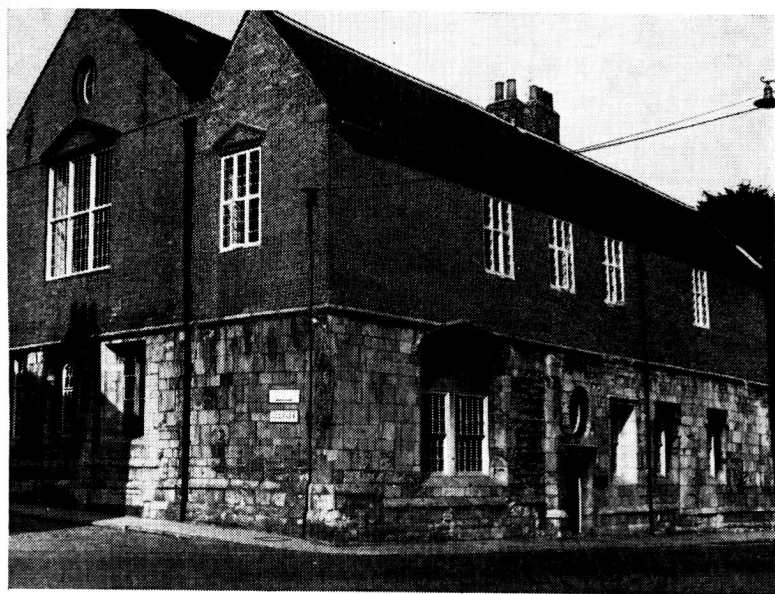


THE BORTHWICK INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH, YORK

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THE Borthwick Institute which has been established in St. Anthony's Hall, York, is a result of a combination of many factors, working over a period of some fourteen years now. The initial impulse was supplied by the resolve of Archbishop Temple that the Diocesan records of York should be made more accessible for research by students of history. The plan as originally contemplated would have provided for a new Record House adjoining the Dean and Chapter Library on the North side of the Minster. The building would have taken the form of an L-shaped block; in the Eastern wing, which would have been built on to the existing Library, the records would have been stored on three fireproof floors; in the Southern wing on two floors there would have been the necessary research rooms and the secretarial offices. The original design solved very happily the problems of harmonising with the thirteenth century stone Library and the red-brick Queen Anne style Deanery which was its nearest neighbour. This scheme, however, was defeated by the War, with its building restrictions and rising costs, although the other part of the scheme, the inspection of the records and their cataloguing, with the necessary preparations for their ultimate removal, went on steadily. After the War, another plan for associating in one building the Archbishop's records with those of the Dean and Chapter, to a design by Professor Richardson somewhat in the style of the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, came to nothing, and it was after this failure that the Archbishop and the Diocesan Registrar agreed in a most important decision.

From the first, Archbishop Temple's purpose had been to open the Diocesan records for full use by historians in research; an arrangement was now reached by which the care of the great collection was passed to the York Civic Trust, whose interest in forwarding academic studies made it especially a suitable body to administer the archives under proper direction and in premises of the right character. A building was found which was not only well suited to become a record house but also by its



ST. ANTHONY'S HALL, YORK.

(Photograph, *Yorkshire Gazette*)

antiquity and by its dignity and beauty was outstandingly appropriate to be the setting of the work which it was proposed to do.

St. Anthony's Hall is a fine fifteenth-century gildhall of great interest with a varied history. The building has been in the hands of the City Corporation since Tudor times, and the Corporation were prepared to lease it to the Civic Trust, for the purposes of a record house, at a nominal rent. The Pilgrim Trust had always been ready to give a generous grant to cover the cost of converting the building into a place for archives, and the work was set in hand at once. In the course of the adaptation, which was carefully supervised throughout by the Office of Works and the Ancient Monuments Commission, much has been observed which has thrown light on the architectural history of the building, and the whole operation has been a notable example of the preservation of an ancient structure and the special problems which every ancient structure presents in the carrying out of such work.

The arrangement of the building in its present working order is that the ground floor is occupied mainly by the strong rooms in which the documents are housed on steel shelving; these rooms are as nearly fire-proof as possible and are air-conditioned for temperature and humidity. On the first floor the Great Hall will be used for exhibitions of documents

and also for meetings and lectures; the Southern aisle, parallel with the main Hall but with a lower timber-framed barrel vault, is divided into a series of rooms where individual students can pursue advanced research, with a room for the Supervisor, while the similar Northern aisle provides a small lecture room and two secretarial offices. The Director's room on the ground floor, with its Georgian bay window, at present contains the Library of technical and reference books.

The main purposes to which the Institute will be devoted are two. The first, of course, is to carry out the intentions of the Archbishop and the Diocesan Registrar, by giving facilities for the use of the archives in research. This will include not only access to the archives by properly qualified persons, but also much in the way of guidance and advice. Since this is a great collection which hitherto has been closed almost entirely to students, the Director of the Institute, who for many years has had the task of examining, arranging and cataloguing the documents, is the only person who can give anything like full information on what the archives contain. There is also something to be done in explaining to students special points concerning the meaning and relations of these ecclesiastical records, the procedure of the ecclesiastical Courts and the like. The work done in such research may produce results of real and permanent historical importance.

But there is another purpose which has grown partly out of the first and partly out of a general need, and that is the use of the Institute as a centre of instruction. This will affect especially beginners. There are at present few if any places in this country where students at Scholarship, or the old Higher Certificate standard, or in their early terms at the University can get instruction in the elementary reading and use of ancient records. Such knowledge, however, is becoming increasingly necessary in such higher educational activities, and at St. Anthony's Hall such young students will be able to learn how to read their original authorities and also how to interpret them correctly and make the right use of them in their studies. The opening of a great collection of archives in this way is a new kind of venture, and the response which it has received already has shown that the scheme is welcome and has much promise.

For this is one of the most important collections of ecclesiastical archives in the country, very large in the number of the documents, and of the highest historical value; in some directions uniquely rich. The magnificent series of Archbishops' Registers is indispensable for the study of mediæval history, but besides these there is a surprising wealth of general historical material, not of ecclesiastical reference only. Perhaps next after the Registers ranks the great series of records of the ecclesiastical Courts, amongst which the outstanding group is that of the High Commission

documents, which are more complete than those for any other English diocese.

Some of the documents are of a kind which has never yet been studied adequately yet affords matter of great if specialised interest, and this includes some of the comparatively modern records. The Faculty Papers, for instance, with their series of architectural plans and drawings from about the year 1800 onwards, give not only an unusually well-illustrated idea of the development of taste in the nineteenth century but also give interesting examples of the work of such architects as Street and others less known but competent in the early years of the century. The Cause Papers again have instances of repair or reconstruction work on churches and parsonage houses, not seldom with lists or estimates of costs, bills and prices. Almost every branch of history will find some material in these papers; they have been studied lately, for example, by four students for information on subjects as diverse as lost villages, papist nonconformity, the cost of living in the time of Elizabeth I, and Yorkshire dialect. There is always a fascination in exploring a great collection of records; where that collection has never before been opened freely to exploration there is all the attraction of the unexpected. Where, as in this case, the collection is unrivalled, certainly, North of the Trent, there is the prospect of doing great service to history and to learning in general.

BOOK REVIEW

La Vie Monuments Français, Destruction, Restauration by Paul Leon 12 × 8. Pp. 584 text illus. Paris: A et J. Picard. 1951. 84/-.

It is not fully realized how many fine examples of French architecture have in the past, for a variety of reasons, been damaged or destroyed. This book, which is written with obvious zest, gives a comprehensive account with complete authority of the way in which France tackled the conservation of what remains.

Both England and France have many common interests and ties in the field of architecture. However in the field of Ancient Monuments, France has always taken the initiative. For example, their Commission des Monuments historique preceded England's Royal Commission on Historical Monuments by some 27 years.

This volume is well illustrated, particularly where buildings are shown before and after preservation or repair. It is to be recommended to all those connected, however slightly, with conservation work on historic monuments.