

TWO HEADS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

by David Turner

Reproduced from his article in the Steward of

There is a somewhat mysterious blocked doorway in the external wall on the south side of the Quire. It is little noticed, because people are drawn to the Stations of the Cross, which are usually set out on the other side of the aisle.

The arch above the doorway features a carved head on either side and these have always been regarded as representations of King Henry IV and his Queen. Now Henry Bolingbroke, the son of John of Gaunt, was married twice. His first marriage, in 1381, was to Mary de Bohun, who bore him six children, including the future Henry V, and died in 1394. After he had deposed King Richard II and seized the crown in 1399, he married Joan (sometimes called Joanna) of Navarre in 1403 at Winchester.

Thus the westernmost head on the doorway is that of Joan of Navarre. The head to the east is identified as Henry IV because a double S can be discerned on the collar (meaning Spiritus Sanctus, a device which appears on the Livery Collar of the House of Lancaster). When I was being trained as a Steward, Peter Latham pointed this out to me and traced the 'SS' on the stonework with his finger. I fear that, 23 years later, either due to my failing eyesight or to a weathering of the stone, I can no longer find them.

The doorway was not constructed as a part of the rebuilding of the Quire during the period 1233 to 1240: it was built later, in a similar way to the insertion of an archway leading to the Chapter House Passage on the north side of the Quire. It seems most likely that the door was to allow the Archbishop of York and his entourage to enter the Quire directly, using the shortest route from the Archbishop's Palace. Since the heads are an integral part of the arch (and not added later), one has to suppose that this entrance was created during or after the reign of Henry IV - that is, after 1399.

One has to assume further, that the Palace was not completed until around that time. Unfortunately, we don't have any precise information about that. Whilst the Archbishopric had established a residence from the earliest times, the present ruins are dated by Norman Summers (*A Prospect of Southwell*) to "the late thirteen-hundreds, or early fourteen-hundreds". That is particularly unhelpful, but does allow us to suppose that the Palace could have been completed during the reign of Henry IV.

Whenever I pass the doorway and look at the heads, I find it very difficult to understand why fractious old Bolingbroke should be honoured in this way. He was a most pugnacious King, whose reign was littered with disputes and rebellions. Owain Glyndwr conducted a

fierce and lengthy campaign for Welsh independence, the powerful Percy family, led by Harry Hotspur, rebelled in the north and, most significantly perhaps, Richard le Scrope, the Archbishop of York, raised an army and allied himself with the Percy faction. After the final defeat of the rebels in 1405, le Scrope was arrested and executed beneath the walls of York Minster on 8 June 1405.

Is it conceivable that York would honour the King who had executed its Archbishop? It may be significant, however, that the next Archbishop, Henry Bowet, was not enthroned until 7 October 1407. I imagine that the King used that lengthy interregnum to rid York of the whole rebellious Scrope faction, so that he could install his own man in the post. Henry Bowet, I believe, was the man who completed the Palace and built the doorway with the two heads prominently displayed, to demonstrate to Southwell which way his bread was buttered.