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A PAIR OF VICTORIAN PLASTER STATUES

cast by Dominico Brucciani c.1868 from the carved limestone originals at the Henry VII Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey c. 1505

one, a group of St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read - the standing pair, in robed attire, looking down into the pages of a book, the mother tenderly supporting her young daughter as she reads; the other, the figure of St Augustine with bishop's mitre and robes - clutching a drape and administering the sacrament to diminutive supplicants

DIMENSIONS: 93cm (36 $\frac{1}{2}$ ") High, 30cm (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ") Wide, 20cm (7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ") Deep, each group

PRICE: £11,000

STOCK CODE: 46815



HISTORY

These two sculptures are likely unique casts – insofar as we suspect that no other casts were

ever made by Brucciani – nor in history by anyone else from the series of figures commissioned by Henry VII in 1505 for the Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

Henry lived to see the original freestone statues installed at the Abbey and died (1509) to celebrate them in perpetuity; his gilt bronze effigy, and that of his wife Elizabeth of York lie atop their tombs in a chantry enclosure in the Lady Chapel apse terminating the east end of the Abbey. Those tomb effigies – also later cast by Brucciani (and later reproduced in electrotypes by Elkington – held today at the National Portrait Gallery), look up at the series of statues arrayed above them in the triforium of the chapel. 96 of the original 106 statues survive. They depict apostles, saints, kings, philosophers and worthies; their job is to propel Henry and Elizabeth through purgatory to heaven.

The figures were carefully piece-moulded in situ by Dominico Brucciani in 1868 and cast in plaster in his workshops at Goswell Road, London. Of the full series he made, 24 of them can today be seen displayed high on the walls of Gallery 64b, The Simon Sainsbury Gallery, at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The present figures at LASSCO are two from that set. The labels in the gallery proclaim that the series represents “the most important surviving examples of early 16th century architectural carving in England”.







Domenico Brucciani's statues of the Saints
at The V&A

The freestone originals were likely carved in the mason's yard at the Abbey by a team of English (or Dutch) sculptors – different hands can be detected in the work, and time constraints would doubtless have required a team effort.

St Augustine is identified as one of a particular family of statues, all of one hand and in Caen stone, and he stands in the third bay of the north flank of the chapel. St Anne, in the more usual freestone, is found to his right in an adjoining bay. These two figures are good examples demonstrating the techniques sculptors employed to account for the height at which they would be seen by the viewer on the ground – and the distance and shortened perspectives they

would be viewed at: they have pronounced facial features, larger heads and hands. Up close these are not the stylised etiolated figures of the early gothic – there seems to be actual portraiture, character, life and realism in these beautifully sculpted works. It is known that Henry VII had an oversight as to which statues would accompany him through the centuries – and the grouping of the saints has an unorthodox scheme to it (the archers that accompany St Sebastian knock the system out of whack but clearly the patron insisted on them!). A list of the statue schedule as produced by the Dean of the Abbey is offered below.

The series represents a watershed in English art. With the death of Henry VII came a conclusion to, or a shift away from, centuries of the Gothic influx from France. With the accession of the new king came burgeoning changes in taste and thinking: wafts of The Renaissance from Italian shores. Henry VIII was soon in league with the Papal States fighting against the French (and the Scottish). Exactly as the sculptors at Westminster chiselled out these wonderful statues in stone, Michelangelo in Florence was carving “David” in marble: all was set to change, in art, architecture, religion, science and fashion. And later, with Henry’s break with Rome, the Reformation was soon set to follow including the iconoclasms which these statues were thankfully to survive.



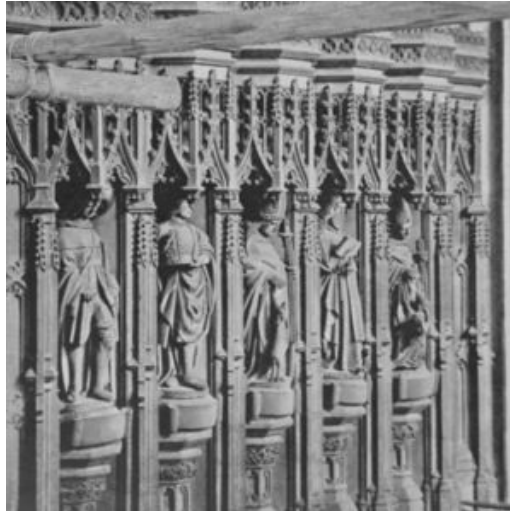
Exterior of Henry VII's Lady Chapel at
Westminster Abbey

Appendix

Statues of Saints in Henry VII's Lady Chapel, Westminster Abbey.

produced by The Dean of Westminster Abbey

This is the largest surviving collection of figure sculpture from early Tudor England. There were originally 107 figures but only 96 still remain. This number includes the statue to Henry VI which was added in 1998 to replace a lost figure. The saints, prophets etc. were chosen by King Henry VII himself and were in place before his death in 1509. The lost figures were probably destroyed during the Civil War 1643- 45.



Victorian photograph from wooden scaffolding of the triforium of the Lady Chapel – St Augustine is the furthestmost figure.

The list begins from the west end of the main chapel, on the north side.

1st bay:

Five patriarchs or Old Testament prophets

2nd bay:

St Roche (dressed as a pilgrim, plague spot on his thigh) St Martin (in armour and long cloak holding a mitre)

St Giles (abbot with crozier and a hind leaping by his side) St Anthony (with book and bell and pig at his feet)

St Germain or St Claudius of Besancon (with a broken crozier)

3rd bay:

St Erasmus (dressed as a bishop, with a windlass)

St Edmund (holds an orb)

St Hugh of Lincoln (dressed as a bishop, a swan at his feet)

St Edward the Confessor (holds a sceptre)

St Dunstan (bishop with crozier, pincers in his hand holding down a demon)

4th bay:

St Vincent (dressed as a deacon, three cruets with a book)

St Laurence (dressed as a deacon with book resting on a gridiron)

St John the Baptist (bearded, with bare arms and legs, book with lamb on it)

St Stephen (carries a book resting on stones)

St Agatha (wears a jewelled turban head dress, carries book or casket and knife)

Centre bay, north:

St Luke (with winged lion on a book)

St John the Evangelist (with winged eagle on a book)

St Augustine (dressed as a bishop, blessing)

(St Gregory – known to have been in this position but now missing)

5th bay:

St Winfred (carrying palm and a book, at her feet a female head on a block) St Margaret
(holding her staff in the mouth of a dragon)

St Anne (teaching her daughter, The Virgin Mary, to read)

St Katherine (trampling on the emperor)

St Matthew (holding book and cross, wearing spectacles)

6th bay:

S James the Less (with long curved club) St Thomas (with spear and a bag)

St John the Evangelist (blesses a chalice from which a dragon is emerging) St James the Greater (dressed as a pilgrim with scallop shell hat)
St Andrew (with saltire cross)

7th bay:

St Peter (with book and key)
St Gabriel (the Archangel)
Our Lord (hand raised in benediction with book and foot on an orb) Blessed Virgin Mary
St Paul (carrying book with a sword in his belt)

8th bay:

St Philip (carries three loaves)
St Bartholomew (carrying a knife and book)
St Jude (carrying the hull of a ship)
St Matthias (carrying a book and large knife or scythe) St Simon (holding book)

9th bay:

St Martha or St Elizabeth (dressed as a nun or widow)
St Mary Magdalene (holding cylindrical box or jar)
St Dorothy (wearing jewelled turban, holding a book and basket)
St Barbara (holds turreted castle)
St Wilgefort also called Uncumber (bearded lady with book on a T-cross)

Centre bay, south:

St Mark (with winged lion on a book)
St Matthew (wearing spectacles with book supported by an angel with ink pot) St Jerome (dressed as a cardinal with a book and lion)
St Ambrose (dressed as a bishop holding a scourge and crozier)

10th bay:

St Helen (crowned, with book on a T-cross)

St Zita (Sita or Sytha) (reading a book)

An archer

St Sebastian (the martyr is tied to a tree, about to be shot by archers)

An archer

11th bay:

St Cuthbert (bishop with crozier and a crowned head in his hand) St Edward King & Martyr, or St Wulstan, or St Kenelm

St Nicholas (a bishop with a boy's head emerging from a basket) St Oswald (king with sceptre and crowned head in his hands)

St Eloy (bishop with crozier and horseshoe)

12th bay:

St Thomas of Canterbury (archbishop reading a book with a crucifix on his staff) St George (in armour, with shield and sword and dragon at his feet)

St Richard of Chichester, or St Germain of Auxerre (with beggar holding a bowl) St Armil (or Armagil) (in armour with cowl, his stole binds a dragon at his feet)

13th bay:

Five Patriarchs or Old Testament prophets

North aisle chapel: St Armil

A king

St Laurence

South aisle chapel:

St Katherine (crowned with book and sword piercing the emperor's head and broken wheel below)

St Margaret (crowned with cross-staff in the mouth of a dragon)

Northern apsidal chapel:

St Stephen St Jerome St Vincent

North east apsidal chapel:

St Sebastian Two archers

Eastern chapel (now RAF chapel):

St Thomas of Canterbury Henry VI (a modern statue) St Nicholas

St Edward the Confessor St Peter

St Edmund

South eastern apsidal chapel:

St Mary, mother of James

St Roch (as before but with a dog with a loaf of bread jumping up)

St Mary Salome, or St Martha

St Dorothy (reading with a basket on her arm)

St Christopher (depicted wading through water, carrying an uprooted tree and the young Christ on his shoulder)

St Appolonia (with book and pincers)

Southern apsidal chapel:

St Denis (carrying a mitred head) St Paul