufacture of stone coffins.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COFFINS

I will now attempt to describe in some detail the various Gloucestershire examples, with which I am acquainted. I fear it may prove to be a very incomplete list as references to them are very frequently omitted in guide and other books. Probably only a personal visit to every church, etc., in the county, together with the perusal of a vast amount of literature, would provide anything like complete information as regards their locations, etc.*

AVENING

Discovered beneath the north aisle of the church during repairs in 1902-1903. May possibly be of Norman or earlier date. Recorded by Dr St. Clair Baddeley in *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LV, 8.

BERKELEY

On a pathway to the south of the chancel of St. Mary's church is a (possible) Roman fragment. It is probably

¹² *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LVII, 107.

* The publication of this list may lead to others becoming known and the Editor will be glad to receive particulars for publication.

part of the head-end and is rounded both externally and internally. I can obtain no information regarding it, but the church itself has some Roman insertions, including an inscribed tile or brick.

BISLEY

In the grounds of Over Court is a very long tapered coffin, which was discovered *c.* 1854 in Bisley churchyard. From its form—convex sides and straight ends—and with incomplete evidence as regards its interior, I am inclined to ascribe it to medieval rather than Roman origin. The finding within it of a girl's skeleton—apparently that of a second interment—seems to have started the fiction of the 'Bisley Boy', a matter of pure invention. Length: external, 89 inches—the second longest in the county; internal, 81 inches; width: external at head, 27 inches and at foot, 18 inches; external depth, 18 inches; thickness of walling, 4 inches.

BOURTON ON THE WATER (M¹)

Possibly that of Walter de Burhton, founder of the church in 1328. Discovered in 1735 under the chantry chapel. Of Cotswold stone. It presents four unusual features: (1) rectangular head recess, probably the only one in the county; (2) floor of recess is raised by a short upward slope, and not by a 'step', which is customary; (3) the foot-walling, both externally and internally slopes inwards; the length of the base is thus somewhat greater than that of the top of the coffin. Extremely rare; (4) curious disposition of the drainage holes.

(2) Roman burial. *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LVII, 243

BRISTOL

At least ten coffins may still be seen, and there are records of others. The disposition of the above is as follows, viz.:—Cathedral, 4; St. Mary Redcliffe, 3;

Crypt of St. Nicholas, 2; and University of Bristol Speleological museum, 1.

CATHEDRAL. These four (M², M³, M⁴, M⁵) constitute a fine series indeed; they are well housed in the north wall of the cloisters, the fourth being through a locked door.

M², Pennant stone? Features: (1) large size and thick walling; (2) sides and foot-end converge inwards slightly—the latter about 3 inches in direct contrast to M¹, at Bourton on the Water; (3) head-recess is wedge-shaped and is the only one of this form that I am acquainted with in Gloucestershire. (Cf. M²³ and one at Worksop priory, Notts., where somewhat similar forms may be seen). 'A'—surface sunk 1 to 2 inches below top of coffin.

M³, Pennant stone? Features: (1) excessive thickness of flooring, averaging about 12 inches. Dr F. S. Wallis has kindly computed its weight and estimates it at about 32 cwt; (2) externally the breadth at the base is somewhat greater than that of the top—very rare; (3) abnormal thickness of walling; (4) form of recess. This is unique as far as my knowledge goes. 'A'—surface sunk 4 inches below top.

M⁴, Bath freestone? Features: (1) longest coffin in the county; (2) abnormally large and approaching a gigantic size; (3) irregularity and abnormal thickness of walling; (4) presence of a popliteal ridge (P.R.) at region of the knees—the only medieval example with which I am acquainted; (5) tapering is not true—there is some convexity of the sides.

M⁵, Bath freestone?—much weathered. Features: (1) abnormal length; (2) side walling has marked convexity and is also very thin. (Type H, FIG. 2); (3) straight-sided 'necking' of head-recess about 2½ inches long and extremely rare, if not unique; (4) extreme narrowness of the foot-end.

The above four coffins described were removed from

under the floor of the chapter house in 1831 and I am informed that about nine others were discovered at the same time and broken up. They are said to have been lying in all directions and had probably been disturbed before. They are probably all of an early date—in particular M³ is of such ponderous construction as to suggest possible Saxon craftsmanship.

Within the cathedral may be seen (1) coffin slab of 'William the Geometer' in the north choir aisle.¹³; (2) in the north transept is 'Abbot David's coffin lid'. As its length is only 65 inches it seems very doubtful if it ever formed the cover of an actual coffin; (3) in the floor of the north aisle of the choir is inserted a tapered lid, 67 inches by 27 inches by 20½ inches, which appears to have been reversed: near its upper end is a square marble inset with inscription, and the date 1777; (4) in the south transept is a Saxon slab representing the 'Harrowing of Hell'. It is said to have been found in 1831 under the chapter house flooring. It seems very unlikely it ever was intended for a coffin lid, as has sometimes been claimed.

ST. MARY REDCLIFFE. Of at least three coffins now piled up with other stone antiquities at the west end of the tower-space only one can be seen properly.

M⁶. Probably that of John Lavyngton, vicar 1393. There is a cover with effigy and inscription near at hand. This coffin presents no unusual feature though the form of the head-recess seems to be peculiar to the county. (Cf. the one in Box churchyard, Wilts.).

ST. NICHOLAS CRYPT. Beneath the arcade are two coffins.

M⁷, Dundry stone? Features: (1) Bevel (A) between the skull and shoulders; this is uniform, but does not extend to greatest breadth of shoulders. This bevelling, as far as I am aware, is unique; (2) side wallings are of

¹³ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LX, 342-3.

different thicknesses; (3) thickness of flooring—over 6 inches—is in excess of usual practice for such a relatively small coffin; (4) externally the upper part has been much more carefully worked than the lower.

M⁸, Dundry stone? Features: (1) abnormal length, the third longest in the county; (2) the 'step' up to the recess is partially rounded—rare. Both M⁷ and M⁸ have been coated with a thin cement wash.

CHURCH OF THE BLACK FRIARS. In 1814 three very large coffins were discovered on the site of the north aisle of the oratorium. All appear to have had circular head-recesses; two contained skeletons of men and the third that of a woman of large stature. All three were probably broken up and reused for repairs to a near-by bridge and other structures.¹⁴

A tapered 13th century slab was found near the church in 1937. Its dimensions are 80 inches by 30 inches by 20 inches by 7 inches thick. It seems very improbable it ever formed a cover to any of the above.

Bristol medieval coffins seem to be remarkable for their large size; in the seven described above there would have been room for bodies of the following statures, viz.:—M², 6 feet; M³, 6 feet 1 inch; M⁴, 6 feet 10 inches; M⁵, 6 feet 8½ inches; M⁶, 6 feet 2½ inches; M⁷, 5 feet 9½ inches; M⁸, 6 feet 10 inches. We are also informed that the Black Friars skeletons were of gigantic size. Can it be these Austin Canons and Dominican Friars at Bristol were largely men of abnormal stature, or is there some other explanation, i.e. have only the finest and largest coffins been retained?

SPELEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY. This coffin is of the Romano-British period and is an alien, having been discovered at Bath.¹⁵ Generally speaking it

¹⁴ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LV, 151–90.

¹⁵ *Procs. Bath and Dist. Branch of the Somerset Arch. and N.H. Soc.* 1931, p. 374, and illustration.

is very similar to coffins R³ and R⁴. During March of this year my daughter, Mrs Crook, when inspecting this coffin noted a hitherto unrecorded and very rare feature, viz. : the presence of a popliteal ridge across the flooring, 21 inches from the outer foot-end. Inside is a box containing bones—presumably those of the person inhumed. These bones are very brittle and mineralized. Mrs Crook selected the right femur and tibia and on placing them in the correct position with respect to the ridge found there was just room for the foot. The rough cover is now fractured into five pieces. This coffin is unduly narrow at the shoulders, but its width increases slightly a little below the top of the walling. Its principal dimensions are : external length, 5 feet 11 inches ; maximum width, 20½ inches ; width at foot, 11½ inches ; internal depth varies from 10–11 inches, and at popliteal ridge is 9½ inches (av.).

CHELTENHAM (M⁹ AND M¹⁰)

These are in St. Mary's churchyard to the east and west of the southwest porch. Both are of a somewhat ordinary type and possess no outstanding points. The flooring of M⁹ was covered with rubble when I last saw it, so that inspection of its cavity was incomplete. M¹⁰ has two drain holes with connecting grooving.

CIRENCESTER

There would seem to be six Roman coffins which have been discovered either in the town or near vicinity. Of these two are exhibited near the entrance to the New Corinium Museum. A third, in Lord Bathurst's garden, was opened in 1877 and found to contain the skeleton of a female—now in the University Museum, Oxford. The fourth is in Lord Bathurst's kitchen garden on the south side of the Tetbury road.¹⁶ Two others are recorded as being (1878) in the gardens of Mr Laurence of the Querns

and Mr Christopher Bowly at Querns Hill respectively.¹⁶ I have failed to trace their present location.

Returning to the two first mentioned coffins, R¹ was discovered during excavations by the G.W. Railway Company at Querns Hill in February 1914, and was presented to the Corinium Museum. It contained the skeleton of a male with a portion of the upper jaw missing—perhaps that of a warrior killed in combat. The probable date of this interment was some time in the 4th century A.D. The weight of coffin and its cover is about 27 cwt. The cover is now under the coffin. Features: (1) heavy and massive construction; (2) sides roughly parallel, with slightly greater width at the foot-end. In both these respects it differs very markedly from coffins R³, R⁴, and that at Bristol University.

R². This may be the one found in a meadow in Ampney Crucis near a stream which divides that parish from Latton. It apparently contained an iron axe, a vessel of jug-like form of pale red pottery, a patera of black ware and some bones. The cover is now placed beneath it. Features: (1) sides very slightly tapered—about 1 inch over a length of a little more than 86 inches; (2) of massive construction; (3) at the head-end of the cavity the flooring slopes up very appreciably over a distance of some 9 or 10 inches and thus forms a species of head-recess. This, I believe, is very rarely found in Roman coffins.

COLD ASHTON MANOR (R³)

Discovered in February 1935, in garden and was found to contain earth and a male skeleton—it has since been covered with earth again. No cover was present and the side walling has been cut away at four places for two transverse modern pipes. Coarsely carved from a soft Oolite stone, stated by a local builder to be a bastard

¹⁶ *A Guide to the Roman Antiquities at Cirencester Corinium Museum*, 1878.

Bath stone. Features: (1) extreme shallowness of the cavity, as this is only some 7 inches in depth it would appear insufficient to accommodate the body of an adult. I can only suggest its cover was hollowed out on the under-side—such a cover, with its under-side cut away by a uniform curve, may be seen at Priston church, Somerset, where is also preserved the corresponding coffin, which latter is of somewhat similar shape to that at Cold Ashton, of shallow depth, and considered to be of the Roman period; (2) the head-walling is considerably sloped both within and without, giving it, in vertical section, a sort of 'prow-shape'; (3) at the foot is a rather large drain hole drilled horizontally through the walling at about the level of the flooring. Such holes are practically unknown in Roman coffins and this may not be an original feature. Evidence on which it was considered to be of Roman origin: (1) form, and also, perhaps, the very unusual position of the drain hole; (2) distance from any church; (3) position, i.e. lying north-south.

DYRHAM (R⁴)

Discovered 19 March 1932 in a field called 'Turks' during ploughing operations. It is now in Dyrham churchyard and has been mounted on a cement base to preserve its flooring, which was considerably damaged. The hole near the foot is modern. It contained fragments of pottery of Roman origin, and also the skeleton of a male, 5 feet 2 inches in stature, and had been deposited roughly north-south. Of local freestone. Features: (1) extreme shallowness of cavity—about $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. (See remark under R³); (2) asymmetrical shape on plan. On 6 May 1932 a second coffin was unearthed in the same field. It was so damaged that it has not been preserved. It apparently contained parts of two skeletons, one of which was almost certainly that of a male about 5 feet 5 inches. No covers were found with either coffins and it may well be that during centuries of ploughing any such

have been gradually broken up and dispersed by ploughshares.¹⁷

FROCESTER (M¹¹)

In the parish churchyard to the east of the southwest porch and in a very good state of preservation. Its only feature of unusual character is the slight slope of the foot-walling internally, the outer face being vertical.

GLOUCESTER

The museum possesses one Roman coffin. This is the one which formerly stood in the portico of the Shire Hall. At present it is stored in the Corporation depot, and its provenance seems doubtful—probably it is one of the coffins discovered at Kingsholm many years ago.¹⁸

CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS. In a modern wall on the right side of a way leading from the Infirmary buildings to

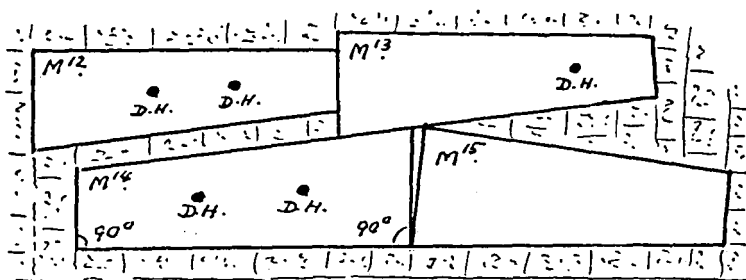


Fig. 3. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$ inch = 1 foot

Miller's Green, and nearly opposite the Little Cloister are to be seen the undersides of four medieval coffins (FIG. 3). Three of them have drain holes which have now been cemented up. The only point of interest that can now

¹⁷ *Procs. Univ. of Bristol Speleological Soc.*, IV, no. 2.

¹⁸ For other Roman coffins discovered at Kingsholm, see *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LV, 93.

be discerned relates to M¹⁴. In this the lower side and the two ends have two right-angles. (See FIG. 2, E). As far as I know this is the only Gloucestershire coffin with this characteristic.

GUITING POWER (M²⁷)

This tiny coffin is now within the church and has been placed near the pulpit. It is in excellent preservation and must be one of the smallest in the country. Its features are its slightly convex sides and form of head-rest, the latter with segmental head and curved sides—the recess is not raised and there are no drain holes.

HAILES

The small church here in all probability contains two coffins. Immediately to the north and south of the altar may be seen two coped lids flush with the floor level; they are almost certainly superimposed above the coffins. The chancel is the oldest part of the church and of Norman date.

HARESFIELD (M¹⁶)

The only feature appears to be the drain hole which is roughly funnel-shaped. At the top it is about 6 inches in diameter narrowing to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This may be due to erosion and weeds growing through the hole. There is a somewhat ill-defined groove extending from the drain hole to near the foot.

HAZLETON (M¹⁷)

To southwest of south porch of the parish church. Badly fractured and has a single drain hole, with channeling running towards the head. The only special feature is that the neck orifice of the head-recess slopes downwards with widths of $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches at top and $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches at base. Cotswold stone.

HILL

' A covered cup of elegant workmanship, stated to have been found, with a paten and two enamels, in a stone coffin at Hill Court, near Thornbury, Glos. There are some ancient buildings, connected with the church at that place, described as cloisters ; over these was a chamber, the wall of which adjoining the church falling into decay was taken down, and in the centre of it was discovered a large stone coffin, containing a skeleton which quickly mouldered to dust, and the ancient relics above mentioned.

' The cup had been described as a chalice, but its form and decorations indicate a secular intention '.¹⁹

In a paper²⁰ by Herbert Jenner-Fust, esq., of Hill Court, there is mention of the finding of three skeletons at different times in or near the church and house, but none of these finds was associated with a coffin-burial. I am informed by the present vicar of Hill that there are now neither traces nor any record of any such coffin or relics still existing locally.

KEMPSFORD

References to three coffins are made in a paper on Kempsford.²¹ One of these was discovered under the north porch of the parish church and a second a little to the northwest of the first-named. Both may possibly be of Norman or earlier date and are presumably still *in situ* below ground.

The third is of white marble and contains the body of Lord Coleraine. It is of 18th century date and in 1858 was removed from the chancel and deposited beneath the organ.

¹⁹ *Archaeological Journal*, 1850, VII, 194.

²⁰ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LIII, 156.

²¹ *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, LVII, 211, 214.

KINGSCOTE

' There is a field adjoining Ashel Barn called the Chestles a short way from Hunter's Hall, and in that field was once unearthed a stone coffin, while flint arrow-heads and Roman coins have been found there '.²² I have no further information.

LLANTHONY BY GLOUCESTER

The Augustinian priory was founded in 1136 by Milo de Bohun. Dr St. Clair Baddeley informs me that at its destruction (1819-1820) for the purpose of constructing the Berkeley Canal, some dozen or more coffins ' for convenient demolition were hurled direct into the Severn . . . and some of these were those of chancellors of England '.

NOTGROVE (M¹⁸)

Now in the southwest porch of the parish church. There are no particular features. The two drain holes are connected by grooving which also extends to within 3 inches of the head-rest and 5 inches of the inner foot-end.

OZLEWORTH (M¹⁹)

In the churchyard of the chapel of St. Nicholas close to the north wall of the nave lies a coffin of a rather ordinary type, but, in one respect, possessing great singularity in that its upper portion towards the head-end has had seven laminated strips and pieces incorporated. It would appear that the stone block available was not of sufficient depth to allow of the whole coffin being carved from it. These seven filling sections—one of which is now missing—are secured to the main body by leaden dowels, the constructor having carefully avoided the use of iron, which would have caused fracturing as the result

²² *Bristol Evening World*, 10 November 1939.

of oxidation. These dowels are indicated on the plan (see facing p. 168).

STINCHCOMBE (M²⁵)

Deposited in the parish churchyard to the south of the tower with its head embedded in turf. Little more than the head-end with its raised head-recess remains, and these call for no special mention.

TEWKESBURY ABBEY (M²⁰, M²¹, M²², M²⁸, etc.)

The abbey contains a greater number than any other church in the county—in all there are at least ten, of which three are *in situ* and closed. In the south ambulatory of the choir are three covered with Purbeck marble lids, each of the latter having a cross in relief. (1) Alanus (1187–1202). He was a friend of Thomas à Becket, having previously been Prior of Canterbury. On the lid is inscribed 'Alanus Dominus Abbas'. At the east end is an inscription 'Hic jacet Dominus Alanus Abbas'. This is no doubt the oldest monument in the abbey. (2) Ascribed to Robert Forthington (1232–54). (3) John Cotes (?–1347). The lid has the inscription 'Johannes Abbas hujus loci'. This is one of the comparatively few medieval tombs not orientated due to its insertion within one of the bays of the apse. Possibly it has been removed from its original position.

M²⁸. This arresting little coffin is now in an apsidal chapel to the east of the vestry. Despite its minute size it has no less than three drain holes. The head-recess is of semicircular form and is not raised. Much of the walling at the lower end has gone, but fortunately the flooring is intact; the latter is of very exceptional character in that at the mid-drain hole there is a step up of about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, this elevation extending to the foot of the coffin. It is possible it may have formed the depository of a child of the de Clare family (13th century).

In the garden bordering the north apsidal chapels, and very close to the latter, may be seen two coffin heads recently unearthed. Both have circular head-recesses but are of no particular interest.

The remaining four are now in the north walk of the cloisters.

M²⁰ exhibits a highly interesting feature. Out of the upper part of its north walling a slot measuring 8 inches in length by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in depth has been cut. It seems very unlikely to have served as a water overflow, and one can only speculate as regards some other signification. I was informed by one of the custodians at Westminster abbey that it is the custom, on the occasion of certain Roman Catholic pilgrimages, to have a certain stone removed from the north side of Edward the Confessor's shrine, and that nearly every pilgrim in passing is wont to insert a hand. Similar customs are common to both the Christian and some other religions. Is it possible that this Tewkesbury coffin at one time contained the mortal remains of some person noted for his or her sanctity, and that it was formerly deposited in the abbey above ground? This slot is somewhat low down as referred to the position of the heart of the corpse, which consideration does not tend to strengthen the above speculation. The coffin is fractured from side to side, the fracture passing through the slot.

M²¹ calls for no special mention: it is fractured and has two drain holes. The upper faces (A) of the head-recess are sunk about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the top of the walling. M²², the grooving here connects the two drain holes, and with its extensions forms a Latin cross. The above three coffins have recently been placed against the south wall of the nave aisle, whilst M²⁰ and M²¹ have been brought into use for flower cultivation, so that their cavities at present cannot be seen. M²¹ seems to have suffered recent further damage due to the hard winter of 1939-40. At the west end of the same walk is a roughly

built wall composed of loose blocks of stone, etc., which is, I believe only a year or two old. The bottom stone at the northeast angle probably would well repay extrication, as I have strong reasons for assuming it is the head portion of a coffin possessing a very rare and perhaps unique form of head-recess. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that the head cavity is only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth, its upper surface being sunk by an amount of about 6 inches from the top of the walling. It also has its flooring raised above that of the torso level. The lower part of a coffin—possibly that of the one just referred to—is probably also built into the same loose wall. At the east end of the walk and adjoining the garth may be seen a curious coffin lid which appears to be covering a coffin almost entirely below the surface.

WESTBURY ON SEVERN (M²⁶)

The upper half only now remains. The form of channelling must be rare and seems to be the most ambitious in the county. From what is left it appears to indicate a series of three drain holes, each with its own cross. The coffin is now deposited in the northwest porch of the parish church. The detached tower is *c.* 1270 and at a somewhat later time St. Mary's chantry was added to its east side. In 1862 this chantry was razed to the ground and the coffin was found in one of the walls. It once may have contained the body of its founder. The cut-away parts $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches and $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches deep suggest that at some time it may have been used for some secondary purpose.

WESTON SUB EDGE

There is a coffin here but I am unable to give any details of it. There are also four coped sepulchral slabs.

WHITTINGTON

Dr St. Clair Baddeley and the Rev. W. H. Goudge inform me that three coffins were removed from Whittington church above a century ago and incorporated into a big drain in Sandywell Park. In the church are three rectangular monumental slabs of the 13th and 14th centuries, commemorating members of the Crupes family. There appears to be some doubt if these ever formed the covers to the coffins mentioned above.

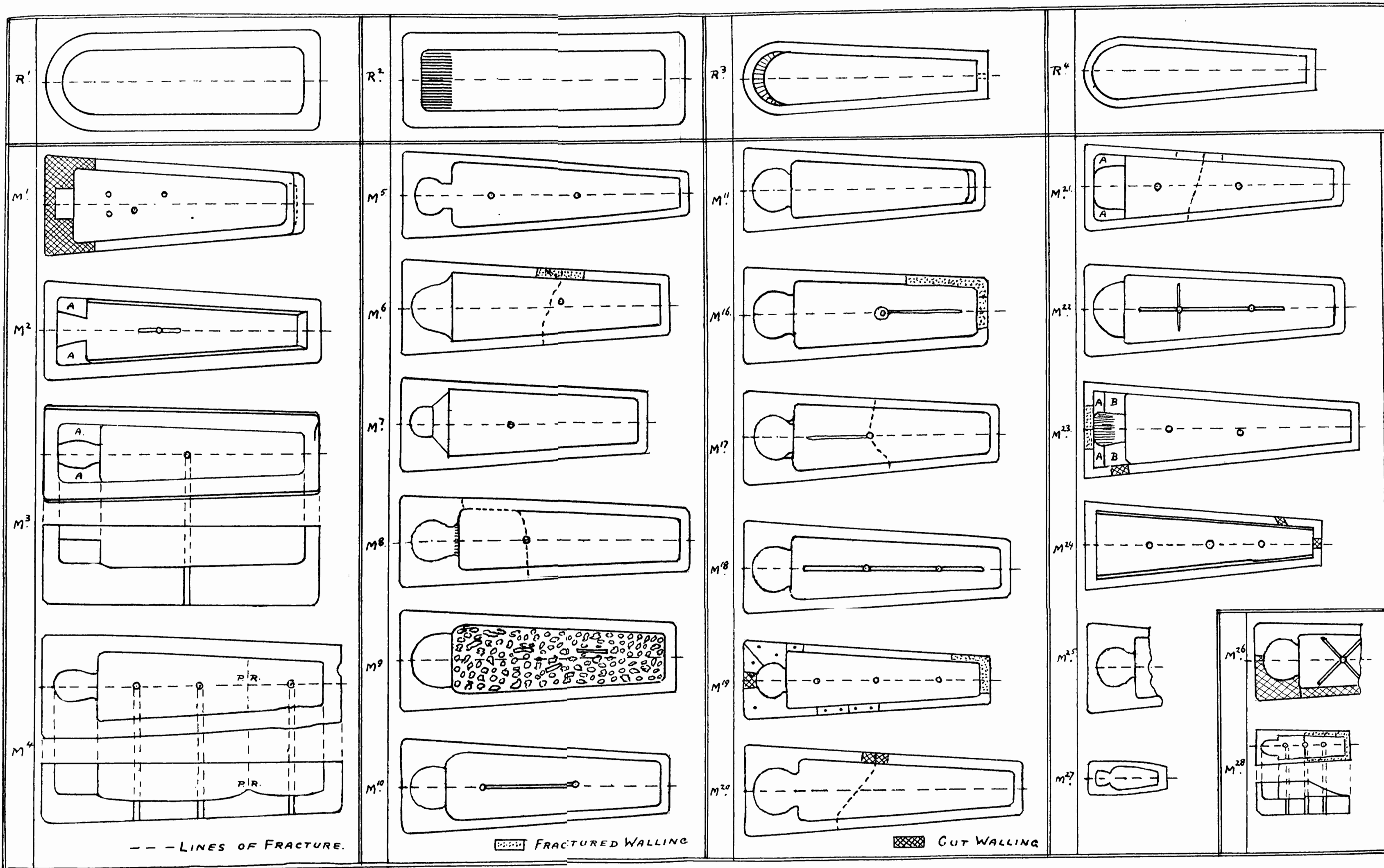
WINCHCOMBE (M²³ and M²⁴)

Leland says that :—‘ There lay buried in the east part of the church of the Monastery of Winchcombe, Kenulphus and Kenelmus, the father and sonne, both Kings of Merches ’.

‘ In 1815 . . . several ponderous stone coffins, containing the remains of human skeletons, were discovered, but the circumstance which attracted the most attention arose from the examination of a small stone coffin at the east end of the interior of the church, close to the side of another of the usual size. Upon the removal of the stone which covered it there appeared a skull with a few of the larger bones, and a very long-bladed knife, which was a mass of rust and fell to pieces on being handled. These were believed to be the remains of the young King Kenelm, murdered as stated in the Golden Legend, at the instance of his wicked sister Quen[d]rida, and of the instrument with which the bloody deed was perpetrated ; whilst the larger coffin was thought to contain the remains of his father King Kenulph, by whose side, some of the chroniclers tell us, the body of his son was buried ’.²³

The coffins are stated by another source to be ‘ those of Kenulf, king of Mercia 796–819, and of his son Kenelm, who at the age of thirteen was murdered in the year of

²³ *Archaeological Journal*, 1877, xxxiv, 97.



Roman Era:—R¹, R² Cirencester, R³ Cold Ashton, R⁴ Dyrham. Mediaeval:—M¹ Bourton on the Water, M²–M⁶ Bristol Cathedral, M⁶ Bristol—St. Mary Redcliffe, M⁷, M⁸ Bristol—St. Nicholas, M⁹, M¹⁰ Cheltenham, M¹¹ Frocester, M¹⁶ Haresfield, M¹⁷ Hazleton, M¹⁸ Notgrove, M¹⁹ Ozleworth, M²⁰, M²¹, M²², M²⁸ Tewkesbury Abbey, M²³, M²⁴ Winchcombe, M²⁵ Stinchcombe, M²⁶ Westbury on Severn, M²⁷ Guiting Power.

his accession to the throne at the instigation of his sister Cwenthryth. The coffins were exhumed in 1815 from the site of Winchcombe Abbey and in 1897 deposited in present recesses'.²⁴

These recesses are at the west end of the nave aisles. M²³, this, the larger of the two, is the one ascribed to King Kenulph. As it has a well-formed head-recess, it is of a more complicated type than M²⁴, the reputed coffin of King Kenelm. This head-recess is of a singular type. Its upper surface (A) is sunk $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches below the top of the walling with a length of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches and then takes the form of an uniform downward slope (B) to the bottom of the neck orifice. The floor of the head-recess is raised about $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the neck and then rises another 1 inch or so to the top of the skull. On the south side of the head-recess, some $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the end, a slot of about $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches has been cut out, which suggests it may at some time have served as a water-trough.

M²⁴, the cavity here is not at all uniformly excavated and the side walling slopes inwards to varying amounts. The absence of a head-recess is not necessarily evidence of an early date: in many respects this coffin somewhat closely resembles a 13th century example found at Cheam, Surrey. The latter contained the skeleton of an old priest with arms disposed at his sides and a pewter chalice and paten deposited at its northwest angle. At the centre of the foot walling of M²⁴, a semicircular piece $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width has been cut out, which again suggests a secondary use as a water-trough.

The chief, and perhaps only, evidence that M²⁴ may have contained the body of St. Kenelm was the presence of the rusted knife. Against this we find the coffin capable of taking a body of stature 5 feet 6 inches, a very unusual

²⁴ *A Handbook to Winchcombe Parish Church.*

height for a boy of thirteen years of age. Some authorities give his age as being much younger. It also seems unlikely that the body of a king should be inhumed in such a crudely worked coffin. Taking these points into consideration it is a matter of some difficulty both to date them back to the early part of the 9th century and to accept them as ever having contained the bodies of these two kings.

To the west of the south aisle in the churchyard is a curious block of stone, described as a coffin lid.²⁵ It is of a tapered form and measures 6 feet 10 inches by 2 feet 6 inches by 1 foot 7 inches. As now lying it exhibits a cavity with uniformly sloping sides and ends. The base of this cavity measures 5 feet 11 inches by 1 foot 5 inches by 9 inches with depths of 8 inches at head and mid-length and $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches at foot ; exterior depth is 11 inches. There is a large drain hole at one of the angles of the foot-end and a much smaller one at a distance of 21 inches from the head-end placed centrally ; both of these may be modern. Externally the head-end has a Latin cross in relief. The underside is of smaller dimensions than the upper. Without seeing the surface now next to the turf it is difficult to decide definitely what function this stone performed. If it be a coffin lid its deep hollowing must be of the rarest occurrence, and may indicate its superimposition above a coffin of extreme shallowness. It is of a form I am entirely unacquainted with, and consider it may be of a late date.

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²⁵ *Handbook to Winchcombe Parish Church.*

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DIMENSIONS, STONE COFFINS

R=Roman. M=Medieval.

Coffin	Location	Length		Breadth		Depth External		Depth Internal		Walling Thickness				Head Recess				
		(A) External	(B) Internal	(A) Head	(B) Foot	(A) Head	(B) Foot	(A) Shoulder	(B) Middle	(C) Foot	(A) Head	(B) Foot	(C) North	(D) South	(A) Length	(B) Maximum width	(C) Neck width	(D) Depth
		in.		in.		in.		in.		in.				in.		in.		
R ¹	Cirencester Museum	A. 83½ B. 73		A. 29½ B. 29½		A. 17 B. 17		A. 13 B. 12½ C. 11		A. 5½ B. 5½	C. 5 D. 5			—	—	—	—	—
R ²	Cirencester Museum	A. 86 B. 73½		A. 28½ B. 27½		A. 24 B. 21½		A. 12 B. 13½ C. 11½		A. 6 B. 6½	C. 4½ D. 4½			—	—	—	—	—
R ³	Cold Ashton Manor	A. 74 B. 68		A. 22 (Max.) B. 14½		14½ ? (Max.)		7 (Av.)		about 3				—	—	—	—	—
R ⁴	Dyrham	A. 71 B. 65		A. 21 (Max.) B. 12		A. 11 B. 10		7½ (Av.)		about 3				—	—	—	—	—

M ¹	Bourton on the Water	A. 75 B. 70½ Base— 78½	A. 30 B. 18	A. 16 B. 14	A. 12½ B. — C. 10½	A. 2½ C. 3 B. 2½ D. 3	A. 6	B. 9 C. 9	D. 10½ E. 2
M ²	Bristol Cathedral	A. 83 B. 75	A. 30 B. 19	14 (Av.)	9½ (Av.)	A. 4 C. 4½ B. 4 D. 4½	A. 9	B. 10 C. 6	D. 10 E. Nil.
M ³	Bristol Cathedral	A. 82½ B. 73½	A. 28 B. 23	A. 23 B. 24	A. 13 B. 13 C. 11	A. 4½ C. 5½ B. 4½ D. 5½	A. 12	B. 8 C. 5	D. 11½ E. 1½
M ⁴	Bristol Cathedral	A. 91 B. 82½	A. 31 B. 23	A. 17½ B. 15½	A. 10 B. 11 C. 9½	A. 3½ B. 5 C. 4½-5½ D. 5-7	A. 13	B. 9 C. 7½	D. 9 E. 1
M ⁵	Bristol Cathedral	A. 88 B. 81	A. 26 B. 12½	A. 16½ B. 16	A. 12½ B. — C. 11½	A. 4 C. 2½ B. 3 D. 2½	A. 10½	B. 11 C. 7½	D. 12½ E. Nil
M ⁶	Bristol, St. Mary Redcliffe	A. 81 B. 75	A. 28½ B. 17½	A. 15 B. —	12 (Av.)	A. 3 C. 3 B. 3 D. 3	A. 12	B. 21 C. 21	D. 8½ E. 3½
M ⁷	Bristol, St. Nicholas Crypt	A. 74 B. 69½	A. 28½ B. 18	A. 18½ B. 18	A. 12½ B. — C. 11½	A. 2 C. 2½ B. 2½ D. 3½	A. 7	B. 9½ C. 9	D. 8½ E. 3½

M ¹²	Gloucester Cathedral Precincts	A. 75½ B. —	A. 25 B. 14½	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M ¹³	Gloucester Cathedral Precincts	A. 78½ B. —	A. 26½ B. 14¾	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M ¹⁴	Gloucester Cathedral Precincts	A. 84 B. —	A. 30 B. 22½	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M ¹⁵	Gloucester Cathedral Precincts	A. 78 B. —	A. 30 B. 22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M ¹⁶	Haresfield	A. 75 B. 69	A. 29 B. 20	A. 16½ B. 15¾	A. 10 B. 11¼ C. 9½	A. 3 B. 3	C. 3½ D. 3½	A. 12½	B. 13½ C. 12	D. 7½ E. 2½
M ¹⁷	Hazleton	A. 78½ B. 72½	A. 28½ B. 17	A. 14 B. 14¾	A. 10½ B. 10½ C. 10¼	A. 3 B. 3	C. 2½ D. 2½	A. 12½	B. 13½ C. { 11¼ 9¼	D. 8½ E. 2½
M ¹⁸	Notgrove	A. 82 B. 76½	A. 28¾ B. 17¾	A. 17 B. 13	A. 14 B. — C. 10½	A. 2¾ B. 2¾	C. 4 D. 4	A. 13	B. 14 C. 12½	D. 10½ E. 3½
M ¹⁹	Ozleworth	A. 76 B. 69¾	A. 23¾ B. 14	A. 13¾ B. 14¾	A. 8½ B. 9½ C. 9½	A. 3½ B. 3	C. 2¼ D. 2¼	A. 9½	B. 10¾ C. 7½	D. 6½ E. 1½

M ²⁵	Stinchcombe	—	A. 27	A. 15	A. 11	A. 3	C. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ D. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$	A. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	B. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ C. 7	D. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ E. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$
M ²⁶	Westbury on Severn	—	A. 25	A. 14 $\frac{3}{4}$	A. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$	A. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	C. 3 D. 3	A. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	B. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ C. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	D. 8 E. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$
M ²⁷	Guiting Power	A. 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ B. 19 $\frac{1}{2}$	A. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ B. 7 $\frac{1}{4}$	A. 7 B. 6	A. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ B. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ C. 4	A. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ B. 3	C. Var. D. Var.	A. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$	B. 5 C. 3	D. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ E. Nil
M ²⁸	Tewkesbury Abbey	A. 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ B. 25	A. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ B. 9	A. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ B. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$?	A. 5 B. 5 C. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$	A. 1 B. 1?	C. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ D. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$	A. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	B. 6 C. 6	D. 5 E. Nil

NOTE.—Dimensions given are approximately correct. Due to inequalities of surfaces, etc., exactitude is impossible.