The Eleanor Crosses: their history and their meaning

Queen Eleanor’s Tomb at Lincoln Cathedral which holds her internal organs and is a replica of her tomb at Westminster.

RE Marshall

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Transcribed from an original typescript by Shelagh Mason, December 2020

This is the text of a talk given by my father RE (Bob) Marshall to Cheshunt WEA in or shortly after 1953. The text has been transcribed from a fragile original typescript in my possession. I have lightly edited the text for minor typographical errors and readability, and added the images and footnotes.

In reading this text bear in mind its age and that historical research has moved on, so current knowledge may differ from what is presented here. However I feel this should be preserved and available if only as an introduction to the Eleanor Crosses.

I am indebted to Shelagh Mason for transcribing my father’s typescript.

Keith Marshall, December 2021
Waltham Cross owes at least its name, if not its existence, to the death of a queen, Eleanor. Crosses might well be known today by another name but for the same reason. It is on such hazards that history is built.

Last week, during his most interesting talk on “Museum Chronicles”, Mr. Locke made the point that his subject presented particular difficulty due to the fact that there was a quantity of material on which he could base his survey of local history at this time. I keep company with Mr. Locke in being embarrassed by the facts at my disposal. I differ from him in that my subject is characterized by a mass of material from which it is most difficult to pick out the truth. Our knowledge of the Eleanor Crosses suffers from far too many such writing by historians who have just not had the trouble to sort out fact from fiction. Much of the literature is contradictory; even more is so vague as to be practically worthless. And all of it is widely scattered and difficult to get at.

Many periods of English history suffer in one of these two ways - to such an extent that we sometimes know far more about life in other countries than we do in our own. The details of everyday life in England earlier than, say, 500 years ago are, unhappily, almost unknown to us. From her tombs we know

Egypt, from Pomp we know Rome, in many ways far more thoroughly than we know the life of the Middle Ages as at home.

What is more, the English are often accused of being unaware of and uninterested in the great men - its artists and its works of art. We know far too little of the lives of Byrd or Thomas Tallis. We know practically nothing of Shakespeare's life and beliefs to enable us to appreciate the extent to which his environment affected the world's greatest poet and dramatist. The host of builders, sculptors and painters that raised and decorated our cathedrals and churches is known to us only as a list of names.

Fortunately, we are beginning to regret our ignorance. We now think it deplorable that earlier generations should have been so careless in their attitude towards the great works of art and literature that were in their time. Research workers are now exploring far more thoroughly than ever before the history of art and literature, folklore and architecture. They are doing so in the hope that, set against the more well-known background, there may yet be found items which were formerly considered trifling thought to be too trivial for consideration, yet which
Waltham Cross owes at least its name, if not its existence, to the death of a Queen. Charing Cross might well be known today by another name but for the same reason. It is on such hazards that history is built.

Last week, during his most interesting talk on “Roman Cheshunt”, Mr Rooke made the point that his subject presented particular difficulty due to the fact that there was a scarcity of material on which he could base his survey of local history at that time. I keep company with Mr Rooke in being embarrassed by the facts at my disposal. I differ from him in that my subject is encumbered by a mass of material from which it is most difficult to pick out the truth. Our knowledge of the Eleanor Crosses suffers from far too much writing by historians who have just not taken the trouble to sort out fact from fiction. Much of the literature is contradictory: even more is so vague as to be practically worthless. And all of it is widely scattered and difficult to get at.

Many periods of English history suffer in one of these two ways – to such an extent that we sometimes know far more about life in other counties than we do in our own. The details of every-day life in England earlier than, say, 300 years ago are, unhappily, almost unknown to us. From her tombs we know Egypt, from Pompeii we know Rome, in many ways far more thoroughly than we know the life of the Middle Ages at home.

What is more, the English are often accused of being unaware of and uninterested in its great men, its artists and its works of art. We know far too little of the lives of Byrd or Thomas Tallis. We know practically nothing of Shakespeare’s life and beliefs to enable us to appreciate the extent to which his environment affected the works of the world’s greatest poet and dramatist. The host of builders, sculptors & painters that raised and decorated our cathedrals and churches is known to us only as a list of names.

Fortunately, we are beginning to regret our ignorance. We now think it deplorable that earlier generations should have been so careless in their attitude towards the great works of art and literature that were in their care. Research workers are now exploring far more thoroughly than ever before the byways of history and literature, folklore and architecture. They are doing so in the hope that, set against the more well-known background, there may yet be found items which were formerly thought to be too trifling for consideration, yet which may, in the light of greater interest and opportunity, show something of significance to add to our depleted knowledge.

Happily – as Mr Rooke showed us in connection with Ermine Street – photography has helped us considerably, not only in his sphere, but also in enabling records to be published more widely. Easier travelling facilities have made it possible to collect and circulate information. Libraries are enabling ordinary folk to learn about things other than the routine and monotonous tasks that make up every-day life.

Every district has its history. Every town has its associations with some artistic or literary figure. Most libraries have their local collections, and the majority of Librarians are only too pleased to help readers learn more about their

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1 The numbers in brackets indicate the start of each page in the original typescript.
2 Peter Rooke (1927-2003) was a well respected Cheshunt local historian.
neighbourhood. Our own Mr Edwards is no exception, and I can assure any of you who may wish to undertake the necessary reading on subjects of local interest that you will meet with the most happy co-operation from him.

Cheshunt is particularly rich in its historical associations. It is not my place to-night to outline the various aspects of this. My subject is the unusual structure which stands quite close to the southern boundary of the district – a building that, I think it is true to say, few of us ever see – the piece of decorated stonework that many people think is nothing more than a hindrance to traffic, and a waste of public money – the Queen Eleanor Memorial Cross.

I said that it is a thing that few of us ever see. Let me explain what I mean. We know that it is there; we know that it is something old; but how often do we look at it? And it is not unless and until we really look at it and study it that we shall really see it – and see it for what it is.

What is there to see? What is there to know about it?

It is common knowledge that, when King Edward I was abroad fighting in the Crusades, he was stabbed in the arm. The wound festered and Edward nearly lost his arm. Queen Eleanor herself sucked the poison out and so helped the wound to heal and prevented an amputation. It is also common knowledge that, when Eleanor died, Edward had her body brought from the north of England for burial in Westminster Abbey, and that wherever her body rested overnight during the journey, he caused a cross to be erected in her memory.

Unfortunately for popular history, the first of these stories is not true, and the second is often misrepresented. The actual details of the first do not concern us here – all I need to say is that there is no contemporary record which suggests that Eleanor did anything so noble or revolting. In fact, it would appear that she had to be helped from the tent when her husband was receiving medical attention! We are concerned only with the facts about the erection of the Crosses.

For many years it was believed that Edward had erected these crosses solely as memorials to his wife and queen. All the old standard histories of the country – Holinshed, Spede, Camden – and the historians of Hertfordshire – Chauncy, Cussans, Hunter, and Salmon – state this as a fact, and modern belief follows them. Unfortunately for their theories, the executorial rolls in respect of Queen Eleanor’s Will were found in France. They were returned to this country, and purchased by the British Museum in 1831. From these Rolls it now seems certain that the series of crosses was erected, at least in part, in compliance with Eleanor’s own wishes.

We need not be surprised by this. In the Middle Ages it was a common thing for the more well-to-do, and possibly devout, classes to make arrangements for Masses to be sung for their souls after death. (The country was, of course, as you will remember, under the religious domination of Rome.) These sung Masses – or Chantries, as they

3 Jack Edwards (1914-1992) was Cheshunt Librarian 1946-1984 and a highly respected local historian.
were called - were performed in chapels set aside for that purpose and [7] known as Chantry Chapels.

(Here let us note that the word “Chantry” means the service – the sung Mass. For classical scholars the derivation from the Latin *cantare* (to sing) will be obvious. Unfortunately, a Chantry is usually understood to mean a chapel, but in this talk I shall refer to the buildings correctly as Chantry Chapels).

But to return. One of the first lessons to be learnt by any student of the past is that the eyes and mind must be closed against present conditions. He must try to understand the point of view of the period which he studies. Here I must say that I have always thought the Cheshunt Survey should not only teach us facts about our particular district, but also, by setting those facts against the right background, help us to absorb interesting details of social history.

[8] History is, if I may put it this way, neither history nor pleasant if learnt only as a series of dates and numbers, or lists of names. For the student who must have the full unattractive details they are available in the standard books of reference. I want to use our local monument as an episode in history from which to wander in a few of the less well-known byways of the past. We are concerned with the Cheshunt Survey; but we cannot consider Cheshunt as an entity on its own. No place can exist in a social or economic vacuum, but must live - and we must study it - in relation to its neighbourhood and, ultimately, the whole country.

As far as the Eleanor Crosses are concerned, I do not intend to give you long lists of dates; neither shall I attempt to catalogue in full the names of architects, masons, painters and sculptors. These are matters for the experts and the research students, and need not concern us here. In any event, I’ve no doubt that too much minute detail would soon get monotonous - and I am sure you will agree that the purpose of WEA\(^4\) classes is not to bore.

Rather should a talk of this nature, I feel, be an attempt to make the past come alive by comparing social conditions of the time under review with those that we are familiar with, today; that is why, at the [9] outset of this talk, I emphasize that we must appreciate the religious thought that underlay, guided and was responsible for the way of life and modes of thought that are foreign to our own. I made the special point about the common procedure of leaving instructions in Wills for Chantries to be sung for the repose of the soul after death.

When Eleanor died in 1290 at [10] Harby in Nottinghamshire, the King, Edward I, wrote to Archbishop Romeyn of York requesting the prayers of the faithful for her soul, and the Archbishop immediately granted an indulgence of forty days to those who responded. Provision was made for perpetual services to be said or sung to her memory and for the repose of her soul, not only at each place where her body rested on its long journey to Westminster, but in almost every part of the kingdom. At

\(^4\) Workers Educational Association. Founded in 1903 WEA a voluntary sector provider of adult education in the UK.
Harby a perpetual chantry was founded for the endowment of which 100 marks\textsuperscript{5,6} was granted by the then Dean of Lincoln. Other records show that similar chantries were instituted at North Clifton (where there is a royal palace), Edington, at the Black Friars in London, Leeds in Kent, Lincoln, Peterborough, and other places too numerous to mention.

(Today, of course, as is well known, when a respected personage dies, his or her memory is perpetuated by other means – such as the endowments of Chairs at Universities, scholarships of various types, funds to be used for specific purposes and so on. Before the early 15\textsuperscript{th} century almost the only way was by instituting and maintaining chantries.)

To my mind it cannot be doubted that Eleanor intended that her memory should be kept alive and that [11] Masses should be instituted for the welfare of her soul. But that she intended crosses to be set up is by no means as certain. Obviously – although we have no details of her Will, and consequently do not know its date – she would not be aware that she would die so far from Westminster where she would certainly be buried with her husband’s forbears. Equally obvious is the fact that she would not anticipate a lengthy journey for her corpse, with daily stops en route, and could not, therefore, direct that crosses should be erected to her memory. But I have no doubt that Edward took every advantage of the situation and agreed that, at the places where her corpse rested, Chantries should be instituted and Chantry chapels built.

My reading of the evidence inclines me to believe that Edward arranged for the crosses to be erected at these places adjoining the chantry chapels so built. These crosses would have the effect not of being memorials in themselves to Eleanor but of drawing the attention of the passers-by to the fact that these spots were those near which the corpse rested, and that the conjoining chapels were there for the traveller in which he could pray for Eleanor’s soul.

Edward was not the initiator of the practice of building crosses along a funeral route. During his period of fighting in the Crusades he had been accompanied in the near East [12] by his kinsman King Louis IX of France (now known as St Louis). Twenty years earlier Louis died at Tunis, and his body was brought to Paris from where it was carried on men’s shoulders to its burial at St Denys. After the funeral, memorial crosses were erected where the bearers had rested. That is the bald statement as given by various historians, but it didn’t satisfy me. I wondered if there were further examples of this.

I find that there were. The earliest references I have so far managed to trace concern Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, who visited Rome about AD 448 to plead on behalf of his country on some matter. At the time when his biographer (Constantius) was

\textsuperscript{5} All modern values are as at 2020 and calculated from the Bank of England Inflation Calculator, \url{https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator}. I am indebted to Shelagh Mason for these conversions.

\textsuperscript{6} A mark was worth 160 pence (13s 4d). Therefore, 100 marks was £66 8s 11d. This was equivalent of over £90,000 in 2020.
writing some 32 years later (in 480), chapels and crosses were rising to his memory along the route he took (Auxerre – Alise – Sainte Reine – Autun – Alps – Milan – Ravenna).

It would appear, therefore, that the Eleanor Crosses were not by any means the first example, and the precedents would appear to have commended themselves to Edward. He was faced with the necessity to carry Eleanor from Harby to Westminster, and it seems easy for us to imagine his interest in and approval of the scheme.

We know that it was planned at the time that at least the crosses should be erected, for we have an [13] account given by an early chronicler at the Abbey at Dunstable which stated that:

... when the body of the Queen was departing from Dunstable, the bier rested in the centre of the market-place until the King’s Chancellor and the great men then and there present had marked a fitting place where they might afterwards erect ... a Cross of wonderful size, our Prior being then present and sprinkling holy water...

So much for the underlying principle. I could here go on to apologize about the beauty and lovable character of Eleanor, as has been done by countless historians and writers of the past. I do not intend to do this because my interim assessment is in no way as favourable as those of the romantic and fanciful chroniclers of the past who relied far more on hearsay and conjecture – not to mention Royal favour – than is either wise or reasonable for a balanced view.

But, without doubt, as a Queen, Eleanor was loved by her intimates, and revered by those who knew her less well and by the common people throughout the country. This, possibly, in part accounts for what may well, at the time, have almost developed into a cult of worship to her memory.

[14] And now I should like you to think for a few moments about the state of the roads and the manner of travelling in the late 13th century. Road surfaces were of a most unsatisfactory nature. Given the least neglect, the lack of drainage made the roads impassable by virtue of flooding. Often the roadways became rivers – almost in their own right – especially in lower lying parts of the country. The construction and repair of roads was of such great importance that they were often undertaken as works of pious character for which penance was remitted. Passable roads were a necessity in order that horses should not stumble and that baggage wagons might have a chance of remaining on their wheels. Carts and carriages were heavy, lumbering, solid machines which slowly followed their devious courses.

I mention these points because they have an obvious bearing on the actual funeral journey. And I should like to show you a picture of a carriage of about this time.

It might well be that Eleanor and other ladies of the court travelled in one of these. Eleanor was only about 40 when she died – and she is reputed to have had at least 17 children, from which we can imagine that, at least on some occasions, she would have found even a bone-shaker like this useful!
There were also horse-litters, which would be useful for more speedy movement. Carts and carriages were also used quite frequently for various kinds of labour in country districts as well as in the towns. Jusserand, in his “English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages” points out that even though carts were numerous, the roads must not necessarily be thought of as excellent. The King always used a number of vehicles. When he moved from one manor to another, the brilliance of the court was followed by an army of loud-creaking, heavy, cumbersome carts. His official purveyor had authority to requisition them wherever they went.

In 1285 – 5 years before Eleanor’s death – Edward had taken special precautions under the Statute of Westminster to combat the growing terror of travelling imposed by robbers and bandits. Men were described as being accustomed to crouch down in the ditches, coppices or brushwood near the roads, especially those linking market towns. The King ordered, therefore, that, for a space of two hundred feet, the ground on each side of the roads should be cleared in such a manner that there remained neither coppice nor brushwood, nor hollow nor ditch that might serve as shelters for malefactors. Only large trees such as oaks might be left standing. In addition to these precautions the court was preceded by twenty-four archers.

That is a very brief outline of a few of the trials that beset travellers at that time, but they may serve to impress upon us the difficulties that faced such a huge cortège as followed Eleanor’s body, and it has a bearing on the question of nightly accommodation for the host of court officials, attendants and the bodyguard.

If at anytime the King did not happen to be within easy reach of one of his own or his liege’s castles, it was customary for him to lodge at the neighbouring monastery. He was sure of being entertained there as its master – and, in any case, hospitality was a religious duty at all monastic houses. People of high rank were admitted into the convent proper; the mass of travellers, pilgrims and retainers were accommodated and fed in the guest houses attached.

And so we come to one of the reasons which suggest that Eleanor’s funeral cortège proceeded from monastery to monastery along its route to Westminster. There was, in effect, a series of ready-made lodging-houses. A further reason that has often been
suggested is that Edward wished for [17] his wife's body to rest in church each night so that solemn requiem could be chanted over it. At St Alba's, according to one of the Abbey's chroniclers – Walsingham – the procession was met at the entrance of the town near St Michael's church by the whole of the Abbey's assembly “solemnly clad in their copes”. The Abbott and the monks conducted the mourners to the Abbey church (now, of course, the cathedral) where the body was placed in front of the high altar. The brethren then spent the whole of the night in holy vigils and in chanting solemn requiems and other divine offices with “the utmost devotion”.

It seems possible – we cannot say yet with any more certainty than that it seems possible – that most nights were spent at religious houses. There are records to prove that it was so at Lincoln, Dunstable, and St Alban’s. It is possible that the same thing occurred at Stamford (where Eleanor is recorded as having founded a nunnery), at Delapré Abbey near Northampton, and at Woburn where there was an important Cistercian foundation. At Geddington it seems that there might well have been a difference, for there had been a royal palace there as early as the reign of King John, 70 to 80 years earlier. At other places there are no records and no further evidence on which we can make any sound conclusion at all.

[18] In November 1290 Edward was on his way north to Scotland. Eleanor accompanied him on most of his journeys and she was with him on this occasion. In those days the whole of the court moved with the King. The size of the retinue made it imperative that the Court move quite frequently. It must be remembered that food production and storage were very different from what we mean by those terms today. It was impossible to transport huge amounts of provisions across country with ease to the places where food was needed. Consequently, large parties were obliged to move on to the next nearest place where provisions were available.

By the 20th November the Court had reached Nottinghamshire when Eleanor was taken ill. Her fever prevented further progress northwards, and she went to stay for the period of her indisposition at the house of a local squire or Lord of the manor, one Richard de Weston, at Harby on the Notts-Lincolnshire border. Her illness proved fatal.

Here we meet with one of the many difficulties that beset us over dates. Varying days are given for her death. In a letter to the Abbot of Clugny Edward states that Eleanor died on the 8th of Kalends of December. This would be November 28th. Other records give the date as the Eve of St Andrew’s Day. Now St Andrew’s Day is November 30th – it’s Eve would be November 29th. This puzzled me for a long time until I remembered that [19] by ecclesiastical reckoning, days started at 6 o’clock in the evening. This would mean that St Andrew’s Eve (29th) would begin at 6 pm on the 28th. From this we can assume that Eleanor died after six o’clock in the evening.

The King immediately wrote a letter to the Abbot of Clugny – probably one among many issued as a formal hand-written circular to the heads of important religious houses.
The corpse was opened and embalmed. Eleanor’s heart was removed and reserved, probably by her own wish, for burial in the chapel of the Black Friars in London. Her viscera were also taken away and buried in what was later a sumptuous tomb in the cathedral church of Lincoln. Probably the body itself was transported to Lincoln while arrangements were made for the journey. The cortège left Lincoln on the morning of 4th December and arrived at Grantham the same evening. The following morning (5th December) it left for Stamford; then via Geddington, Northampton, Stony Stratford, Woburn, Dunstable, St Albans, Cheshunt, Cheapside and Charing to Westminster where the body was finally buried on 17th December.

And now we start meeting real trouble. The ordinary route from Lincoln to London at that time was [20] through Stamford, Huntingdon, Royston, Puckeridge and Cheshunt. As I said just now it has often – indeed, almost always – been suggested that the reason for the long detour was so that Eleanor could rest in the churches of large and important religious establishments each night. This we cannot wholly
accept as there are no records at some of the places of the existence of any such monastery.

But a greater difficulty – and one that seems insuperable – I can only explain from the accompanying chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Evening of</th>
<th>Morning of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantham</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamford</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geddington</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardingstone</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stony Stratford</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woburn</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunstable</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Alban’s</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waltham</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheapside</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Burial on 17 December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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These dates we can reasonably take as correct as they are confirmed by records and Rolls and by writs issued and dated by the King. You will notice that there is a day missing before Stony Stratford. What [21] happened? Was there a further halt of which we know nothing? Was there another Cross? I don’t think so, because there would be some reference to it – even if only in the form of a strong local tradition. I’ve not been able to trace anything to help in solving this problem, and I can only conclude, on present evidence, that the cortege stopped for two nights at either Geddington or Hardingstone (Northampton), probably Geddington as there was a royal palace.

We meet a similar difficulty at the end of the journey. There seems to be no doubt that the cortege left St Alban’s on the morning of the 13th on its way to Waltham. Edward definitely left on that day, and went direct to London. We assume this as there are writs issued by him at both places dated 13th December.

If the body left Waltham on the morning of the 14th, it would have reached Cheapside on the same evening. And then what? We know there was a Cross at Cheapside, and another at Charing, this accounting for two days. But you will see that there is a further day not accounted for.

Again, what happened? Was a night spent at Blackfriars? Or did it stay for two nights in the vicinity of Charing or Cheapside? We just don’t know! Neither do we know exactly where the body rested overnight at Charing or Cheapside! All that
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would seem certain is that it did not go to the [22] Abbey at Westminster before the burial on the 17th – at any rate, no one at the Abbey, today, can confirm that it was so. A gain there is no record – nor any tradition to that effect. I've spent nearly 18 months trying to get to the bottom of this – and I am no nearer, now, than I was then. There just does not seem to be enough evidence on which we can base any sure conclusions.

And now I think we ought to briefly go the Rolls of accounts kept by the executors of Eleanor’s Will. They appear not to be complete as there are entries relating to only 9 crosses. In fact, the number of crosses that were erected has seemed to cause historians considerable trouble. Some laid claim to 15 or 14; many believed the correct number was 13. I believe that the most of these were right except for the inclusion of Tottenham High Cross – of which a little more, later.

However, let us look briefly at the Rolls. The payments recorded fall into three classes:

- Bequests, donations Eleanor’s executors to carry into effect the Queen’s intentions, and to provide for the repose of her soul.
- Payments directed by the King, generally for matters in relation to his dead Queen.

[23] The funds available for these purposes were:

- the debts due to Eleanor at her death;
- the revenues from her manors;
- occasional grants in aid from the Exchequer.

The chief value of these Rolls for our purposes, tonight, lies in the entries which relate to the building of the crosses, and the casting of the effigies on her tombs at Lincoln, Blackfriars and Westminster. From them we learn the names of the architects, designers, painters, masons, gilders and so on. We also learn of the quarries from which the stone was obtained; that 726 pounds of wax (in those days beeswax) were obtained from one particular source, and nearly another 5cwt were purchased for the preliminary modelling of images on the tombs at Lincoln and Blackfriars; that these small images were “made and cast” by William of Suffolk, Alexander of Abingdon, and a Dominic of Rheims.

1700lbs of metal were bought to make three statues for £21 13s 8d. There is a further payment of £50 for the same purpose, which must have purchased another 25 cwts.

350 golden florins (costing 2s 6d each) were melted down and used for gilding the effigies.

And so I could go on. There is page after page of such entries. I might mention here that, of course, they are all written in Latin – and often in bad Latin, at that! I must

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7 £21 13s 8d was approx. £29,386 in 2020.
8 £50 was approx. £67,761 in 2020.
9 350 golden florins (worth 2s 6d each) is £43 15s, which was worth approx. £59,290 in 2020.
admit that my ability with that language is limited, and I haven’t been able to find complete translations so that, if there is anyone here this evening, who would like to undertake the job, I, for one, should be most pleased.

And now, having spoken in general terms about various aspects of the story of the Eleanor Crosses, let us look at a few of the known facts about the memorials.

The first was Harby on the Notts-Lincs border, where Eleanor died. There was never a cross, but there is a statue over the doorway in the Church tower commemorating the fact that Eleanor died there.

**Lincoln** I have not been able to find a print or drawing of the cross, although it definitely existed. Leland says that, in the 1530’s it stood in the market-place. This must have been close to the Priory of St Catherine whose nuns [25] embalmed the queen’s body. The only portions of the cross now known to exist are to be found in the passage of the castle gateway, where there is a fragment of one of the sculptured figures that earlier adorned the cross.

A part of the body was removed and buried in a magnificent tomb under the East window of the cathedral church. The tomb appears to have been very similar to that which has been preserved at Westminster, and the gilded bronze effigy that lay on the top was an exact copy of that which can be seen in Westminster Abbey today. The original tomb at Lincoln was destroyed by Cromwell’s unholy crowd in the Civil Wars but, thanks to a generous Lincoln citizen, a replica was made in 1891 from drawings of the original before its destruction. This replica can now be seen in Lincoln cathedral.

**Grantham** Again, no drawing. What is more, there is no mention of this cross in the Rolls. This need not worry us unduly because neither is there any reference to Geddington Cross which still stands. As I said just now, it seems that all of the Rolls have not been preserved. But in Gough’s edition of Camden’s “Britannia” (1586) we read that

> Queen Eleanor’s Cross stood before Mr Hacket’s house, called Peter Church Hill, where stood a church, [26] dedicated to St Peter, now demolished.

There seems no doubt that the monument was still standing until the Civil War, and that it was destroyed shortly after Cromwell occupied the town on the 22 May 1643. Later, the Corporation tried to gather the pieces of the cross, but all traces of them have now disappeared.

**Stamford** Here was another cross that is not mentioned in any of the Rolls, but that it existed there is no doubt. In Richard Butcher’s “Survey and Antiquity of the Town of Stanford” (sic), published in 1646, there is a definite statement that

> upon the North side of the Town near unto York Highway ... stands an ancient Cross of Free Stone of a very curious Fabrick, having many ancient scuthions (escutcheons) of arms incscribed in the stone about it, as the Arms of Castile Leon quartered, being the paternal coat of the King of Spain, and divers hatchments belonging to that Crown ...
Here we recognise one of the features that appear to be common to all the Crosses – the sculpturing of coats of arms of a particular design. We can see them on our example [27] in Cheshunt. That report was in 1646. In the 2nd edition, published 13 years later he amended his account to read “... upon the North side of the town ... stood an ancient cross ....” And so we can assume that the Cross at Stamford was demolished between 1646 and 1659, apparently another casualty of Puritan misguidedness. This assumption is confirmed by Camden who states emphatically that the cross “... was pulled down by the soldiers in the civil war ....”.

GEDDINGTON Cross appears to have been odd in design. As you can see from the print it is triangular in form – the only one of the series known of this shape. Usual armorial bearings. I am not satisfied that there was a monastic house of any size or importance here in which the cortège could rest for the night. But – as I said a few minutes ago, and you may think it worth considering – Geddington was known to our Kings before the time of John, who had a palace there.

[28] HARDINGSTONE was a hamlet a short distance from Northampton. Writers in the past have sometimes called the cross here either by the name of Northampton Cross or the Hardingstone Cross. Not far away stood the house of the Cluniac Nuns, now remembered as Delapré Abbey, where it is possible that the bier remained overnight.

There is an interesting sidelight that I might mention in connection with this particular memorial, the building of which involved the construction of a roadway across the marshes of the River Nene. The Rolls mention the expenditure of £80\(^\text{10}\) which was paid to one Robert Harrison, and further sums for the expense of laying a

\(^{10}\) £80 was approx. £108,417 in 2020.
pavement. The need for such a causeway can well be imagined by anyone who visits the spot, and its construction would have been regarded at the time as a work of piety.

[29] STONY STRATFORD Cross was another casualty of the Cromwellian era. Camden mentions its existence, and, in 1847 Dr George Lipscomb, in his Antiquities of the County of Buckinghamshire says that it “... was demolished about the year 1646 ...”, but goes on to inform us that an old inhabitant of the town (in 1847) remembered part of the cross remaining at the western extremity of the town.

[30] WOBURN Cross was built we know from the Rolls, but what it was like or when it was destroyed I have not been able to find traces. I have been able to find very little material from which to offer you any worth-while account of it.

[31] Camden refers to DUNSTABLE Cross in 1586 by stating that it stood in the centre of the town and that it was “adorned with statues and by the arms of England, Castile & co.” Stukeley says that it stood “in the centre of four streets, intersecting at right angles”. This was at a point where the Icknield Way crosses Watling Street – about 300 yards from the wonderful west front of the Priory Church. Hard by the monument stood (it has now been demolished) until comparatively recently, a small building which was locally known as the Cross House and, in my opinion, this might well have been the successor to an early chantry chapel. In fact, I have recently learnt that there is a local tradition to this effect. A few years ago, during road repairs, the foundations of the cross were uncovered.

It was pulled down in 1643 by troops under the control of the Earl of Essex, the Roundhead leader, who considered it a relic of Popery.

[32] ST ALBAN’S The Cross is mentioned by Gibbs in his Corporation Records. In 1596 we find it described as “verie stately”, and it is several times referred to in 16th-century documents as the “Great Cross” and the “Queen Cross”. It was erected in what later became known as the Market Place.
There is no drawing of the actual Cross known, although a map by Benjamin Hare, dated 1640, shows the monument as a tall pinnacle almost approaching the dimensions of a church spire. This representation was obviously exaggerated.

Stukeley, in 1721, shows the Cross in his map of the city, even though he had earlier noted its demolition. Presumably Stukeley’s map was a copy of an earlier work. Chauncy represents the Cross (in his plan of the town in 1700) as though the upper portion had been removed, and this agrees with another record that states that it was partly destroyed by order of Parliament in 1643 – another Commonwealth victim! Fragments of it remained until 1703/4 when the last vestiges were removed to make way for a market house. In the Herts Advertiser of 25th June 1870 it is recorded that “workmen laying a pipe ... came upon the south foundation wall of the Eleanor Cross”.

[33] From St Albans the funeral came to Cheshunt (more of this in a minute), and then went on to Cheapside.

TOTTENHAM HIGH CROSS was not an Eleanor Cross. Butcher and Bedwell in their Survey & Antiquity of the Town of Tottenham High Cross, published in 1717, incline to the belief that the cross was in existence before 1290; the most they will admit is that it might possibly have been re-edified and raised higher “against the corp’s coming through the town”. Of course, it looked nothing like its present form, and may even have been made of wood.

[34] CHEAPSIDE Cross served history well. By 1441 (after a life of 150 years) the first one was in a very decayed state. In that year, John Hatherley, Mayor of London, procured a license from Henry VI to re-edify it in honour of the city. Unfortunately this re-edification was carried out with little respect for the original intention of the cross. The statues of Eleanor were replaced by figures illustrating the lives of Saints. At various times it was re-gilded in honour of the visit of the Emperor Charles V in 1522; at the coronation of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn; at the coronation of Edward VI; and in 1554 against the coming of King Phillip.

During the reign of Elizabeth I the cross was further desecrated by the introduction of an alabaster image of Diana “from whose naked breasts there trilled continuously some streams of water conveyed into it from the Thames”.

Shortly after Christmas 1600 the image of the Virgin Mary which had also somehow found a place on the monument was defaced by plucking off her crown and almost her whole head, taking from her her naked child and stabbing her in the breasts. During the religious and political turmoil of the first half of the 1600s, the crosses both at Cheapside and Charing became the subjects of numerous [35] political lampoons. These are most interesting for the idea they give of the frenzy of destruction which possessed the extremists.

When we consider this madness we can hardly feel any regret to learn that in 1643, the last scene of in the history of Cheapside Cross was enacted. By this time it was a sorry and unrecognisable descendant of the original beautiful monument. The Parliament deputed Robert Harlowe to demolish it, and he carried out his work completely, believing it to be a most worthy act to remove a profanity. A contemporary account says that
... at the fall of the top drums beat, trumpets blew, and multiple of caps were thrown in the air, and a great shout of people with joy ...

There is no drawing known of the original, although prints of later crosses are fairly common. In the Guildhall Museum there can still be seen two broken stone panels which almost certainly formed parts of the first monument. They show the characteristic heraldic shields emblazoned with the arms of England and of Leon and Castile.

[36] **BLACKFRIARS** It was a custom of the time for devout persons to direct that their heart should be removed after death, and taken to some particularly holy place. Eleanor had taken a special interest in the community of Black Friars and their church that they had not much earlier built in London. She wished for her heart to be taken to this church, and Edward took pains to ensure that the tomb should be worthy of such a relic. A casket or urn held the heart, and was supported by a figure of an angel. All traces of the tomb disappeared at the dissolution of the monasteries.

[37] **CHARING CROSS** was the reputed site of the last resting-place of Eleanor’s body before its burial at Westminster Abbey on 17th December 1290.

The romantic and fanciful writers of the past frequently suggested the name “Charing” is derived from “chers Reine” (dear queen) in acknowledgement of the affection that existed between Edward and Eleanor. But this is only another conjecture, as there are earlier references to it than those concerning the Cross. The most reliable derivation of the name seems to be:

“cerre” – Anglo Saxon for “bend”, & “ing” – Anglo Saxon for “meadow”.

Thus “Charing” means “the bend meadow” or “the meadow by the bend”, and, indeed, it is here that the River Thames takes a turn to the South.

The small village was a halting-place between the cities of London and Westminster. It is quite probable that there was one of the old wooden preaching-crosses there in the village, before the magnificent structure erected in honour of Eleanor. It is possible that Edward, having many times passed through the village, would realise what an admirable place Charing would be for his wife’s body to rest on the [38] night before it was finally taken to Westminster for burial.

The labour for our own Waltham Cross cost £95.11 Charing Cross cost £650.12

Again we cannot tell where the body stayed that night. It certainly does not seem probable that it would have been left out in the open at the mercy of the weather in the middle of December. There would appear to have been two possible places for its care – a hermitage, which is known to have existed on the spot, and the chapel of the hospital of St Mary Rouncival which treated “lunatic, distracted, madd or wood people”.

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11 £95 was approx. £128,745 in 2020.
12 £650 was approx. £880,890 in 2020.
For my part, I cannot believe that either of these places would be acceptable to the King; the hermitage would scarcely have been large enough; the hospital of a madhouse would hardly be appropriate.

You will remember that I drew your attention to the fact there was a day missing after Waltham. Is it possible – and here I am going to throw a cat among the pigeons in Trafalgar Square – is it possible that the body did not go to Charing at all? Is it possible that, after leaving Waltham and Cheshunt, it was taken to St Paul’s (the Cheapside Cross is only a short distance away), where it stayed for three nights before passing on to its final resting place at Westminster. I thought of this only over the weekend and, of course, as yet, I’ve not had opportunity to give the position a great deal of thought, nor to do any work on it – but I throw it out as a suggestion for consideration.

Here I may warn you, if you are not already aware of the fact, that the monument which now stands in the forecourt of Charing Cross Station and Hotel is not the one that was built in 1291. The first memorial stood some way removed from the present cross. In point of fact it was erected on the exact spot where the statue of King Charles I (on horseback) now stands, in Trafalgar Square.

The puritan tyranny demolished the cross – as at Cheapside, by this time amended to only a shade of its former glory – in 1647. As with the others, it was considered to stink of popery and idolatry! What was more, it was accused of plotting against the Cromwellian Commonwealth!

Parliament was

... told, got-wot, it had a plot Which made them so hard-hearted,  
To give command, it should not stand, But be taken down and carted ...

But neither man, woman, nor child (goes on the old writer who composed the ballad about the same time) [40]

Will say I’m confident,  
They ever heard it speak one word Against the parliament.  
The committee said, that verily to Popery it was bent;  
For ought I know, it might be so, For to church it never went.

And so another of the crosses was destroyed. The present monument is believed to be a fair representation of the original Cross. It was erected at the expense of the railway company from the designs of a member of the famous Barry family in 1865. These designs were founded on the traditions and early drawings known to exist of the original.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY TOMB  I intend to say very little about the Eleanor tomb in the Abbey. Of course, at the moment, it is not appropriate while we are thinking of a more joyous occasion in that place, but the reason why I shall not say much about it is that, like the tombs at Lincoln and Blackfriars, it does not fall wholly within our consideration of the memorial crosses. But it is only reasonable that we

13 Presumably the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
should take a short look at a work that has been the subject of admiration for centuries. Especially is this so of the effigy of the queen which is a work of art of undeniable beauty.

The figure is of bronze and was richly coated with gold. It was made by William Torel, a goldsmith and citizen of London. The effigy is idealised – as you will see Eleanor is made to look young, whereas, in fact, she was 40 when she died – and had borne her husband 17 children. The great Professor Lethaby praised this figure as being the most beautiful Gothic sculpture in England ... indeed ... it may be questioned ... whether all Europe can show such another.

The tomb was originally painted, but almost all traces of the colour has now disappeared. More enduring has been the iron grille which was erected to keep out thieves.

The tomb itself appears to have been designed by Richard Crundale and completed by himself and his brother Roger who worked on Waltham Cross. You will note the ornamentation with the characteristic carving of the period, and the shields bearing the arms that appear on the crosses.14

Special provision was made for religious observances to be maintained at the tomb, including gifts of land and money to the Abbey as endowments. At one time each Abbot of Westminster was required to swear on oath that he would comply with certain requirements by the King. All the year 30 wax tapers were to remain about the tomb, all of which were to be lighted on great feast days, whenever nobles visited the tomb, or on any occasion when it was thought fit. At least two tapers remained alight continuously. The anniversary memorial service was held on St Andrew’s Day each year, and was maintained until the dissolution of the Benedictine community in 1539 – an unbroken period of 249 years.

And now I must draw your attention to another difficulty. You will have noticed that the crosses were not built on exactly the same spots where the body rested. They couldn’t be in many cases where the High Altar of a church was the place.

We have also reviewed the suggestion that the daily journeys and nightly halts were so arranged so that Eleanor could stay each night in a church or monastery of major importance. I hope that we have agreed that this was so only at certain places. At other villages it is now almost impossible to verify the facts.

Although every town or village at which we know the corpse rested would have had, at least, its Parish church, or the chapel belonging to the Lord of the Manor, who might well have been a noble or relative of the royal house, or one of the many friends of the Court who had been granted a special favour in the form of a gift of land.

Our own example is a case in point. There is a fond belief that Eleanor’s body rested for the night of 13 December in Waltham Abbey. But I have not found a trace of recorded evidence to substantiate this tradition. It may even be – although this

14 See the cover image.
seems unlikely – that the bier was cared for at the house that we now know as “The Four Swans Inn”.

[44] Arthur, Duke of Brittany and Earl of Richmond was a nephew of Eleanor, and Lord of the Manor of Cheshunt.

However, as I said, this theory is of very doubtful value. Although we do not know where the body stayed that night, I think that we may call upon what is strong circumstantial evidence to assume that tradition may be correct in asserting that Waltham Abbey enjoyed the honour.

You will note that Waltham Cross is in the parish of Cheshunt – or, more correctly, was until the division of the parish in the last century. Hence it would seem reasonable to suppose that, had the queen’s bier stayed at the house now called the “Four Swans”, the memorial cross would have become known as Cheshunt Cross, (as was the case at all other places, when the cross automatically became known by the name of the district in which it stood). But the very fact that, from the earliest records (the Rolls), it has been called Waltham Cross, must surely cause us to believe that there was some connection with the township of Waltham; indeed, the only

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15 The Four Swans was demolished in the 1960s to make way for a shopping precinct.
likely connection would be that the body was the subject of a night-long vigil in the Abbey church.

What is more there is an added piece of evidence in favour of Waltham Abbey as the resting-place. We must remember that both Edward and Eleanor were very familiar with that district, having had a favourite hunting-lodge near to Waltham, almost under the walls of the Abbey, whose Abbot they doubtless knew.

It has often been queried why the cortege should make such a wide detour between St Albans and London, when the two cities were normally within a day's ride of each other. We don't know the answer to this difficulty, although the usual reason given is that, to go from St Albans to London in one day would mean a late arrival in the city. As there would be a concourse of nobles etc. who might wish to meet the funeral, it was thought that a shorter journey on the day would mean an earlier entry and enable more people to see the procession.

If – as is presumably the case – Eleanor did stay in Waltham Abbey for that night, why was the cross erected so far away? We have seen that the cross at Dunstable was built about 300 yards from the Priory, but at Waltham it is a mile away.\footnote{The cross at Waltham is actually 1½ miles from Waltham Abbey Church. This should be compared with the Cross being 2½ miles from Cheshunt Parish Church.}

Well, let us look at what happened. At other places the cortege was met “at the gates of the city by the monks. Did the monks take over the task of carrying the body through the streets after lifting it from the [bier?] on which it probably travelled? I think that is a fairly safe assumption.

\footnote{In 2003 Temple Bar was removed from the site in Cheshunt (where it had stood since 1880) to Paternoster Square by St Paul's Cathedral in central London (and near to its original site).}

[46] Now look what happened at Cheshunt. The procession would have come East from St Albans, across Ermine Street where Temple Bar now stands\footnote{In 2003 Temple Bar was removed from the site in Cheshunt (where it had stood since 1880) to Paternoster Square by St Paul’s Cathedral in central London (and near to its original site).}, along Theobalds Lane turning south down what is now High Street. I have already mentioned the great difficulties that beset the traveller in the 13th century – bad roads and cumbersome carriages and carts. Remember it was December. Doubtless the River Lea was swollen by rain, and Dr Dury explained to us last year and Mr Rooke mentioned last week, the flood plain of the river was fairly wide across the low-lying marshes, and it was not possible to control water by modern methods of irrigation.

We are, therefore, reasonably correct in concluding that the body was taken from its carriage outside the house now known as the Four Swans and carried on men’s shoulders – possibly by the monks of Waltham – across the uneven and marshy track to the Abbey. Local men would be familiar with the peculiarities and pitfalls of a path that was unknown to strangers and possibly not passable by a carriage. I imagine that there were probably no bridges across the river – only fords. If there were bridges they would probably be only narrow foot-bridges.
On arrival at the Abbey, there would be similar ceremonies and vigils of the royal body as at Dunstable and St. Alban’s. And on the following morning it would have been borne back to the main road where it would have been placed on the carriage and carried on its final stage to London. And so it may not seem so difficult to understand why the memorial cross should be set up in Cheshunt. The width of the flood plain and the state of the marshes may well have prevented its being built any nearer to Waltham.

From the brief outlines that I have given you of the history of the other crosses, you may begin to think that we are fortunate that our own Cross has survived so many troubles. And I think that there is very little doubt – thanks to wise repairs when necessary – that with two small differences – we can today see the cross very much as it was in its original design.

The cross was designed by Nicholas Dominic, variously styled in the accounts as “de Lageri” or “de Reyne”. We know particularly nothing about him, but from his names, it seems possible that his correct name would have been Nicholas Dominic of Legeri (wherever that may be). He was undoubtedly a builder of recognised skill – possibly associated with Waltham Abbey. His description as “of Rheims” may lead us to suppose that, at some time, he had been on the staff at Rheims Cathedral.

Waltham Cross c.1907 showing the Four Swans behind the cross and the rebuilt Falcon Hotel on right. [Image source unknown]
The masons were Richard and Roger Crundale. The statues of the queen were sculptured by Alexander of Abingdon (known as “Alexander le Imaginator” – the Image maker) or by William of Ireland who sculptured the figures for the Lincoln and Northampton Crosses. Other portions of the cross were fashioned by Robert de Corfe, who came from the Purbeck quarries in Dorset. Alexander carved the statues from the design of William Torel. Originally the right-hand was shown as holding a sceptre, and the left as holding a crucifix suspended on a cord from the neck.

From the Rolls we know that, at first, the monument was surmounted by a small cross, but, as far as I am aware, there isn’t a drawing available of it to give us any idea of what that top cross was like.

It seems remarkable that the whole thing was not pulled down by Cromwell. Possibly – and this has been suggested quite seriously – it was thought better to let it remain standing due to the intense feeling of affection for it that was felt by the residents at that time, although why local feeling should have received more attention at Cheshunt than at other places we can’t say. One thing seems certain, however. It is that the Puritans knocked off the small uppermost cross as a symbol of idolatry and Popery, because for many years the memorial stood with a damaged pinnacle.

In 1729 Stukeley remarked on the ruinous condition of the monument, and prevailed upon the Society of Antiquaries to act for its preservation.

On 12th July 1721 (from the Minutes Books of that Society) we learn that 10 shillings was paid for “setting down two oak posts to secure Waltham Cross”, and in

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18 10 shillings was worth approx. £678 in 2020.
December of the same year, a Mr Robinson of Waltham Cross was presented with an engraving of the Cross in recognition of his care in setting the posts. These were set against the outside edge to prevent coaches and carriages from knocking into and damaging the stonework at the bottom and thus weakening the whole structure. You will notice that the original stops have disappeared – [50] presumably to make more space for traffic.

It is about this time that we are told that the Four Swans bore the marks of great antiquity in the form of its chimneys, and in the quality of chestnut timber employed about it. In early days it was the only building of any importance near but “the resort of travellers rendering another inn upon the spot necessary” other houses gradually arose. The Cross and its site apparently belonged to no-one in particular, and so these other house(s) gradually crowded on to the cross.

In 1757, 37 years after his earlier complaint, Stukeley again mentioned that the cross was without adequate protection as the two posts had been broken down. The whole fabric, he said, was in great danger of collapse. Lord Monson – the then Lord of the Manor – had his attention drawn to the perilous condition of the cross, and his lordship built a brick wall round the stonework and re-erected the posts.

Dr Stukeley noted that the owner of the adjacent house had encroached on the monument to such an extent that the roof of his house leant against one of the images of the queen.

[50] 1795. The year that saw the demolition of the last remains of Theobalds Palace, and an ill-advised attempt was made by Sir George Prescott to remove the Cross into his grounds at Theobalds Park.

One writer says that “Prescott, with colossal impudence, endeavoured to remove it”. Fortunately, the material of the cross was found to be in a very decayed condition, and it stayed where it was.

Drawings a little later than this show the absolute need for the restoration that was carried out in 1832/3. The cross was in a disastrous state, and a subscription list was opened to raise a fund for its restoration and preservation.

A little later, the Rev. Arthur Brown writes that the honour of raising the necessary funds lay with the ladies of Cheshunt.

Who more fit than they [he wrote] to secure the preservation of his tribute to a wife’s devotion?

Queen Adelaide defrayed the cost of restoring Eleanor’s effigies, and the landlord of the adjacent house – the Falcon Inn – allowed one corner of this building to be taken down, thus enabling another side of the cross to be seen.

This was the first real attempt at [51] restoration and preservation. The architect – WB Clarke – gave his services for free. Even so, it cost £1,200 in money of those times.\[19\]

\[19\] £1,200 for restoration again in 1892 was worth approx. £153,613 in 2020.
He entirely rebuilt the upper two stages, and refaced the lower divisions where necessary. Two of the three statues were in fair condition and needed only a little attention; the third was considerably damaged and the head was missing. Sir Richard Westmancott the Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy, took it to his studio in London, where he intended to remove the drapery, and make new hands and head with Caen stone of which the original was made.

It was at this time that great difficulty was encountered with regard to the cross at the top of the memorial. Clarke, the architect, claimed to have found a piece of stonework that he though was the missing cross. It was claimed that when Prescott had tried to remove the monument to Theobalds, the small cross at the top was taken away and not returned. This, of course, will not bear examination for various reasons:

1. None of the engravings earlier than the time of Prescott show the memorial as having a cross at the top.
2. The piece of stone found by Clarke [52] was Kentish Rag – a limestone – whereas we know from the Rolls that the original was made from Caen stone.

The stone used by Clarke to repair the memorial came from Bath, and was of inferior quality, quite unsuitable for exterior work. Consequently, older parts of the cross outlived the newer, and it was not very long after that it became obvious that a further restoration would be needed.

1885. An Eleanor Restoration Committee was formed under the presidency of Sir HB Meux. On condition that sufficient funds were raised by the public to preserve the cross, he promised to purchase the neighbouring ground so that a road could be made right round, thus giving an unhindered view.
The restoration was entrusted to Mr CE Ponting who was abjured to carry out the work in a proper manner, without any vandalism or sacrilege to the style of architecture.

Queen Victoria gave £25.\textsuperscript{20}

I mentioned earlier that the crosses would probably have been erected near to small chantry chapels. This was certainly the case at Waltham Cross.

[53] During the demolition of the old Falcon Inn and the construction of the road and a sewer, remains of the chapels were found, and a large quantity of stone was removed to Theobald’s Park. This stone included gothic arcading and Caen stone. And so, at last, there was confirmation that a chapel did exist.

Obviously what had happened was this: in the early days of the Reformation the chantry was suppressed and the endowments that had previously provided for the upkeep of the chapel & the payments of the priests were confiscated. With the endowments went the wherewithal that provided alms for distribution to the poor.

As one writer put it: It may be imagined that the prayers for Eleanor had grown somewhat perfunctory, and so, when the chantries were dissolved, their revenues seized and the mumbling priests ejected, the world was well rid of a hoary piece of humbug.

This would have been in or soon after 1545.

[54] Approximately 100 years later, Cromwell probably destroyed the chapel, Shortly afterwards its existence was remembered in a deed, dated 1698, by which the Bishop of London granted permission to erect a shop on a piece of waste ground “upon which formerly stood a chapel”.

But to return to the restoration. All the work done by Clarke in his earlier effort to preserve the cross was removed in 1886-1892.

In 1886 the Secretary of the Royal Archaeological Institute wrote to the Weekly Telegraph\textsuperscript{21} saying that the Falcon Inn should not be taken down and rebuilt as it “would be a great detriment to the Cross”. In reply to this gentleman, the editor of the Weekly Telegraph said that the writer had altogether overlooked the desirability, for the convenience and safety of the public, of the monument being isolated and a roadway made on the side abutting on to the Falcon Hotel. When the monument was erected it was placed in the centre of the roads which met at that spot, and stood, as intended, at a distance from any building. In short can anyone suppose for a moment that a monument like the one in question was ever designed for a large portion of it to abutt on to another building, and least of all, a country inn? Indeed [54] in most persons’ estimation the improved position of the monument is almost as desirable as its restoration and preservation.

\textsuperscript{20} £25 in 1885 given by Queen Victoria was worth approx. £3,237 in 2020.

\textsuperscript{21} The Cheshunt & Waltham Weekly Telegraph, the local newspaper, was founded in 1863.
Clarke had earlier removed several pieces of carved stone from the cross and set them into the wall of the Falcon. Ponting returned these stones – at least, those of them that were still fit for their purpose – to their correct positions in the cross.

Sir Henry and Lady Meux duly bought the adjoining property and freed the cross from encroachments, thus accomplishing in 1892 what Stukeley and the Antiquarian Society had wished for nearly 150 years earlier. The new road was opened and dedicated with the cross on 31 December 1892 almost 600 years to the day that the original cross was completed. Lady Meux stood on the steps and revived the ancient custom of distributing alms in memory of Queen Eleanor by giving new shillings to the old and poor of the neighbourhood.

Again, the expense of restoration was £1,200 – a figure worth about four times as much today.

An interesting little addition was made to the cross at this time. That was the erection of the railings. It was wrought in iron by Mr Starkie, a well-known antique and mediaeval iron-worker of Lambeth, and is designed partly from the grille enclosing Eleanor’s tomb in Westminster Abbey, and partly from the fence round the tomb of her father-in-law, Henry III, in the same chapel. Both of these were made at the time of the tombs, and so we have a very good imitation round Waltham Cross of the sort of iron-work that was contemporary with the Cross.

1906 the Hertfordshire County Council took over the custody of the Cross, and it is that authority which is now defraying the cost of the present [1950-53] restoration.

I said a few minutes ago that the present structure is probably very similar to the original with the exception of two minor points. I have already referred to one of these – the small cross that topped the monument. We don’t know what the original was like, but I think that the present one is by no means out of place. It is a typical representation of a gothic pinnacle.

The other point in which the present cross differs from the first is in the number of steps. Originally there were 6 steps. The road is now two feet higher than 6½ centuries ago – that is why today there are only four steps visible. The remains of the others are still under the road surface.

[56] **WALTHAM CROSS**

- Hexagonal panels of two “lights” tracery in pointed head under crocketed gables with finials set against a diapered background which is surmounted by a sculptured cornice.
- Panels – shields suspended from foliage and carved with the arms of England, Castile and Ponthieu.
- At the angles are small pinnacled buttresses.

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22 £1,200 for the further restoration in 1892 was worth approx. £153,613 in 2020.
Second stage – Six elaborately carved gabled & crocketed canopies with pinnacles between them.
Contain three statues of the Queen.

Third stage – Also hexagonal. Roses from plinth set in space from the enclosed canopies below.
Tall crocketed pinnacles with finials.
Plinth – foliated cornice.
Surmounted by hexagonal plinth from which the crocketed pinnacle and cross rises.

The original (?) statues of Queen Eleanor from Waltham Cross stood for many years in Cheshunt Library (as seen here); they are now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
[Image source unknown]
The crosses as we have seen were intended to draw the attention of travellers to the fact that near the spot was a place hallowed to the memory of Queen Eleanor, and where the passer-by could pray for her.

The crosses were, also, no doubt, intended to be as beautiful as the architectural knowledge of the time could make them ... under the direct influence of the King.

Here I would like to show you an architectural feature that has never received enough attention.

The Latin word for a building is *aedes*. From it is derived the word *aedicula* which means a shrine or a small temple, and this word was used in earlier times to describe the little buildings whose function was symbolic or ceremonial. It applied to the little shrines in Roman houses in which statues of gods were placed.

A sort of architectural canopy in the form of a rudimentary temple ...

This idea was woven (either consciously or unconsciously) into the structure of the Crosses. And [58] so you will see the added suggestion of sacredness about the monuments.

The use of the *aediculae* as settings for figures of the dead queen serve to emphasize:

1. That here is a wayside cross to remind the wayfarer that there is something sacred about this place,
2. In the little houses there are statues of the Queen, thus symbolising a shrine,
3. Near to the cross, there is a chapel in which you may pray.

All this may seem very far-fetched and speculative to some of you, but I hope that you will accept the assurance of Sir John Summerson who points out most forcibly that from about this time onwards, the idea of the “little house” is deliberately underlined, stressed, and even exaggerated as if to say “Don’t forget that this is not just an arch but also a shrine”.

Another fact of architectural and symbolic interest is that the steps or mound on which crosses were built were - and, in some places, still are - known as “Calvaries”. Here we find ourselves returning to our earlier consideration of the effect of religion on everyday life.

[59] The sign of the cross, in whatever form it was found or used, was a universal symbol of hope for resurrection from the dead.

We find this emphasized by the inclusion of oak leaves as decoration of the crosses. Oak leaves were a symbol that stood for wood and trees and, ultimately, as a symbol for the wooden cross on which Christ was crucified. This is quite a common architectural symbol during the period of Gothic architecture, as was also the quatrefoil which is also a cross.

And finally, in some places, there are figures of Roses which, again, have been used for centuries as symbols of love and affection.

At no time did any of the crosses, as far as I have been able to trace, bear any inscription – not even a name – they silently bade the living remember the dead. At their erection they were consecrated with full religious ceremonies.
Although they did not show a name, or make any written request, nevertheless the stones are far from dumb. They speak more eloquently than the most glorious of epitaphs, and by the study of them I believe that we may come to realise a little more clearly not only [60] to what extent Edward loved his wife, but also how history may be revealed to us in the symbols of simple religion as expressed in the faith of bygone times.

We have tried to use our local monument to an episode in history as a point from which to wander in a few of the less well-known byways of the past.

If, in doing so, our own lives are enriched, the excursion will have been justified.