

West Dean Village History Trail

THE BORBACH CHANTRY

No 16

The chantry was built and endowed in 1333 by Robert de Borbach as part of the old church of St Mary. It formed the south aisle of the church and was separated from the nave of the church by a three arch arcade.

The endowment took the form of a yearly charge of 100 shillings paid to the priest, then Sir Edmund de Worthy. In return the priest was to intercede daily in the chantry “for the souls of the last Edward, late King of England [*Edward I, reigned 1272 – 1307*], grandfather of our present King [*Edward III who had become King in 1331*], and for the souls of Gilbert de Clare, late Earl of Gloucester and Hereford, and Joan, his wife, John de Ingham and Marjorie, his wife, and for the good estate of the venerable father the Lord Robert de Wyvyle, Bishop of Salisbury, Oliver de Ingham, Robert le Boor, and of me Robert de Borbach and for our souls when we shall have departed this life and for the souls of all the faithful dead”.



PHOTOGRAPH OF A WATERCOLOUR BY R KENN OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY
AND THE BORBACH CHANTRY FROM THE WEST IN 1865
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In addition Robert de Borbach conferred upon the chantry and its chaplains three suitable vestments, one chalice, one breviary, one coffer, one brass five gallon jar, one wash basin and ewer and one brass jug, all of which were to be handed down by each chaplain at his death. After the first century following the chantry's foundation, these items were never mentioned again.

The walls of the old church were built of rough-cast of chalk, flint and sandstone but the walls of the chantry were of faced flint and superior craftsmanship. By 1866 the walls of the nave were inclining outwards and, although they were supported by buttresses of stone a large and dangerous fissure had appeared at the north-west corner. It was this that led to the building of the new church of St

Mary and the demolition of the old church in 1868. The chantry, however, being of better construction and character was retained and restored. Its south porch was replaced by a much higher one to enable its use as a mortuary chapel with a bell to be rung at funerals. This bell remains in the porch with its casting date, 1868, upon it.

The Borbach Chantry is a Grade I listed building now maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust. In addition to the interest of the building itself it contains a number of stunning memorials. It is now open and well worth a visit.