



## Pilgrimage Background Notes

### Source 1 – Cross Gneth

The ‘Cross Gneth’ or ‘Croes Naid’ was a relic said to be a piece of the ‘True Cross’ on which Jesus Christ had died. It had belonged to the native Prince of North Wales and formed part of the spoils given over to Edward I at the close of the campaign against Llewellyn and the Welsh in 1283. The relic was first taken to Westminster Abbey and later in the reign of Edward II it was kept in the Tower of London. Soon after the foundation of the Order of the Garter in about 1348, Edward III gave the cross to the College of St George, Windsor Castle, to be displayed in St George’s Chapel, the spiritual home of the Order.

The entry in the 1534 inventory reads:

*“Item the holy crosse closyd in golde garnyshed with rubyes, saffers hemerods...the fote off this crosse is all golde costyd standing apon lyons garnyshed full with parlle and stone...the whiche holy crosee was at the pryorye off Northeyn Walys and Kyng Edwarde the thyerde owre fyrst fowndar gave the lyvelodde to have this holy crosse to Wyndesore.”*

It came to be regarded as the Chapel’s chief relic and remained the focus for pilgrimage and devotion for over 200 years. This is reflected in the importance that was placed on it when a new Chapel was built for the Order by Edward IV in the 15<sup>th</sup> century: the roof boss bearing its image was one of the first bosses to have been completed, in 1480-1481.

The boss shows Edward IV and Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury 1450-81, Dean of Windsor 1477-81 and Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, kneeling on either side of a Celtic cross. Its inclusion shows how much value was placed on this relic, that it be reflected permanently in stone. It represents a link between the King and the Church, highlights the importance of St George’s Chapel and shows their devotion to Christ. It reflects a continuation by Edward IV of the work began by his ancestor Edward III, and shows the link between the old St George’s Chapel and the magnificent new building. Edward III had founded the Order of the Garter, and now Edward IV was providing it with a fitting home.

The Most Noble Order of the Garter, the oldest surviving Order of Chivalry in the world, was founded by Edward III in or just before 1348. St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle, became and remains the spiritual home of the Order. It is believed that the foundation of the Order coincided with the feast held by Edward III at Windsor Castle in January or February of 1344. At this feast, Edward declared an intention to establish a Round Table of three hundred knights ‘*in the same manner and estate as the Lord Arthur, formerly King of England*’. By the time that the Order was founded, membership was restricted to twenty-six, including the King. The purpose of appointing a Garter knight was to reward past honour and, more importantly, to bind the warrior to the Sovereign in an allegiance of friendship and honour. It was a strategic tool to ensure that the Knight could be called upon to fight for his King and country when needed.

## **Source 2 – Schorn Book of Hours, LIB MS 6, c.1430-1450**

The intricately decorated illuminated manuscript known as the Schorn Book of Hours, written around 1430-1450, contains a collection of texts, prayers and psalms for Christian worship. Books of hours were commonly kept as private prayer books, and as a result often contain additions that are personal to the owner, such as this with its prayer to John Schorn.

Master John Schorn, the Rector of North Marston, became the object of a late medieval pilgrimage cult centred around the newly constructed St George's Chapel in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Following Schorn's death in 1314, scores of pilgrims visited his burial place in North Marston, Buckinghamshire, in order to display piety, perform penance, and in the hope of gaining a cure or witnessing a miracle. Schorn gained a reputation as a healer of various ailments, including the ague (malaria) and rheumatic and eye afflictions. He was also believed to possess the power to resurrect dead cattle and the drowned. Pilgrims would leave tokens, offerings and money at the burial place of this holy man in order to guarantee their successful cure.

So substantial was the fame and profitability of Schorn's pilgrimage centre at North Marston that the Dean of Windsor decided to acquire Schorn's bones and relocate them to St George's Chapel. St George's Chapel subsequently became one of the most important pilgrimage centres in southern England, bringing prosperity but also enhancing the reputation of the College of St George, which administered the Chapel. This was further increased after 1484 when the body of the martyred King Henry VI was also translated to Windsor.

## **Source 3 – Drawing by Rena Gardiner of pilgrims in the chapel in the 15<sup>th</sup> century**

In the Treasurers' accounts of the College of St George for 1483-84 an entry refers to the payment of £5 10s 2d *'for expenses about the removal of King Henry VI from Chertsey'*. According to the contemporary account of John Rous, *'the King's body was taken out of his grave in the abbey church of Chertsey in August 1484, and honourably received in the new collegiate church of the Castle at Windsor where it was again buried with the greatest solemnity to the south of the high altar'*.

Its position by the high altar showed the importance placed on the tomb as this was the most holy of places within the Chapel. In this reconstructive drawing, a priest can be seen at the smaller altar specially created for prayers to Henry VI, the tomb is made of marble with a painted golden effigy on top, and above hang the trappings of royalty – the Royal Standard, banner and helmet. The tomb is fenced off, separating it from the ordinary people who gather below. The archway of the Chapel in which the tomb lies is painted in reds, blues and gold while the aisle itself is plain and unadorned, providing a contrast with the glory of the tomb. Traces of this painting were found during cleaning work undertaken in 2008. A metal collecting box can be seen to the right of the altar. The inventory taken in 1534 has the memorandum that *"there is belonging to Kyng Henrys awter moche ryches and many costly jewells to the image off our Lady there"*.

#### **Source 4 – Money box made by John Tresilian in the 1480s**

John Tresilian was a Cornishman, and royal clock maker. He was also the maker of the iron money box which stands in the South Quire Aisle of St George's Chapel. It is marked with the letter "H" for Henry VI, for whose tomb it was designed and by which it still stands. It has 20 slots for money to be inserted, and can only be opened by the four keys being turned simultaneously. A similar box was made for the tomb of John Schorn, for which the bill survives in the College Archives.

The College had several chests which needed more than one key holder as this increased the security of the contents. For example, the Statutes, or governing regulations of the College dated 1352, required that the records of the College be kept in a coffer or chest "*secured with three different locks and keys.*" One was to be held by the Dean, one by the Canon Precentor and one by the Canon Treasurer. It is probable that the keys to the money box would have been held by these three important College officials, with possibly the virger as the fourth.

#### **Source 5 – *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, SGC RBK C.185, c.1542**

*The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century. In July 1390, Chaucer was appointed as Clerk of Works at Windsor Castle, and was commissioned to repair the chapel which was '*on the point of ruin and of falling to the ground*'. This was the chapel built by Henry III, which was subsequently used by the Order of the Garter until the present Chapel was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It occupied the site of the present day Albert Memorial Chapel.

This version of his *Canterbury Tales* dates from around 1542 and appears in a volume of his collected works printed by William Bonham in London. The volume, which is held in the Chapter Library, contains several woodcut illustrations, of which this is one, depicting the Squire.

The journey undertaken by the Pilgrims takes them from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The journey is approximately 60 miles and would have taken around 4 days walking.

#### **Source 6 – Pilgrim badge**

Pilgrim badges were souvenirs of a difficult journey completed, and a sign of devotion. For journeying to Windsor, pilgrims were able to commemorate a pilgrimage to both the shrine of Henry VI and the tomb of John Schorn. Their cults were suppressed at the Reformation, but there is plenty of surviving visual evidence for their former importance, including large numbers of these pilgrim badges.

The leaden hat-badge of John Schorn shows the rector with coif and academic hood, reflecting his status as Master. He is preaching from a pulpit, and reaching down he thrusts the devil by the tail into a long-toed jack-boot. It is believed that John Schorn, "*gentleman born, who conjured the Devil into a boot*", i.e. whose prayers healed aches and pains in the limbs, is the origin of the jack in the box. More than seventy of these badges have been found, at several sites in London, Salisbury and Canterbury.