

A Familiar Corbel

Who on earth is that bloke up there?

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A pleasant feature of Chichester cathedral is the way its dignitaries are perpetuated in stone, the most recent as a group of corbels on the south side of the outside of the western end of the nave. An earlier set of modern corbels can be seen a little to the East, on the south side of the south transept, above the great window. They commemorate restoration work completed in 1932. I was surprised to discover, recently, that one of those immortalised in this way was a Mortlock. It is certainly the most permanent memorial enjoyed by any of my own relatives.

Of the group of stone figures the most easily recognised is King George V in the centre. As far to his left as possible is Ramsay MacDonald and equally distant to his right is Stanley Baldwin. The remainder have local significance and include my second cousin twice removed, **Canon Edward Mortlock** (1859-1945), four along from Baldwin towards the King, who as canon residentiary during the building work will have had some responsibilities between the cathedral and the architects.

Edward was born in Bridlington where his father, Rev. Edward Thomas Mortlock was serving, and where his banker uncle was a JP, but the Mortlock roots were in Cambridge where Edward's great-grandfather had been a banker, MP and, in alternation with two of his sons and one of his business partners, many times mayor until the same reforms that nearly cost Chichester its mace bowled out the Mortlocks. The family can be traced back in Cambridgeshire to the Wars of the Roses. Edward Thomas retired to Sussex, dying in St Leonards on Sea in 1908, his last wife surviving him in Chailey until 1920. Edward had a brother-in-law who was a judge and a nephew who was knighted as a chancery lawyer. Indeed Edward had a cousin who was married to the daughter of a chancery lawyer who made so much money as a junior that he was able to refuse silk, and who ended up as the last head of that court. The Church was for the quieter members of the family.

Edward was educated at Haileybury - his grandfather Charles Mortlock and another great-grandfather, James Thomas, had commanded Indiamen - and Trinity, Cambridge, where he took his BA in 1882. In the same year he was ordained a deacon at Winchester. A curacy in Godalming was followed by one at St Peter's, Bexhill from 1887, until in 1891 he was promoted to the Bexhill living of St Barnabas which he held until 1926. From 1922 to 1926 he was Rural Dean of Hastings.

In 1926 he came to Chichester as a canon of the cathedral and as Vicar of St Peter the Great, a living he held until 1937, for the last four years in plurality with the Rectorship of All Saints. In 1937 he was appointed Precentor of the cathedral in succession to the Rt Rev. HK Southwell, a post Edward held until his death at the Treasury, Chichester, on

August 6th 1945, an occasion marked by a bright flash of light over Hiroshima.

In 1900 Edward had married Katherine Daniell Cuddy who died in 1939; the marriage was childless.

The casual student might easily confuse Edward with the better-known Rev. **Charles Bernard Mortlock** (1888-1967), who was Treasurer and Canon of Chichester Cathedral from 1950 until his death, but had the Rectory of St Vedast, Foster Lane as his main address, he having spent the early years of his ministry almost exclusively in London.

St Vedast's, rebuilt by Wren after the Great Fire, had been gutted again in the Blitz. In 1947 the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral offered Charles Bernard the living, which included twelve other City parishes whose churches had variously been lost in the Great Fire of 1066, demolished in the nineteenth century, or had completely perished in the Blitz (but there was only one stipend). CBM was duly inducted by Dr Wand, Bishop of London, in the roofless shell of the church on 5th September 1947. There were two challenges: to build up a congregation, which Charles Bernard commenced using St Sepulchre's, Holborn; and to rebuilt St Vedast's and build a rectory - Charles Bernard was having to 'live out', in Warwick Square in Kensington. The architect Stephen Dykes Bower was recruited for the rebuilding, and the PCC appointed Noel Mander, who soon became one of CBM's churchwardens, to take on the matter of the organ. Mander short-circuited an expensive problem by finding, moving and restoring a fine 18th century organ which was idle and derelict in a church in Fulham. He also found Mortlock a disused Wren pulpit ornamented with carved swags by Grinling Gibbons, originally from All Hallows, Bread Street. A Grinling Gibbons font was recovered from nearby St Anne & St Agnes, Gresham Street; a reredos came from St Christopher-le-Stocks which had been demolished in 1781. As to the congregation, CBM, that man of parts, was president of the Actors' Church Union which brought some interesting folk into his fold.

Charles Bernard was a noted authority on church architecture (FSA 1945, Hon. RIBA 1946) and for four years before the Second World War lectured in Ecclesiastical Art at King's College in London; this may have produced a mutual attraction between him and the Chichester cathedral authorities. In 1946 he was President of the Critics' Circle and was President of the Shakespeare Club from 1955-1956. His most accessible work, *Some Famous London Churches*, had been published in 1934, but besides articles on architecture he was also the author of a number of pieces about the Oxford Movement and Evangelism. He must deserve credit for much of the fund-raising which found £40,000 - millions today - to copper the roof of Chichester Cathedral between 1946 and 1951, and which copper can now be seen from nine miles away to the West, glinting in the evening sunlight. He was however - his Mortlocks came from Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk - no relation at all of Canon Edward, who was also thirty years his senior. Charles Bernard was also a Cantab. - Jesus College, BA 1913 - and had been, very briefly, attached to the 8th Lincolnshire Regiment as an Army chaplain during the Kaiser's war, until tuberculosis contracted in France (but the Army weaselled out of paying for his recovery by saying that the illness was not due to service after all) forced him out. He had also survived typhoid fever as a child but seems, from his long life, to have had a staunch

constitution. He did not confine his church duties to Chichester but served on many national Church committees.

CBM already had a connection with Sussex; his parents had earlier retired to Brighton where they had passed away in 1934 and 1940. Being a keen sailing man might have added to the attraction of working in Chichester, although Charles Bernard's recorded marine connections were with Fowey and Plymouth suggesting more of a deep-sea sailor. Other cultural interests were reflected in his memberships of the Athenaeum and the Garrick.

Charles Bernard also turned a penny at secular journalism, a sideline which started as follows. As curate at St Mary le Strand he decided to take a sabbatical. He applied to the *Daily Telegraph* for a job and was given a tiny office, and a week to come up with a proposal. Looking through the dirty window he saw a street sign 'Peterborough Court'. "Ah", he thought, "That is the title under which I shall make my daily contribution." And that is how the *Telegraph's* long-lived (under a succession of correspondents) *Peterborough* column was born. He also contributed to the *Church Times* under the byline 'Urbanus'. He contributed dramatic and ballet criticism to *Punch* and other journals and was a contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography* and was briefly an assistant editor of *Country Life*. For the *Daily Telegraph* he was archaeological, architectural, ballet and ecclesiastical correspondent and a member of its editorial staff, and served as their special correspondent on trips to Europe, the Middle East (where he had an interest as Hon. Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund for nearly twenty years) and India.

What perhaps helped Charles Bernard Mortlock's Chichester appointment was that he was already known to Dean Hussey (who, however, did not himself actually come to Chichester until 1955), with whom he had corresponded in 1944 regarding a Henry Moore *Madonna and Child* statue for Hussey's then church, St Matthew's, Northampton. He had written to Hussey regarding Hans Feibusch, an artist who was a great friend of Bishop Bell. Mortlock had commissioned Feibusch for a mural in St Vedast's. Now Bell wanted a Treasurer who would be also a "kind of minister of religious art in the diocese as a whole". CB Mortlock fitted the bill perfectly and as Treasurer would have knowledgeably facilitated the commissioning and purchase of modern works. Two Feibusch paintings bought in 1951 and 1953 followed the Christopher Webb windows, executed in a more representational style, of 1949. In 1960 Sutherland's even more "modern" *Noli me Tangere* followed. The selection, purchase, execution and installation of such items is no speedy matter; but Mortlock lived to see the final tribute to his stewardship, the yet more controversial Piper tapestry which was woven in 1966. Hussey's money may have helped; he spent much of his private wealth on art. Mortlock was praised, in a somewhat terse, and rather tardy, diocesan obituary, for "championing much that was good and forward-looking" and for "a right standard of artistic taste and achievement in the churches of the diocese".

Canon Charles Bernard was arguably a better rounded character and spread his wings rather further than Canon Edward. CB was also immortalised in stone, and by no less

than his friend Jacob Epstein, whose statue of him stands in the little yard behind CB's beloved St Vedast, where CB's ashes are interred in front of the altar in the Lady Chapel.



Canon CB Mortlock by Epstein, St Vedast's church, London

Canon CB Mortlock is also depicted in a grand mural in St Alban's, Holborn, standing alongside its incumbent Father Priest(sic). It would appear that Mortlock tried to persuade Epstein to formal Christianity; certainly, on the Sunday after Epstein's death, CBM stepped down into the middle of St Vedast's and asked his congregation to "pray for the soul of Jacob Epstein, WHO DIED UNBAPTISED". CBM had felt deeply for the Jews suffering persecution under Hitler and in January 1943 had preached in Westminster Abbey on the occasion of a service offering special prayers for the Jewish people; this in spite of his contempt for Judaism, which he described in 1936 as a "monstrous creation of human ingenuity". In the context of the crucifixion he apostrophised the Jews as "God killers". Epstein, who stuck to his synagogue, left Mortlock his sculpture 'Ecce Homo'. All attempts to find a home for it were frustrated by the petty jealousy of Henry Moore, until Noel Mander, to whom Mortlock had passed its ownership on his deathbed, successfully donated it to Coventry cathedral.

Charles Bernard is remembered in his old college, where there is a £50 p.a. bursary in his name for aspiring ordinands. Sadly, this was worth rather more in real terms when it was set up. He is also remembered by a contemporary choirboy for wearing gaiters with his canonicals.

Neither of these Canons was any kin of **John Newton Mortlock** (1919-1990), a local artist whose pen-and-ink line drawings of local scenes and buildings were often published in the local press, and a copy of whose 1960s "Visitor's Map and Pictorial Guide to Chichester" can be found in West Sussex Records Office.. However the **Rev. Charles Frederick Mortlock**, 1849-1921, who is pictured in the locally-produced history of South Bersted village school, was a second cousin of Canon Edward.

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P.S.: A Note on Canon Bernard's cousin, **Harry Clive Mortlock**, and his father **Harry Thomas** can be found in the table for Bury St Edmunds in the Suffolk Miscellaneous section of the Mortlock Encyclopedia.

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