

# CHARITY AND STATUS: THE ACTIVITIES OF SIR JOHN KEDERMINSTER AT LANGLEY MARISH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, (NOW LANGLEY, SLOUGH)

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*The rise and fall of a family from the Tudor merchant class is illustrated with reference to the life and works of Sir John Kederminster of Langley Marish, Buckinghamshire. He embellished his local church and left us a range of four almshouses and a family chapel accompanied by an adjacent theological library. He inherited the grant of arms accorded to his father and became Knight Bachelor in 1609. This was perhaps in recognition of his own and his father's good stewardship of the royal park at Langley. Living from 1576 to 1631, he was, however, unable to establish a long-term dynasty. Part of the reason, possibly, was the death in infancy of his only son Edmund, named after his grandfather. The later history of the site, especially the library, is also considered.*

The Kederminster Library, a name it formally acquired only in 1911, when it became the subject of a charitable trust set up by Sir Robert Granville Harvey, Lord of the Manor of Langley Marish, presents an important and continuing challenge to the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society (BAS). The Trust has no endowment and no income other than that received from visitors' donations and the sale of booklets and postcards. Until a few years ago it received £1 *p.a.* from the United Charities, a grouping of houses which has at its core the almshouses founded by Sir John Kederminster<sup>1</sup> about 1630, together with the slightly later Seymour Almshouses. This small contribution, possibly intended to pay the insurance premium, was renounced by the Kederminster Trustees in 1996.

The books in the library, the only property of the Trust and about three hundred in number, are a precious collection of mainly theological works, printed in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. All are in Sir John's contemporary leather binding.<sup>2</sup> They are housed in a room converted from a late-medieval chapel by the addition of a chimneystack and book cupboards containing shelves. This chapel, set against the south wall of the nave of St Mary's church towards the west end and accessible through the original, early, south door of the church, was apparently in use as a porch

in the post-Reformation period. After being appropriated by Sir John as an annexe to his family chapel, it is now in the ownership of the current lord of the manor of Langley Marish, the Buckinghamshire County Council (Fig. 1 – Plan).

As now constituted, the Kederminster Library Trust owns the books, but not the room in which they are stored. By the late 1930s the books were in a deplorable state, and Dr E C Rouse, the BAS representative trustee, was able, with the help of Sir Frank Francis of the British Museum, to arrange funds from the Pilgrim Trust for the expert restoration of the books.<sup>3</sup> Since then they have been carefully conserved, and they remain in excellent condition. Mrs Muriel Kemp, the honorary curator, is frequently to be found in the library; she exercises great responsibility for security and good order. After an attempted break-in about ten years ago, the county council installed a burglar alarm. Their nominated architect monitors the dehumidifier installed within the fireplace and cares for the fabric.

In 1973 the same Dr Rouse, Chairman of the Trustees from 1936 to 1981, arranged for a complete cleaning and conservation of all the painted surfaces in the library room and the adjacent pew. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of the survival of the whole unparalleled Kederminster complex – the added 'aisle or chap-

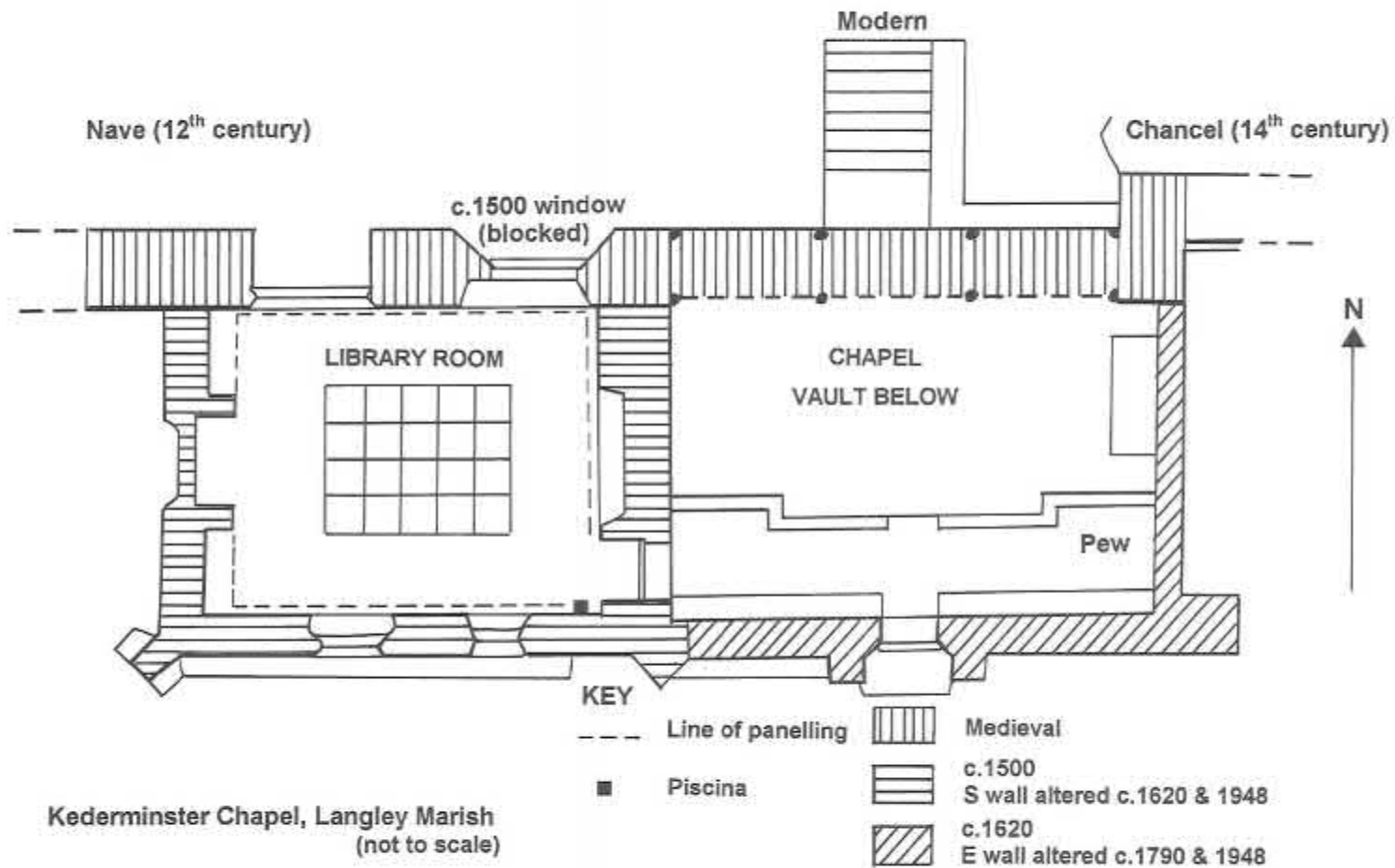


FIGURE 1 Plan

pell' with burial vault beneath, and the heated library room beyond and 'within'. In 1788, the manor was bought by Robert Bateson Harvey and a new dynasty established. Robert Bateson Harvey made significant alterations after 1791, yet the appearance today corresponds to a great extent to that created by Sir John Kederminster between 1614 and 1631.

The first connection of Sir John's family with Langley Marish was established in 1547, when one John Kederminster, son of a London draper, bought land in the area. This John's son, Edmund, born in 1520, received a gentleman's education at Oxford and the Inns of Court, and became prominent in legal circles by virtue of his appointment as one of the Six Clerks in Chancery. This was a key position, generally thought of as having been a lucrative one. In 1594 Edmund Kederminster received a grant of arms from Queen Elizabeth, under whom he was also keeper or steward of her Royal Park at Langley Marish.

Edmund's son John, later Sir John, matriculated at St John's College, Oxford, in 1594 and was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1603. Like his father before him, he secured for himself a wife from a manorial family, marrying Mary, daughter of Sir William Garrard of Dorney. This was when he was barely 21 years old. The couple had a son, who died in infancy, and two daughters, all baptised at Dorney. Sir John was thus well placed to add prestige to the family name and give solid expression to his dynastic ambitions. His father and father-in-law both died in 1607, but he received no great inheritance, Edmund dying in debt.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless he set about further commemorating his family, while at the same time embellishing the church where he worshipped, and laying groundwork for the future.

So it was that in 1614 Sir John obtained from the Bishop of Lincoln and lesser dignitaries a faculty enabling him to base his new chapel on a small plot of land approximately 24 by 18 feet in the churchyard and to take down a section of the nave wall to provide an outlet from chapel to church (see Appendix 1). The wording of this document, known to us from a copy made in the late-seventeenth century by a canon of St George's, Windsor, expresses Sir John's hopes and ambitions for himself and his family. It is clear that he intended to demonstrate once and for all that he and his successors (though they never became lords of the

manor) were, and would be, the most important people in Langley Marish. It is likely that throughout the work he was his own designer. His interest in building continued until the end. The fact that his works were so long drawn-out and his cash-flow therefore measured, must account for the fact that he left only a few small debts, and even an extra £20 for a further purchase of books for the library.<sup>5</sup>

'Most Elizabethan or Jacobean family chapels were erected by new landed families ... as part of the process of establishing themselves as members of the English aristocracy. Such chapels served in addition as family pews, from which to listen in dignified privacy to the preaching of sermons.'<sup>6</sup> A nearby and earlier parallel is the Hastings family chapel at Stoke Poges, built about 1560.

Sir John's earlier benefactions to the church itself had been striking. A brick tower dated 1609 added impressive bulk and height. It probably replaced a timber belfry over the west end of the nave, similar to those surviving at nearby Wexham and Boveney. A fine carved pulpit, now reduced in height like most of its contemporaries, bears his name, followed by 'Miles', *i.e.* Knight, and is also dated 1609. It was in October of that year that he was dubbed Knight Bachelor at Hampton Court.<sup>7</sup> One can only presume that this honour was conferred by James I, in recognition of the services rendered to the Crown by him and his late father as Keepers of the Royal Park of Langley Marish. Later, only a year before his death, came the timber screen of paired Tuscan columns that replaces the former stone arcade on the line of the north wall of the twelfth-century nave and allows a great deal more light into the nave through the north windows. The general opening-up unifies rather than divides the total space, giving the impression of a double nave, the north aisle being only three feet narrower than the nave proper. 1625 is the date on the carved and painted, double-sided Royal Arms (Charles I); it would have been set above the centre of the wholly or partially rebuilt chancel screen. Two large cartouches flanking it bear the 'sentences' (Creed, Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer) and are now preserved in the north chapel. A contemporary example of such a seventeenth-century arrangement can be seen at Dore Abbey in Herefordshire, where the screen and its tripartite cresting were made by John Abel, a well-documented local carpenter. Within thirty years, therefore, the church of St Mary the Virgin at Langley

Marish was embellished both inside and out. The only later addition up to now is the west porch of 1808.

The most prominent addition was made by Sir John Kederminster, when he built his family chapel, probably completed by 1623 when he deposited his young daughter's coffin in the vault below (see Appendix 2). The chapel, abutting the south side of the nave and containing a large and ostentatious pew, and a family burial vault below, enshrines the memory of the Kederminster family rather than, one would think, the eternal glory of God (Fig. 2).

The Kederminsters of Langley Marish, after having made good money in the drapery trade, had already by the mid-sixteenth century reached gentry status. Sir John's family alliances were all with manorial families, and he made much of the fact that he was distantly related to Queen Elizabeth through his mother. He and his father before him rented the estate of Langley Park but he never acquired the whole manor, which had been in royal hands since the early Middle Ages. It passed out of crown hands only in 1627 and finally absorbed the Langley Park estate under Sir Henry Seymour, Lord of the Manor from 1671.

Sir John himself died in his 50s in 1631, leaving an endowment for his almshouses, a newly completed organ for the church, proper financial arrangements for his descendants and only a few small debts.<sup>8</sup> For nearly fifteen years he must have been engaged in building operations, but he clearly managed his resources very prudently. It would be interesting to know how much profit he derived from his stewardship of the Royal Park.

It was in February 1613 (n.s.1614) that the authorisation or faculty was granted to Sir John by the Bishop of Lincoln, enabling him to proceed with his ambitious plans (Appendix 1). We are fortunate in having a reliable copy of the document. It sets out his detailed intentions at the outset. His family pew was to enjoy (in perpetuity) an uninterrupted view of the proceedings in the church, necessitating the removal of an existing pew, belonging to Robert Style, tenant of part of the manor, to the far (north) side of the nave next to the chancel arch.

The size of the plot of land in the churchyard, 24 by 18 feet, specified in the faculty, is exactly represented in the present building. The time allotted to the actual building (three years) does not, however, seem to have been observed, but there are no



FIGURE 2 Kederminster chapel viewed from the nave; photo. courtesy Kederminster Library Trustees

records to show when the campaign actually started. The dimensions of the new 'aisle or chapel' were predetermined, since it was built against the eastern end of the nave and an already existing late-medieval chapel to the west, at the time being used as a porch. It was built in brick, like Sir John's tower, but it was rendered externally, a common technique at the time. This rendering was continued round the south wall of the earlier chapel, concealing evidence of the changes in fenestration required to convert this space into a library room. As a 'porch' it was perhaps under the sole jurisdiction of the churchwardens; at all events no work on it is mentioned in the faculty. In 1948, however, stone jambs and other medieval moulded stones were found in its south wall during a large restoration programme carried out by the Buckinghamshire County Architect. These stones were discarded and the wall built up in brick. No exact records were kept and all evidence was lost.<sup>9</sup>

Sir John's chapel needed only two new walls, as at Stoke Poges, where the family chapel of about 1560 is built, like many later ones, against the chancel wall. It is likely that Sir John was his own architect. James Cleland said in 1607 that knowledge of the principles of architecture was an essential part of a gentleman's education.<sup>10</sup> We know that at his death he left 'draughts on paper' for the fitting-out of his almshouses. For the 'fair arch' between the church and the chapel, design was important, not to mention the necessity of support for the wall plate of the nave above the gap. According to the faculty this arch was to be of stone, brick or timber, so at this point all options were open. The present arch is provided by the Coade stone screen inserted by Robert Bateson Harvey in 1792.

Whatever first lay in front of it, it is still Sir John's highly decorated box-like family pew which catches the eye. Categorized by John Harris as a 'unique survival of an exotic Jacobean decoration'<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 2), it fills the whole width of the chapel immediately in front of the inordinately large south window. The 'box', which is ceiled, contains benches along the back wall and sloping shelves for prayer books or psalters on the front wall. The opposing doors are in the centre. The whole structure is in panelling, painted inside and out. The dominant colours are black, dark red and grey, the last because of the profusion of marbling, so typical of the early -seventeenth century. Many biblical

texts run throughout, the majority from the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms. These texts were carefully copied by Dr Lipscomb, the county historian, before 1831, by which time the first part of his publication was in the hands of his publisher. (Stoke Hundred, however, was not actually published until 1847).<sup>12</sup> The eastern end of the pew contains the achievements of arms of the Kederminster family and their alliances, and the heraldic element appears prominently in the centre of the strapwork cresting above the door opening towards the church. Along the front wall there is a row of pierced panels, opening like casement windows, behind which the occupants could see and not be seen. Numerous painted panels throughout contain formalised eyes, proclaiming in words 'Deus videt'.

Pretentious forms of seating were not uncommon in Sir John's time, but one may speculate that this may have been one of the most ostentatious examples. In the days when no fixed seating or heating was provided in churches, private individuals, and not only the aristocracy, built their own pews to raise themselves above the vulgar sort – and the cold damp floor. Raised seats of the seventeenth century can still be seen at Rycote chapel, a manorial chapel near Thame. At the time of the Archdeacon of Buckingham's 1637 Visitation, the Kederminster pew, then in the hands of Sir John's son-in-law, Sir Henry Parsons, is clearly described as being 'seven yards long or thereabouts' and standing on the 'floor of the vault', itself nine steps high from the church. Lady Fisher and Yeoman Smith however, have seats which are too high, a recurring complaint in other local churches.<sup>13</sup> With the pew in its present position, a door from its west end leads down through another door into the library room, a convenient arrangement, since the room, with a good fireplace, serves to provide not only a library but also a sort of retiring room, as attached to the more pretentious laird's aisles built in the sixteenth century by the Scottish aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> It is questionable, however, whether the Kederminster pew is today in its original position and whether a position further forward would not have allowed a clearer view of the pulpit and also of the great heraldic window. Unfortunately precise archaeological evidence is still lacking.

Severely rectangular, the window is divided into two rows of six lights by one slender mullion and six transoms of brick. It has a domestic rather than



ecclesiastical appearance, and was probably the setting for a great display of heraldic glass; one panel showing Sir John's arms remains today. The pew itself, hard up against the window, has two awkward stepped entries, one from the churchyard and one from the library room. Moreover, the fragmentary wall paintings below the frieze on the chapel walls bear no relation to the pew in its present position, nor, on the east wall to a Harvey monument. The paintings, strongly Jacobean in character, are thought to have been disclosed by a scrubbing down of the walls in 1948. The evidence is not conclusive, but did the 'cleaning' simply remove the three coats of stone-coloured distemper which William Bidwell was to apply in 1825?<sup>15</sup> The Harveys would have wanted a plain background for their monuments, the earliest of which is dated 1791. About that time the (uncontentious) insertion of the gothic Coadestone screen would have caused disruption, followed no doubt by re-decoration of the chapel. The pew itself appears not to have been repainted, however many times its surfaces have been freshened up. It shows uniformity of technique, with perhaps a specialist for the armorials at the east end. These were found by Lipscomb (before 1831) to be very faded.<sup>16</sup>

The library room, with its walls lined with a light framework containing painted panels of varying sizes, gives the impression that several different craftsmen have been at work. The single Eye of God seen next to the door is depicted in the formalised style of those in the pew, but the brushwork is slightly different. The numerous paintings of apostles and saints, and perhaps Fathers of the Church, are none too easy to recognise and do not seem to follow any coherent iconographical arrangement. Elaborate cartouches fill in the gaps. The palette is varied and bright, but there is no dominant colour scheme. The paintings in the frieze, two traceable to Flemish prints, are equally varied. The portrait of Sir John on the inside of the door of the book cupboard in the splay of the large nave window is very competently painted. That of his wife in the other door is today a modern pastiche insofar as the face is concerned. For some unknown reason her face was obliterated sometime before 1890 by a patch of dark brown paint. For the sake of appearances the face was re-imagined in 1973 by Jim Murrell, an expert on the portrait miniatures of the period (Fig. 3).

The whole effect of the room is that of a private

closet of the type that ultimately derives from sixteenth-century Italy and France;<sup>17</sup> very few examples survive there today. The lack of comparisons makes it difficult to know whether the apparently unique pattern of panels was so unusual. Their proportions, a mixture of squarish and rectangular, make for an agreeable variety. They are designed and made to fit the dimensions of the wall space available. Perhaps the arrangement may be attributed to Sir John himself. The shelving behind the panelling accommodated the 300-odd books he bought, together with fourteen more, which were bought on his instructions by his widow after his death, as Jane Francis has shown.<sup>18</sup>

Today's Trustees are happy to be able to report to the Charity Commissioners that the books are in excellent condition, having been carefully cherished since their restoration in 1939-40. They retain their contemporary calf bindings, with the Kederminster arms blocked in gold on both sides. The spines are plain, probably because the books originally stood with the spines inward. Before the great, late sixteenth-century increase in book publishing, particularly on the Continent, a gentleman's books were stored in a chest or on a table. At Langley Marish we have an early example of purpose-built shelving; but it was rudimentary in structure, set directly against masonry walls. By 1939, when the books were away being repaired, much of the damp, worm-eaten timber was replaced and backing added.<sup>19</sup> Some ninety per cent of the books are in Latin and therefore would only have been readable by those in Holy Orders and by those who attended the rare grammar schools. The early Divines and Fathers of the Church, such as Pope Gregory and Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas are represented, together with some post-Reformation treatises – all essential for theological training. Sir John wished to hear 'godly sermons' and he certainly carried out his intention to have 'many good and godly books for the use, good instruction, better help and benefit in study of such vicars or curates as shall for ever hereafter enjoy the cure or vicaridge'. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the great repositories of learning, there had been virtually nowhere where clerics could find libraries to deepen their theological knowledge and insights. The numerous primers and books of hours circulating on the eve of the Reformation had provided guidance on the practice of religious observance, but they did not



FIGURE 3 Library room interior, north-west corner; photo. courtesy Kederminster Library Trustees

set out to examine the origins of Christianity and biblical truth. To Protestant eyes they lacked intellectual rigour.

From about the end of the sixteenth century a number of well-to-do benefactors, both private people and institutions, founded educational libraries for the public good. Sir John was one of them, formally donating his books 'to the town' in 1623, according to an inscription in the vault. In later years most of these libraries came to be called parish libraries. Some have changed their nature and others have disappeared altogether. Sir John's books have, exceptionally, been kept together, with few losses over the years, in the place he prepared for them. Only recently did the library come to be 'called or known as Sir John Kederminster's library' and this name is firmly established in the Trust Deed of 1911. Most of the seventeenth-century 'parish libraries' that have been extensively studied were open to all comers, but Sir John's library had a private character from the first. Anyone, presumably a cleric, wishing to read in it had first to swear a corporal oath to observe the rules, or so it was decreed by his daughter and heir,

nearly twenty years after his death. The residents of the almshouses became in effect the caretakers. The close and continuing connection between the almshouses and the library is underlined by the fact that as late as 1911 the Library Trust still received an income of £1 *p.a.* from the Almshouse Trust.

When M R James visited the library in 1879, by which time the Harveys were opening it to curious visitors rather than readers, he recorded his name in the visitors' book, and three other Eton scholars accompanying him did the same. The entries can be seen on the second page of the earliest visitors' book that has been preserved. James noted in his diary that he found a 'noble printed 15th-century service book with lovely hand-painted initials and two or three manuscript leaves. I had thoughts of gagging the old person who takes care of the library and departing with the best books, but thought better of it'.<sup>20</sup> Today the library owns a marvellous, incomplete, set of Gospels in a handsome nineteenth-century binding. It was probably written and illuminated in Canterbury in the eleventh century. An object of great beauty and historical value, it is on permanent loan to the British

Library. It is strange that James did not specifically notice it. The fifteenth-century service book he mentioned is no longer in the library.

How often the books were read in the early days is almost impossible to know. The book restorers of 1940 found no great evidence of frequent early use. The vicar whom Sir John would have known was George Eyles, vicar of Wraysbury, the mother church, from c.1602 to 1630. An inscription on the north wall of the burial vault (Appendix 2) records that Sir John gave the library 'to the town'. It seems that this inscription was put in place during Sir John's lifetime, since his birth is recorded but not his death. It is, however, hard to know how this inscription should be interpreted.

It was not until 1649, after the deaths of Sir John and his widow, that an indenture tripartite was drawn up between Elizabeth, their sole heir, and Sir John Parsons, her husband, together with two other parties, to establish the Almshouse Trust on a proper legal and financial footing. Annexed to this document were elaborate rules for the conduct of the library, set out in an unnumbered typescript in the Buckinghamshire Record Office (BRO).<sup>21</sup> No books were to be taken out of the room. When a reader was present, one of the almshouse residents was to stand at the door, the key hanging from his or her girdle. The key was normally kept in a locked iron box standing in the porch in the centre of the range of almshouses. Each resident had a key to this box, and the penalty for losing it was a fine or even expulsion. No doubt these rules reflected the way in which matters had been conducted by Lady Kederminster and Lady Parsons.

The Almshouses or 'Hospital', an expression of charity and piety, were essential to the running of the library. Built immediately outside the churchyard to the south, they were very near to Sir John's heart and an important part of his dynastic building schemes. A defaced stone plaque on their central gable once appeared to read '1617', but such date plaques are often unreliable for various reasons. Sir John's will<sup>22</sup> stated that he had left notes and draughts for the completion of the houses, and it discussed the names of intended residents. Clearly, therefore, the houses were not quite ready for occupation at the time of his death in 1631.

They are an attractive range of four self-contained and heated dwellings, built in a simple contemporary style. Some of the parcels of land providing the endowment income are listed in the

will, though the full extent of the endowment is only spelled out in the 1649 indenture. It is only thanks to the Charity Commissioners, who published between 1815 and 1835 a full review of all the charitable trusts in the country, that we have this information. In 1830 they found the affairs of the Kederminster almshouses in very bad order. No officially appointed secretary was in office and no up-to-date accounts were available. Nor was the original indenture. They had to rely on a copy produced by the churchwardens. This copy they published.<sup>23</sup> It is gratifying to note that the houses, discreetly modernised and popular with their tenants, still fulfil their original function as part of the United Almshouses Trust.

They were at first intended for two elderly men and two women of the parish, the men occupying the two central cottages, which had slightly more room upstairs. Each had two rooms, one up and one down; both rooms had a fireplace, a luxury found only in the better houses of the time. In 1679, Sir Henry Seymour, the then lord of the manor, produced a plan for a range of almshouses on the north side of the churchyard; the architectural style would have reflected the Kederminster work. Originally four, the Seymour almshouses became six in 1687 by the addition of one house at each end, after a further endowment under Sir Henry's will. He had been Groom of the Bedchamber to Charles II and had lived in Langley Marish during his retirement.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, many of which had provided hospitals for the sick and indigent poor, dwellings were built by newly enriched individuals and institutions to replace, to some extent, the refuge offered by the Church. Sir John followed an already established tradition, but his benevolence was closely linked to his own advantage, in that his almshouses were to provide a continual source of labour for the good upkeep of his family chapel, vault and library. In this connection two slightly different texts have come down to us, one mentioning windows in the vault, and the other, the printed text of c.1831, omitting the relevant sentence.<sup>24</sup> It is a possible indication of structural changes, which might have been carried out for the Harvey dynasty after 1788.

In Sir John's will the almshouses and their residents take first place in his instructions for the disposal of his worldly estate. There is no mention of any trust as such. It was the solution found by Lady



Parsons, his heir, to give permanence to her father's arrangements. He may even have mooted it with her, but he died too soon to set up a formal trust himself.

The Kederminster dynasty in Langley Marish, which Sir John had done so much to glorify and commemorate, came to an end with the death in the 1660s of his childless grandson, Sir William Parsons. The Seymours, who bought the Langley Park estate and later acquired the whole manor, were members of an old aristocratic family. It seems that they respected the Kederminster traditions, adding more almshouses and making use of the burial vault and the library, to which they bequeathed a large family bible. During the eighteenth century, the manor was held by the 3rd and 4th Dukes of Marlborough, for a period of fifty years. There is no reason to suspect any drastic changes on the church site during their time. The Marlborough interest in the manor, which resulted in a new house in the Park, was based on its proximity to London and the excellent hunting available in the former royal park.

In 1788, Sir Robert Bateson Harvey, Bt, acquired the manor, and thus began a new dynasty, which lasted until the death of the last Lady Harvey in 1937. The first Sir Robert was Sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1791 and his descendants provided further sheriffs in 1828 and 1900. They made the burial vault their own, and they used the chapel above for the display of family monuments. The earliest of these, for David and Elizabeth Harvey, is a Coade stone figure of a mourning woman and is dated 1791. The latest seems to be a brass ledger in the middle of the floor space. It commemorates the burial in 1887 of a Sir Robert Bateson Harvey.<sup>25</sup> This raises the question as to whether a previous entry to the vault had by this time had been blocked. In trying to reconstruct the vault as built by Sir John Kederminster, later alterations must be discounted. A recent survey by Dr Julian Litten has proved invaluable not only in itself but in indicating the changes which may have taken place in the chapel above (Fig. 2). The evidence is not complete but the general trend is apparent. The vault now contains no identifiable Kederminster or Seymour



FIGURE 4 Portrait bust of Anne Kederminster on west wall of vault (Slough Observer 1948).

burials; the east wall, whose only aperture is a small ventilation grille, is lined internally with charnel bins. There is no sign of the sort of entrance with steps which might have been suitable for the almshouse cleaners to use every six months. A narrow channel, without fixed steps, runs south beneath and beyond the chapel door. It is below a foot or two of earth and covered by a light roof, mainly of corrugated iron, a material not available before the nineteenth century. The main space in the vault is occupied by coffins, a few stylistically identifiable as of the eighteenth century, piled higgledy-piggledy on top of one another. An internal dividing wall defines what has been called 'the Seymour vault'.<sup>26</sup>

It is now clear that the Harvey adaptation affected not only the upper part of the chapel, but also the vault below. From what remains today, one is tempted to make a guess about Sir John's original design. As Dr Litten has pointed out, the unexpected death from a 'fever' in 1621 of Anne Kederminster must have given extra urgency to the building of the chapel and perhaps occasioned a revision of the original design. The building of the almshouses, so essential to the whole plan, might, one would think, have taken place concurrently, allowing economies in the burning of the bricks on site. A prudent man, as Sir John seems to have been, would have foreseen his requirements from the beginning. Nevertheless, we are unable to assign precise dates for the actual laying of the brick foundations of either structure.

Sir John himself recorded that he laid his daughter Anne's body to rest in the vault in 1623, almost ten years after the granting of his faculty, by which time the whole chapel building was presumably complete. Anne's coffin is perhaps still lying next to the west wall of the vault, 'behind this stone' as stated in the inscription. Her portrait bust (Fig. 4) is flanked by large stone slabs, which carry her father's 32-line celebratory poem. It consists of rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter (see Appendix 2). All the inscriptions on the vault walls were transcribed in 1948 by the vicar and curate of the day. Their text was recently confirmed by Dr Litten and Julian Hunt. Behind the north wall Sir John assigned spaces for himself and his wife. The relevant wall inscriptions give dates of birth but not of death, so it may be presumed that they were made under Sir John's orders during his lifetime. There is no provision at all for Elizabeth, the daughter and

heir who survived both him and her mother.

Memorials to the dead are not normally to be found in burial vaults beneath private chapels. Not surprisingly the preference is, as with the Harveys later, to display these memorials in the chapel above where the family pew is placed, and often also in sight of those sitting in the church proper. It remains possible that the architecture of the primary building, now distorted by Harvey alterations, might have provided some clue now lost to us.

Sir John's father, Edmund Kederminster, a man of substance, received the grant of arms from Queen Elizabeth in 1594. He expressed pride in his family by erecting an imposing stone wall-monument on the north wall of the chancel. On it he remembered his own father, John Kederminster, and his mother, together with his own immediate family. He himself died in 1607, and in 1609, Sir John, his son, who is shown as a child on the monument, added the fact that he had been knighted. He eventually constructed a new and exclusive family chapel for himself and his descendants. Perhaps his comparatively early death accounts for the fact that he never attained the honour of serving his county as Sheriff. Nor did he fill any public office except that of Steward of the royal park of Langley, but he probably prepared the way for his son-in-law, Sir John Parsons, to serve as Sheriff in 1638. The Heralds' Visitation of 1634 found Sir John Parsons occupying the grandiose family pew.<sup>27</sup> The name Kederminster has disappeared from Langley Marish. One cannot help wondering, however, what might have been the outcome had Sir John's little son Edmund not died in early childhood. The family name, in its various spellings, lives on nevertheless in the almshouses and the library.

## APPENDIX I

The following text, a transcript by Canon Evans in the late-seventeenth century, appears to be a faithful copy of the original faculty. The original document, bearing the Bishop of Lincoln's seal, is now lost. Published by kind permission of the Dean and Canons of St George's, Windsor.

**IV.B.16, ff. 115 – 116. Archives, St George's, Windsor**

To all true Christian people to whom these presents shall come.

The Rt. Reverend Father in God Richard Bp. of Lincoln Ordinary, Antony Maxey clerk D.D & Dean of Windsor & the Canons there, by the name of the Dean & Can. of the Kings free etc. castle of Windsor undoubted patrons of the Church of Langley Marish in the county of Bucks being within the said diocese of Lincoln, George Eeles vicar & incumbent of the said church, & Henry Rawson & John Gardiner churchwardens of the said parish of Langley send greeting in etc. everlasting; for as much as Sir John Kedermister Kt. Chief Steward of his Majesties manors of the said Langley Marish & Wyardsbury within his county of Bucks & Mr of all his Majesties games within his said manors & parke of Langley Marish aforesaid hath a good desire to erect & build a faire decent ile or chappell adjoining to the southside of the said church of Langley not only for the beautifying & adorning thereof and for his & his heirs better convenience to sit neer unto & the better to see the place in the said church where the divine service is there celebrated & godly sermons preached; but also intendeth by Gods favor for ever to annex and have within the said ile or chappell many good & godley bookes for the use good instruction, better help & benefit in study of such vicars or curates as shall for ever hereafter enjoy the cure or vicaridge; And for that it is commendable to give way to [...] good desires and fit also that the said Sir John K. & his brethren & Dame Mary his lady & wife their children & the heires of the said Sir John should have a meet place for their seat & abode in the said church during the time of divine service. Therefore wee the said Richard Bp. of Lincoln ordinary & the said Dean & Canons patrons, George Eeles vicar & incumbent there & Henry Rawson & John Gardiner tendring the furtherance of the said good work desires and endeav-

our of the said Sir John Ked. & for the orderly placing of the said Sir John Ked. his brethren & his said Lady & wife & their children in the said church, have given & granted & confirmed & by these presents for us & every of us & our successors & every of them do grant & confirm unto the said Sir John Ked. & Dame Mary his wife, Eliz. Ked., Anne Ked., their daughters; Robert Ked. & Oliphe Ked. brethren of the said Sir John Ked. to the heires of the said Sir John Ked. for ever a certain part or parcel of the cemetery & churchyard of the said church of Langley Marish containing about 18 foot in bredth north & south & about 24 foot in length east & west, & lying between the church porch of the said church toward the west & the chancell wall east, together also with our seat in the said church now & anciently used by one Robert Style being about 4 foot & 4 & 2 inches from the partition which divideth the said church & chancell, to the intent to make a passage for ever out of the said church into the said parcell of the said churchyard so to bee built as aforesaid; to have & to hold the said parcell of the said cemetery or churchyard & the said seat in the said church in all & every the appurtenances, unto them the said Sir John Ked. & Dame Mary his said lady & wife, Eliz. & Anne Ked. their daughters & Robert & Oliphe Ked. brethren of the said Sir John, & to the heires of the said Sir John Ked. for ever to erect & buld upon the said parcell of the said cemetery or churchyard one faire & decent ile or chapel for the use & purpose aforesaid; and further for that it is most fit & convenient the said ile or chapel should be annexed to the said church of Langley Marish for the better use thereof & for the better beautifying & adorning of the said church & increase of light into the same & to the place there where prayers are usually read from a faire window in the southside of the said chappell or ile there intended also to be built; Therefore wee the said Bishop Dean & Canons Vicar & Churchwardens aforesaid doe by these presents further give & grant for us & every of us & our successors & every of them unto the said Sir John Ked. & Dame Mary his lady & wife Eliz. Anne Rob. & Oliphe Ked. & the heires of the said Sir John & every of them full power liberty & authority to pull or take down so much of the south wall of the said church next adjoining to the said parcell of ground parcell of the said churchyard as shall bee in length between the upperside of the said ile or chappell towards the chancell east-

wards & the lower side of the said ile or chappell toward the said church porch westward, so as always they the said Sir John Ked. & Dame Mary his wife, Eliz., Anne, Rob & Oliphe Ked. or the heires of the said Sir John or one of them doe within convenient time next after the pulling or taking down of the said wall erect build & make one faire arch in the said wall of stone brick or timber, or some other workes with columnes or pillars of stone brick or timber, comely & of sufficient strength for ever to support that part of the roof of the said church so far as the said wall shall be so taken down as aforesaid, & it is fully intended promised & assured that the said Sir John Ked. & Dame Mary his wife or one of them shall within 3 years next ensuing the date hereof not only erect and build the said intended ile or chappell of brick or stone and the roof thereof of strong oken timber at their or one of their costs & charges with a faire window also in the south side thereof, as well as for beautifying the said church and chappell as giving light to both of them. But that they the said Sir John Ked., Dame M. his wife, Eliz. Anne Rob. Ol. Ked. & the heires of the said Sir John shall after the said ile or chappell shall be so built & erected sustein maintain repaire & keep the same & every part thereof in all needfull & necessary reparacons sustenacons & amendments. And because it is undecent uncomely & most unmeet that any seat or seats or any part of them or other thing should hereafter bee built set up raised or enlarged within the said church either to hinder or obscure the sight of those that shall sit in the said ile or chappell so intended to bee built from seeing the minister & preacher and the place where prayers are said & godly sermons heard, or otherwise to hinder the free passage of light into thesaid church from the window of the said ile or chappell. Therefore wee the said Bishop, D & Can. vicar & churchwardens aforesaid do by these presents further grant ordein & appoint for us & our successors & every of us & them that no person or persons whatsoever or whosoever shall from henceforth in any place within the said church build set up or erect raise or enlarge any seat pew or any other thing or building whatsoever, either to impeach stop or hinder darken or obscure the sight & view of the said minister & preacher & place of prayers from such person or persons whatsoever as shall at any time for ever hereafter sit & abide in the said ile or chappell. And because the said Robert Stile shall also bee provided of some other

convenient seat in the said church, wee the said Bishop etc. churchwardens aforesaid doe further grant order & appoint that the said Robert Stile shall have free power liberty & authority to erect make & build him a seat in a certain place in the north side of the south ile of the said church which was in former times used as a passage up into a place commonly called the roode lofte being about 3 foot & a halfe wide & about 6 foot long & the east side thereof being about 4 foot & 9 inches from the wall or partition which divideth the said church & chancell. And the said seat or pew being there made to bee by the said Robert Styles always used as he hath been accustomed to use his ancient seat now referred from him by these presents & annexed as a passage into the now intended ile or chappell as aforesaid & to the end these our present grants may bee for ever thereafter firme & stable wee the said Bp. D & Can. George Eccles vicar Hen. Rawson & Jo. Gardiner churchwardens aforesaid have hereunto set our hands & scales the 28<sup>th</sup> day of Feb. 1613 in the years etc. 11<sup>th</sup> & 46<sup>th</sup>.

His codicill added to the former grant. The seal & everything of this was paid for.

To all Christian people to whom these presents shall come Henry Beaumont Clerk D.D. & now Dean of Windsor & the Canons there by the name of the Dean & Can. of 'The Kings free Chappell of St Georg within this Castle of Windsor being undoubted patrons of ....'

Turn to folio 336 but I find it not.

## APPENDIX 2

Inscriptions in vault, as recorded by the Rev. T D Prentis, Vicar of Langley, and the Rev. F C Hewdon 26 and 27 August 1948, and confirmed by Dr Julian Litten and Julian Hunt in August 1999. Copyright BRO, Kederminster Library Trust records (uncatalogued).

### KEDERMINSTER VAULT TWO TABLETS ON NORTH WALL

Tablet to the east:

At top Shield in relief, coloured:

Per pale, Kedermister (Kedermister quartering Wentham) on dexter side. Sinister: Garrard (Quarterly, 1st & 3rd, arg. a fesse sable, charged



with a lion passant guardant, arg. Or possibly gules. 2nd & 4th, arg., a chevron between 3 crescents two & one.

**Inscription:****MEMORIE SACRÆ**

Behind this stone lyeth the body of Dame Mary, wife of Sr John Kedermister Knt, & eldest daughter of Sir William Garrard of Dorny in this Count of Buck. Knt. a right virtuous & good woman, who was borne at Dorny aforesaid ye VIII of August in Ao. Dni 1577 & died ye of Ao. Dni 16 AETAT SUAE

Tablet to the west:

Shield in relief; colour gone, or possibly never coloured, with helmet, crest and mantling. Crest, a bird of some sort. Arms, Quarterly Kedermister and Wentham.

**Inscription:****MEMORIE SACRÆ**

Behind this stone lyeth ye body of Sr John Kedermister Kt, first Sonne of Edmund Esqr lineally descended from ye Lord Hoe & Lord Wells by Anne his mother eldest daughter of John Leigh Of Addington in ye Count of Surrey Esqr, & was thereby Cousen german thrice removed to Queene Elizabeth. He was borne in this Towne ye 18 day of December Ao. Dni. 1576. By his only means and endeavour ye Copihold Fines of this Manor of Langley Marr. were in Ao. Dni 1609 reduced unto ye certainty of 2s 4d for every Acre & Vs for every house that ye are hee builded Romsey house in this parish and also this vault and chapel over this ground. And he also made and gave unto this Towne for ever ye adioyning Library in Ao. Dni 1623 (Remainder of Inscription hidden by coffin)

**WEST WALL.**

In the centre of wall is a niche containing the bust

(in the round) of a young woman, head bound with fillet or wreath; a tablet on each side.

Tablet on left (south) side:

A lozenge with Arms, coloured, Kedermister quartering Wentham.

**Inscription:****MEMORIE SACRÆ**

Behind this stone lyeth ye body of Anne Kedermister second daughter Of Sir John Kidermister, Kt: by Dame Mary his wife, a most virtuous and beautiful Virgin who died of a burning fever the 22d August Ano. Dni. 1621 aetat susae 16 & afterwards the 15 day of March Ao. Dni 1623 was by her said Father removed to this place, being of Stature 5 foote & 8 Inches High, whose virtuous Life and Disposition Hee thus Recordeth to Posterity.

**EPITAPH**

Tablet on the right (north) of bust:

Twixt Life and Death a discord did arise  
About this Virgin, Young, Faire, Chaste and Wise,  
Whom Nature, out of her best curious Art,  
Made perfect good; in body, Face and Hart,  
Religious to, and of so mild a Spirit,  
As each did strive, who should enjoy her Merritt,  
That unto God shewd great Piety,  
To Parents, Duty, Friends Alachrity,  
Good will to all: & good Deeds unto many,  
Envy to none, nor yet envide of any.  
Hir Inside was hir Outside; she neer sought  
To make false shows, of what she never thought,  
And therein was, A pattern for the Lives  
Of virtuous Maidens, Widdows, & of Wives.  
Thus Life, hir Life relates, Death by his Rod  
Shewd hir that Death was ye first step to God.  
Of which, they made her Judge; Shee Sentence gave  
That Death hir Bones, but God her Soule should have,  
Who unto it, a Crowne of Life would give,  
And state, co-equall with his Saints to live  
In such Eternall Joy and full Delight  
As no tounge can express, nor pen can write.

And though long-lasting Names & Tombes decay  
 And Rust & Age weare epitaphs away  
 And Tyme consumes our Bodies into Earth  
 Leaving them nameless, as before their birth,  
 Yet Heaven contaynes A Monument of Bliss,  
 The Booke of Life, Where Hir name written is.  
 There neither Rust, nor Age, nor Tyme shall sever  
 Hir & Hir Name, which shall endure for ever  
 Where God hath Hir, and shee a better Life  
 Than if on Earth shee were Great Cæsars wife.

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