

## ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS AT THE GUILDHALL

*By Caroline M. Barron*

First of all I should like to thank you for the honour which you have done me in inviting me to give the Anniversary Address at your Annual General Meeting. I accepted your secretary's kind invitation, which was a rash thing to do, but like all enthusiasts I could not resist the chance of talking about a building which interests me passionately. After accepting I re-read Mrs. Gold's letter and learned that my audience would consist "largely of architects and architectural historians", and I realized that my enthusiasm had led me into folly, for I am but a historian presuming to talk about the architectural features and peculiarities of this building. I am indeed honoured, Sir John, that you should have taken the Chair for this meeting. I have long been an admirer of your poetry—indeed I think your poems were some of the first that I ever really enjoyed, and although I realize that we are today gathered to consider architecture and not poetry, yet you above all others have shown us how closely linked the two can be.

Less than a week ago, Her Majesty the Queen was received here at Guildhall, with honour and with celebration on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee. Many sovereigns have been received here over the centuries, commemorating not only jubilees, but victories and safe returns from foreign travel, weddings and coronations. In the medieval period, however, it was not customary for sovereigns to be entertained at Guildhall, for the simple reason, perhaps, that until the sixteenth century, Guildhall had no kitchens, and even last Tuesday's festive spirit might have been a little damped by the absence of food or drink. The sovereign would, instead, have been greeted at London Bridge by the Mayor and Aldermen and other leading citizens dressed in a matching livery. When Henry V returned from his victory at Agincourt in 1415 the decorations on London Bridge included a large model giant placed there "to teach Fren-

chmen courtesy". A Carnival atmosphere pervaded Cheap-side: the citizens hung their best tapestries and cloths from the windows (an early form of bunting) and the great conduits at Cornhill and near the Hospital of St. Thomas of Acre flowed with red and white wine (vin ordinaire cost 6d. a gallon in those days), and the Mayor made the customary speech of welcome. In 1445 the city was busily preparing for the arrival of Margaret of Anjou, destined to be the bride of Henry VI and the "she tigress" of the Lancastrian cause in the Wars of the Roses. On this occasion the task of composing a speech of welcome appears to have been entrusted to the Town Clerk, or perhaps even to the clerk to the Town Clerk, and a couple of his drafts have survived in the city's journals. One can imagine him scratching his head and staring miserably out of the window as he scrawled,

"Right gracious lady, as welcome ye be to this City of London as any one queen or princess before these days".

And then that was crossed out in favour of

"Right glorious princess, and gracious and most benign lady",

at which point inspiration appears to have failed entirely. How that clerk would have envied our present Lord Mayor's felicity of speech in producing that magnificent sentence of welcome for Queen Elizabeth II,

"Little did I dream that in thirty-four years' time I should bear the sword of my city before my sovereign in the house of my God."

This Guildhall in which we are sitting was not built for the ceremonial functions with which it is now chiefly occupied. Certainly it was built for pomp and ostentation, but it was also built to be the administrative centre of the city, to house the city's judicial courts, to provide a meeting place for the more substantial citizens, the "probi homines", and a home for the growing volume of city records, financial and judicial, royal charters, taxation lists and legal customals. It was a working building: a medieval office block.

Now you all possess a specialist knowledge of Ancient Buildings and so are unlikely, even if this is your first visit to Guildhall, to suffer from the delusion, and one under which I

laboured for several months, that this building is largely the work of Victorian architects and craftsmen. I hasten to assure your Chairman that I realize that such a delusion would be delightful, but it would nevertheless be a delusion. For in spite of George Dance's façade of 1788 which Guildhall presents to the south, and in spite of the mid-nineteenth-century "finish" of much of the stone work of the great hall, and in spite of the post-war roof designed by Sir Giles Scott, the Guildhall remains a medieval building, in its overall design and in its detail. It is largely about the medieval aspects of the building that I wish to speak today.

The City of London has had a Guildhall, probably from the late twelfth century; certainly from the reign of King John. As the thirteenth century progressed there are increasingly-numerous references to Guildhall: assizes were held there, a foreigners' court sat there, the king stored his tents there, civic taxes were to be collected and brought to two treasurers "apud Gildhalem". The exact location of this early Guildhall is uncertain but by the 1280s at the latest it is possible, by using the evidence of the deeds enrolled in the City's Hustings Court and elsewhere, to locate the Guildhall here on its present site, with the church of St. Laurence Jewry and the rector's house and garden lying to the south west, Guildhall yard to south, the now-demolished church of St. Michael Bassishaw lying to the north, and Bassishaw or Basinghall street itself on the east. The Guildhall of London has been, therefore, on this same site since at least the late thirteenth century (and probably earlier), and this raises the question whether some of the present building may not also be of this early date.

To shorten your suspense I shall declare my hand, namely my belief that the western crypt is the surviving crypt of this thirteenth-century Guildhall. I have argued the case for this elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> but it has not found universal acceptance and I should value your opinions. When you have a chance to look at it later and to compare it with this elegant and harmonious crypt of 1410 in which we are now sitting, I think that you will immediately notice certain unusual features. Firstly you will observe that the great buttresses containing the outward thrust of the hall above which, in this crypt, are on the same module as the vaulting and so back to back with the wall

pillars are, in the west crypt, intrusive, damaging the vaulting pattern and making the window openings odd and irregular. They are intrusive and, I would argue, later additions. Secondly the corner turrets in the west crypt are simply masses of reinforced masonry, to support the staircases which begin at the floor level above, whereas in this eastern crypt the staircases begin at crypt level. Thirdly the vaulting pattern is not only interrupted by the buttresses but it is also truncated by this dividing wall between the two crypts.

In fact it seems probable that the western crypt is the crypt or undercroft of the old Guildhall. I am of the opinion that it originally extended one bay further east and that it was truncated and adapted when the decision was taken in the early fifteenth century to rebuild and extend the Guildhall. To that great rebuilding programme I shall return in a moment.

The western crypt therefore is, I believe, earlier than the rest of the building, but how much earlier? The city records provide no information at all about the early Guildhall except to indicate that some repair work costing just under £20 was carried out in the 1330s. We are reduced therefore to arguments from style and the only stylistic feature of any note is the vaulting, simple rib vaults springing from octagonal piers without capitals. This is not a remarkable or distinguished style and so not closely dateable. I have found seven cases of similar vaulting styles and they date from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The now-demolished granary of Westminster Abbey, built before 1297, seems to be one of the most significant parallels. The evidence, tentative as it is, suggests a date for the west crypt in the second half of the thirteenth century.

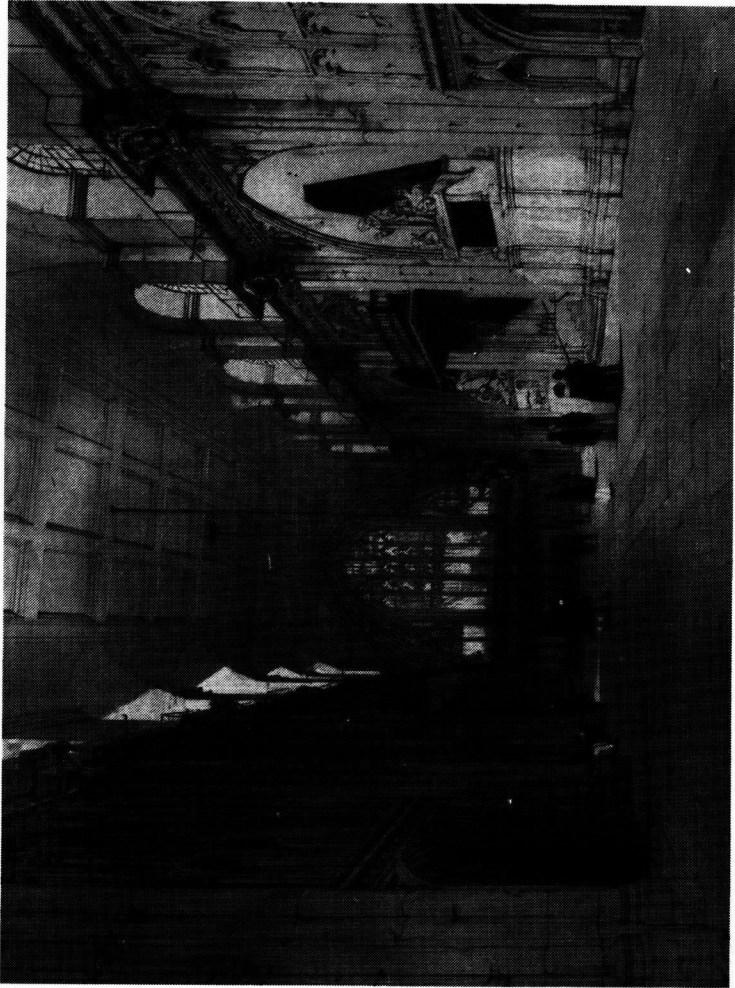
In the Great Fire of 1666 when the Guildhall was burnt out, the weight of the debris falling onto the floor above, cracked the vaulting of the western crypt while the eastern crypt survived intact. This also suggests that they were built at different times and that the western crypt had been weakened by the alterations which it had undergone 250 years before. In 1666 the western crypt was not repaired but shored up with brick arches and so it remained, a repository for rubbish, gas pipes and records, until 1970 when Common Council took the bold and expensive decision to restore the



western crypt. The work, completed in 1973, can now be seen. Very little of the original stone work remains and there may be some doubt whether so much tidying was necessary. The ceiling has been lowered to incorporate the necessary steel supports for the hall above and the resultant flattening of the vaulting is unfortunate, but it has at least been preserved and it is used and valued, as befits the oldest secular undercroft in the city of London.

Not long before 1411 the decision must have been taken by the citizens of London to rebuild their Guildhall. They may have been prompted to this by the spectacle of the rebuilt royal hall at Westminster completed in 1407 after less than ten years' work, at a cost of about £10,000. If the King had achieved a great aisleless hall in which to hold his courts of law, why not also the citizens of London? For the rebuilding works the Londoners chose as their master mason and architect, John Croxtone. About Croxtone we know very little: he was a friend of Walter Walton, Henry Yevele's deputy during the rebuilding of Westminster Hall and in his will Walton bequeathed to John Croxtone his "best compass". There may be here a continuity of influence and style—Yevele to Walton and thence to Croxtone—and this traditionalism may explain some of the somewhat old-fashioned features of the London Guildhall, the detail of the mouldings, a hall with tall two-light windows, and the use of the arms of Edward the Confessor in the roof bosses of the porch and the crypt, characteristic of Richard II's style rather than that of his supplanters and successors, the Lancastrians. Croxtone was to spend his whole life in the service of the city as its master mason, employed not only on the great rebuilding of Guildhall but on numerous other civic projects, the new Guildhall chapel and the new water supply derived from wells in Paddington and brought in pipes to Cheapside. In 1440 he was given a house over the back gate of Guildhall together with a shed, and in 1446 his annual salary was raised from 20s. to 60s. He was dead by 1451 and his will has not been traced. More appropriate even to John Croxtone than to Wren is the injunction "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*".

Robert Fabyan early in the sixteenth century wrote of the building works of 1411



1. The Guildhall, by Thomas Shutter Boys 1848, looking west.

“In this year also was the Guildhall of London began to be new edified and of an old and little cottage, made into a fair and goodly house as it now appeareth”.

John Croxtone's plan was to preserve the stone undercroft of the old Guildhall (it may originally have had a wooden superstructure) not only for reasons of economy but also to ensure that the ordinary business of the city might go on comparatively undisturbed while the building works were in progress. What he did was, first, to insert the necessary buttresses to take the outward thrust of the projected upper hall, to strengthen the corners for the planned turrets and to adapt the windows into the odd spaces between the wall pillars and the new buttresses. Then he cut off the final eastern bay of the existing crypt and put up the dividing wall, so that the room could be self-contained and used for civic business. Finally he built on the fine four-bay crypt in which we are now sitting. Only when all this underpinning work was completed could the new hall above be built: 151 ft. × 48 ft. and, apart from Westminster Hall, the largest open span covered in England in medieval times.

How indeed was it spanned? The present roof was put on after the Second World War and has been the subject of much controversy. It is the fourth roof that Guildhall has supported. Of John Croxtone's original roof we know nothing except that it was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. It was then replaced by a flat coved roof and a clerestory of classical round-headed windows added for height and light between the existing windows and the new roof. There are engravings which show this curious hybrid of Gothic and Classical styles (fig. 1). Such a hybrid was, of course, offensive to the Victorians and in the 1860s the Guildhall was provided with a “proper” wooden hammer beam roof by Sir Horace Jones, the city architect. It was this roof that the bombs destroyed. When Sir Giles Scott came to replace the roof after the war he found Jones's solution of a hammer beam roof unacceptable for two reasons. Firstly, hammer beam roofs always spring from corbels half way up the walls whereas Guildhall has these massive clustered shaft pillars rising to the height of the windows. What was the point of such massive pillars if they were not intended to take a *stone* vault? Secondly, the

junction between the trusses of a wooden roof, comparatively narrow in width, and the wide stone shafts would have looked extremely awkward and would have been contrary to all medieval precedent. Since he was convinced that Guildhall was not intended originally to have a wooden roof Sir Giles constructed the stone transverse arches resting on the tall piers and provided a narrow row of clerestory windows for extra light. His solution did not find wide approval: it was thought to be a Spanish rather than an English style and unlikely to be the original intention of the medieval architect (the only similar roof construction in England is at Mayfield in Sussex, a palace of the archbishops of Canterbury, built in the early fourteenth century, with the stone arches springing from corbels rather than wall pillars).

Recent work by Mr. Christopher Wilson of the Courtauld Institute has, in part at least, vindicated Sir Giles.<sup>2</sup> The roof is not as wrong as it was thought to be. Mr. Wilson noticed two important things: firstly that the pillars have been raised and that originally they ended below the top of the windows (this can be seen from the changes in the masonry coursing) and they were raised to provide a straight line for the row of classical windows added to Guildhall after the fire. Secondly he read the discussion amongst architects in 1865 at the R.I.B.A. about the roof and noticed that mention was made then of finding (during the period of rebuilding) sections of massive stone ribs, lying on the top of the walls, which could only have come from massive stone transverse arches. Sir Giles therefore was almost right: the stone arches (Spanish or not) seem to be correct, but he should have unpicked the stonework down to the original height of the pillars and sprung the arches lower down. Then he would not have needed the extra row of clerestory windows. His solution has the advantage, however, of letting in more light even if it is not exactly as it was in the fifteenth century, and it is, presumably, important to be able to distinguish between the Queen and the Lady Mayoress.

Lastly I would ask you to consider the Porch (fig. 2). You may have noticed as you came down into this eastern crypt that you passed through a carved doorway, with shields in quatrefoils in the spandrels of the door and then niches for statues on either side, and a further statue niche above. When



2. The porch, by Jacob Schnebbelie 1785, with statues in situ.

restoration work was being carried out at Guildhall in the 1960s much of this battered medieval stonework was revealed and it was possible to restore this façade in accordance with drawings of the medieval work produced by the Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings. This was originally the main entrance to this fine eastern crypt and gave direct access to Guildhall yard; nor was it so subterranean for the outside ground level has been considerably raised since the fifteenth century. Then lying to the west of this entrance was the main porch which led to the great hall itself. The main part of this survives but not the façade. The porch resembled church porches of the period, but surpassed them in size and elaboration. Its two vaulted bays with their roof bosses can still be seen and we have drawings of the façade before demolition from (among others) the skilled and loving pen of John Carter, an early enthusiast for the Gothic taste. In 1785 there was a fire in the building which adjoined the porch to the west. George Dance, the younger, then the City clerk of the works, was asked to produce a plan for rebuilding this western section, while retaining the fifteenth-century central section. This he did, but the old stone work was found to be in such poor condition that it was decided to scrap the whole façade and ask Dance to design an entirely new one, hence the façade which you see today. (Incidentally, though it has been suggested that Dance's design shows 'Indian' influence, it is clear that the real inspiration for the new façade was the old medieval façade with its cusped mouldings to the blank arcades and it is these which were the inspiration for Dance's windows.)

What did the medieval façade look like? The whole porch (and you can see this from the surviving interior) was highly ornate, the surface being covered either with blank arcading or with canopied niches for statues. There were originally seven statues representing, according to a sixteenth-century poem, Christ in Majesty in the gable, Law and Learning on either side lower down and then two pairs of statues flanking the door, Discipline, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. By contrast with the rest of the building which is restrained and austere, this porch façade and the entrance to the east crypt seem almost flamboyant. All the decorative skills at Croxton's command were crammed into these two surfaces. This



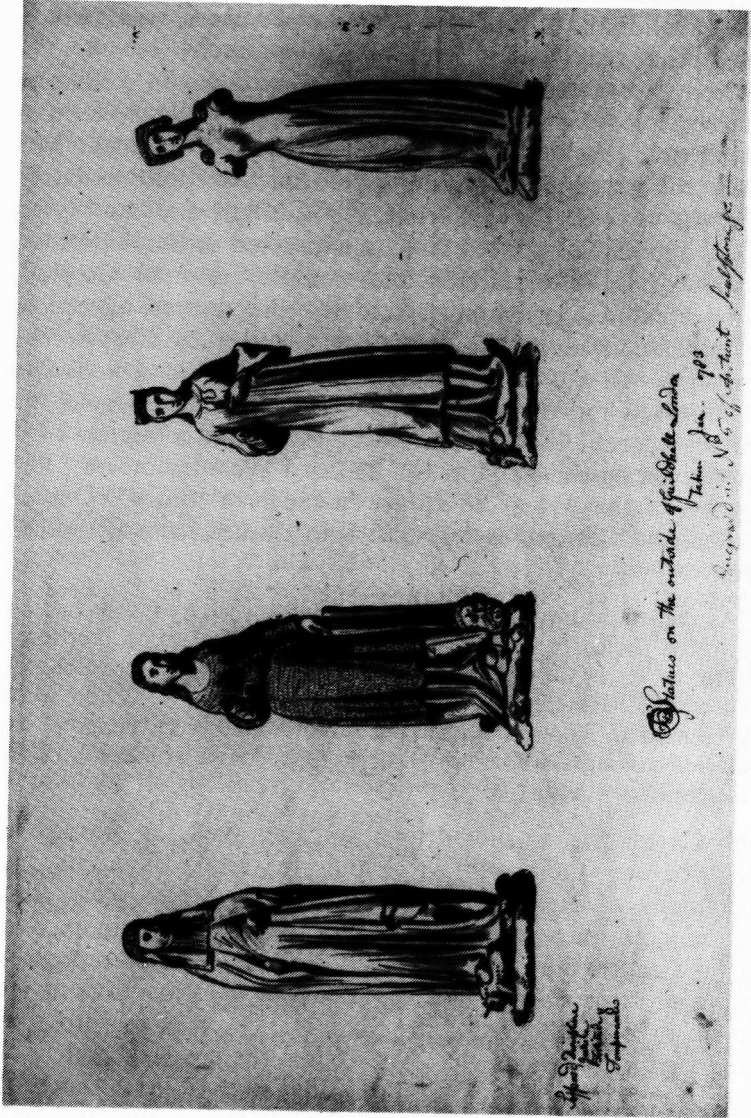
is not surprising, perhaps, when it is realized that these two entrances would have been the only parts of the building easily on view from Guildhall yard: they were the public face of the Guildhall. The rest of Croxtone's work was hidden behind other buildings.

When the medieval façade was taken down in 1788 the statues were preserved, for on 27 February 1794 Alderman John Boydell requested the Common Council to permit Mr. Banks, the statuary, to have the defaced stone statues lately taken down from the old front of Guildhall and now lying useless under the hall, "he having expressed to the Aldermen a great desire of obtaining the same". Common Council, having appointed a committee to view the statues, agreed to Boydell's request, and at this point the statues disappeared from sight. An exchange of correspondence in the *Athenaeum* for 1846 led me to try to pursue the lost statues from the medieval porch. In that periodical there was a review of a paper given by the sculptor Sir Richard Westmacott on "The progress of the Art of Sculpture in medieval times". One of Sir Richard's examples was four fine statues from Guildhall porch

"As choice examples of the union of Italian with English feeling towards the early part of the sixteenth century [*sic*, in fact their date is c. 1430], I would notice four statues, representing Discipline, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance ... They were presented to Thomas Banks the sculptor and were included by Carter amongst the most valuable specimens of Sculpture in England".

John Carter had in fact drawn and engraved the statues in 1783 before their removal, and featured them in his *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture* (fig. 3). It is likely that Westmacott knew the book rather than the originals and Carter's engravings long remained the only detailed representations of these statues. But the report of Westmacott's paper provoked a letter from a Mr. L. F. in Paris to the *Athenaeum*. He wrote that Mr. Banks the sculptor had been given the statues by Alderman Boydell and had removed them to his studio. Mr. L. F. describes the statues in some detail and then continues

"these statues, executed in stone, were for many years an



3. The statues, by John Carter 1783.

ornament to Mr. Bank's study and after his death—which occurred in 1805—were purchased at the sale of his effects, for £100, by Mr. Bankes, M.P. for Corfe Castle. They are probably still at his country residence."

The presence of the statues in Bank's studio is further attested by the Victorian artist William Mulready who declared that the first drawings he made on entering Bank's studio were from Gothic sculptures from the Guildhall porch.

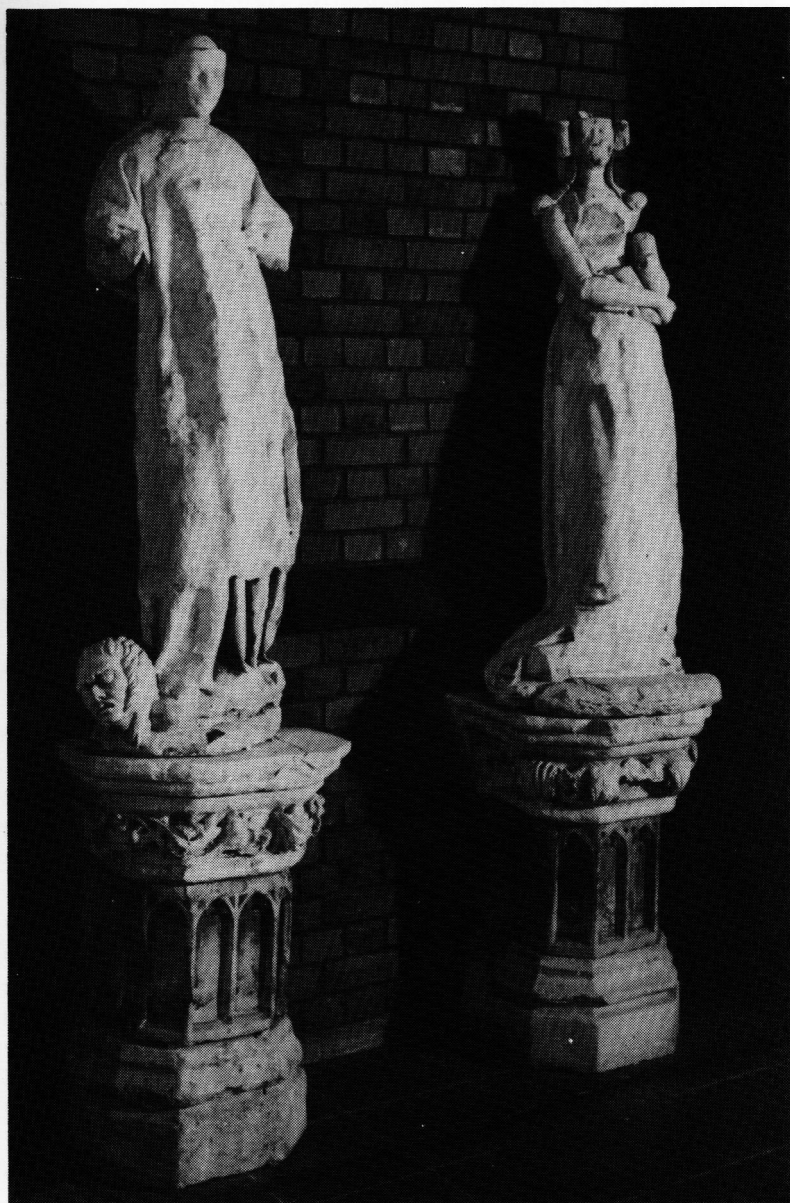
"Mulready felicitated himself and his master on their being among the first persons to appreciate at its value the extraordinary merit of these specimens of Gothic art. So rigid was Banks in demanding due consideration for their beauty that he insisted upon the most unflinching rendering of all their characteristics."

The suggestion of Mr. L. F. in 1846 that the statues might still be at the country residence of Henry Bankes the M.P. for Corfe Castle seemed worth following up even though it was now 120 years since the suggestion had been made. Some work in the Dictionary of National Biography and in Burke's *Landed Gentry* revealed the welcome information that both branches of the Bankes family descended from the M.P. were still living in the same country residences which they had inhabited in the early nineteenth century, and that is indeed remarkable in a century of revolution in landed fortunes. It seemed worth attempting to write to both the present owners and ask if they had by any chance four medieval statues in their possession. And Mr. Robert Bankes of Soughton Hall near Mold in Flintshire replied that he did indeed have four headless statues answering to my description leaning against his stable wall and I was welcome to come and see them. No one had ever shown the least interest in them but there was a belief in the family that they had come from the London Guildhall. Mr. Bankes was most helpful and hospitable and a morning's excavation in the leaf mould revealed the missing heads. The statues had already lost their arms when Carter drew them in 1783 and they had not been improved by 150 years of wind and rain, but in spite of their vicissitudes they remain interesting and unique specimens of first class English sculpture of about 1430. They are now in the Museum of

London where the carving of their five pedestals can be seen to advantage (figs. 4 and 5).

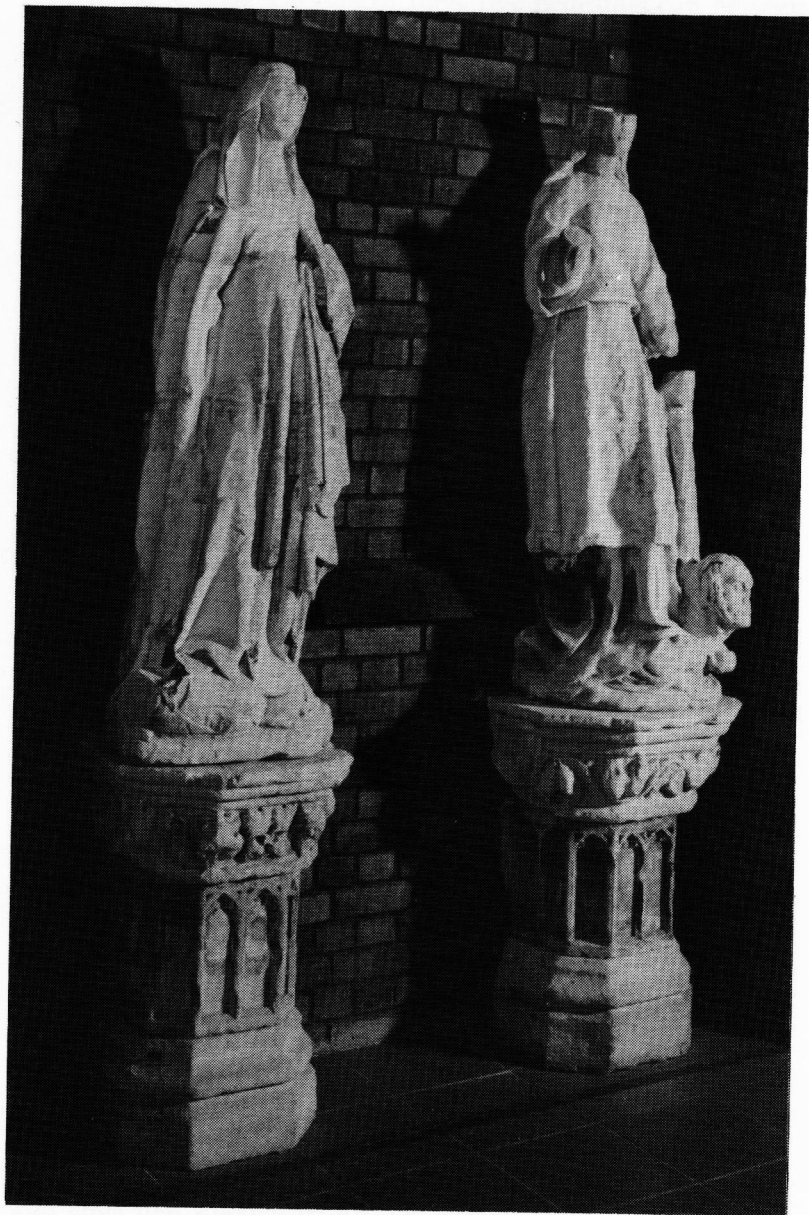
The Guildhall was built between 1411 and the 1430s. Of its progress and its cost we have only indirect evidence for no special building accounts nor ordinary Chamberlains' accounts survive for this period. By 1418 work had begun on the roof and the executors of Richard Whittington, who died in 1423, provided money to pay for the Purbeck Marble paving of the great hall and for the glazing of some of the windows. In 1429 Thomas Walsingham agreed to pay for the glazing of the great east window in order to escape from the expensive and onerous office of Alderman. So by 1430 the work on the hall itself, and probably the porch also, was virtually completed. It cannot have cost much less than the £10,000 which Richard II spent on Westminster Hall (I would guess that a stone roof would have been more expensive even than a fine wooden roof like Westminster Hall). At first the city relied upon pious benefaction from the gifts of dead citizens and the helping hands of the living, but when spontaneous charity proved insufficient, surtaxes were imposed upon civic fees, and various *ad hoc* financial solutions helped the work to a conclusion. Several London wills of this period include bequests for the new work of the Guildhall. A major building enterprise was brought to a successful conclusion by that curious medieval mixture of spontaneous charity and organized exaction.

The "finest hour" of this medieval Guildhall was undoubtedly the century succeeding its completion—the years between 1430 and the 1540s when the frost of the English Reformation destroyed the context of Guildhall, if not the hall itself. Let us imagine for a moment what the complex of buildings here at Guildhall was like on the eve of the Reformation. These crypts and the great hall were not the stranded edifices or empty shells that they seem now to be. They were centres of activity. You can see how fine this crypt is with its tierceron vaulting and shafted Purbeck marble pillars. The great hall above has been knocked about rather more and it has acquired more post-medieval decorative odds and ends like wooden dados and heroic monuments to great Englishmen. The walls were originally divided into two horizontal planes—tall windows in the upper plane and small



4. The statues Fortitude (left) and Temperance (right) by courtesy of "The Museum of London".





5. The statues Discipline (left) and Justice (right) by courtesy of "The Museum of London".



windows in the lower, although the simplicity of this design has been obscured by the monuments. Some of the windows were blank from the beginning and doorways had to be inserted into the overall scheme where necessary. To achieve internal unity of design blind tracery was applied to the whole surface of the lateral walls to north and south and so the windows and doorways were incorporated into the tracery. The architect achieved a grand building but not at the expense of flexibility. It is the perpendicular Gothic style seen at its best, decorative in order to enhance function, an early form of modular building, perhaps, where the component parts can be fitted together to achieve a harmonious whole. In this great hall the Hustings Court was held on Mondays and Tuesdays at the east end and the Sheriffs' Court at the west end. Here too the Common Council (numbering about 150 members in the fifteenth century) met, probably once a week and larger gatherings would congregate in September to elect the Sheriffs, and in October to elect the Mayor. It was a place of public spectacle where perjurers might be found standing on stools, caps in hand, doing public penance for their dishonesty. Through the doorway to the north was an open porch—open on two sides—where in the early days markets were held (in the fifteenth century a leather market) and in the building to which the porch gave access were the fine rooms, also built in the 1430s, for the Mayor's Court and the Court of Aldermen: two small but extremely important gatherings of city elders who decided, in rooms of comparative secrecy and comfort, upon all matters affecting the inhabitants of the City. The Mayor's Court was a royal court of law and dealt particularly with merchants who needed speedy and well-informed justice. The Court of Aldermen simply ran the city. These fifteenth-century courtrooms survived until the 1880s when they were demolished to make way for a great new Council Chamber. If your society had been alive then, Sir John, I am sure that it would have been hard indeed for the city to perpetrate such a vandalism. Sir Horace Jones' new Council chamber was bombed in the last war and now the whole of the area north of Guildhall is occupied by a post-war office block, built in a weak sub-Egyptian style about which the less said the better.

In the fifteenth century these court rooms to the north had

gardens round them and lying to the east was the entrance into Basinghall Street. Above this gate lived John Croxtone and his wife Agnes in the "new housing" which Croxtone had built. Then in the early sixteenth century kitchens were added to the north wall of the west crypt. The magnificent doorway which you see at the east end of this crypt led nowhere for not until the nineteenth century did the City purchase the land lying to the east. Then in 1870-1873 the Corporation built a library on this land to the designs of Sir Horace Jones. The doorway therefore remains as a monument to some unfulfilled fifteenth-century architect's dream: a grand ceremonial entrance way into Basinghall Street, perhaps?<sup>3</sup>

Some of you may remember the old Guildhall yard which preceded the airy piazza which now lies to the south. The medieval yard was a little narrower than the old Guildhall yard: at its northern end it was only as wide as the porch and entrance to the east crypt together. On the west, between the Church of St. Lawrence Jewry and the hall itself was the rector's house and his garden. On the east was Guildhall chapel, built also by John Croxtone between 1430 and 1450. It had a fine seven light window facing onto the yard and the rest of the façade was covered in blind cusped tracery panels, in conformity with the Guildhall porch. Again the perpendicular style was used to harmonize disparate elements. The chapel declined into a law court and was demolished in the 1820s. (It is extraordinary how much of medieval London survived into the nineteenth century and was then swept away, for example Gisors Hall, and Pountney Hall.)

Adjacent to the chapel on its south side was a library, established in the 1420s by the Town Clerk, John Carpenter, using the money of the wealthy mercer Richard Whittington. It was a public library but whether it was used by Londoners apart from the priests and choir boys who served the chapel next door, it is hard to tell. It was not, however, a lending library. John Graunte who bequeathed a Latin-English dictionary and a mass book to the library, enjoined that they should be "bounde in bordis and to be tied with a cheyn in the forseid liberary". There were desks provided and these were sold up in 1550, for the intimate connection between the library and the chantry priests of the college next door led to its confiscation and there were clearly helping hands which

helped themselves on that occasion. Lord Protector Somerset sent his secretary, the up and coming William Cecil to borrow the books from Guildhall library. The Court of Aldermen agreed that he might borrow "all such books of St. Augustine's works and other as he now desireth that remain in the Guildhall chapel with this gentle request to be made to him upon the delivery of the same, that this house trusteth that he having perused them, will return them to the said library there to remain to such use as they were provided for". John Stow notes that three cartloads of books were taken away and never returned. One wonders what use Lord Protector Somerset had for the works of St. Augustine. Or was it Cecil who wanted the books? When Stow wrote at the end of the sixteenth century the library was "lofted through and made a store house for cloths". This is not surprising since Blackwell Hall, the city's main cloth market, lay just to the south and completed the ring of buildings around Guildhall yard. The yard itself was closed off from the street (then Catte Street, now Gresham Street) by a great gate with rooms above which was closed at night.

You must not think that the great London Guildhall would have been externally impressive: very little of it would have been visible if you stood in the southern gateway into the yard: only the two porches and, perhaps, the two roof pinnacles. Recently it has been stripped and exposed (especially at its west end) in a way which John Croxtone never intended. Nor, in the medieval period, would it have been lapped in the empty and reverential silence which now pervades it. True it was sited like a Cathedral within its precinct, but it was crowded in upon and throbbing with the noise of business, of the courts, of the chapel and church bells, of the buyers of leather and the sellers of cloth crying their wares, of Croxtone and his workmen chipping at stones and sawing wood in the seemingly endless task of creating and repairing these buildings. Now almost no one goes to bed within half a mile of Guildhall, then there were people living and eating and sleeping in the shadow of its walls—John and Agnes Croxtone above the back gate, the chantry priests and boys of the college, the rector of St. Lawrence and his household, the keeper of Blackwell Hall, the families who lived in the tenements along Basinghall Street and around the

south end of the yard, all these might in the fifteenth century have woken to the noise of birdsong and bells and of the wind rustling the leaves on the trees in the gardens.

This was the context, both homely and rural, in which the Londoners built the finest civic hall in medieval England.

*Notes and references*

<sup>1</sup> See Caroline M. Barron, *The Medieval Guildhall of London* (London, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Wilson, "The Original Design of the City of London Guildhall", *J.B.A.A.*, vol. CXXIX (1976), pp. 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> I am most grateful to several members of the Society and in particular, to Mr. H. C. D. Cooper, who pointed out to me in the discussion following my talk that the doorway at the east end of the crypt appears to be an external doorway, for it is turned to face into the crypt and not out of it. In this case it would seem that there was a building, albeit not owned by the city, which adjoined the new Guildhall at the east end and which was entered from the crypt. The fact that the intra-mural staircases in the east wall turn *outwards* suggests that they were intended to give access to a room or porch adjoining the hall. In 1429 William Estfield (Mayor in 1429-30 and 1437-1438) was given permission by the city to build a "haultplace" for a chapel outside his house extending up to the east end of Guildhall. It is possible, therefore, that the doorway of the east crypt may have been the entrance to Estfield's house and chapel.