

A Fresh Look at the Exterior & the Carved Figures

By John Meredith July 2006

The South-western Towers, the top of the Central Tower and the North Porch are the final Norman contributions to the Minster. Southwell Minster is the only Cathedral to have circular windows forming a frieze round the Nave at clerestory level. The parish church of St. James at Avebury, near Marlborough, has them too.

Below the parapet on the Norman Nave, note the unusual Nebular [wavy] moulding.

Nave Windows: The most westerly window in the north aisle is the only remaining original Norman window. The other windows were enlarged in the contemporary architectural style in the 15th cent. NB. For stained glass, see relevant Fact Sheets and "Stained Glass in Southwell Minster" by John Beaumont.

The Parvis Room over the North Porch was used in the Middle Ages by the Sacristan. It has a fireplace. The right pinnacle has holes in it to provide a chimney. Note the carving over the centre window of a dragon swallowing a man.

The exterior of the North Transept: The path from Church St., which turns west just before the Transept, originally led to a doorway opening into the Minster opposite to the South Door. This was stoned over on both sides in the C 19 to prevent the route being used as a short cut. The original door still remains beneath the stone. The gable is decorated with the Norman ball and zig-zag design; a bear is carved at the apex.

The exterior of the Pilgrims' Chapel, constructed in the late 13th cent. The windows are original. On the north side are two small pinnacles where carvings of a king and two angels were replaced with modern copies in the 1950's.

Below the library window, also note David Harvey's carving, 1956 [starting from the left]:

1. Harry Clulow (clock-winder & bell ringer)
2. Edward Wragg (former Head Verger)
3. Malcolm Fisher (former choirboy)
4. George Palin. (the last official dog-whipper & sexton). [see also FS274 for illustration]

On the end of the Library and the Pilgrims' Chapel, at the top left-hand corner, an Archbishop and a King, and to the right two Ladies.

On the left side of the Pilgrims' Chapel window: Michael Dennis (Clerk).

The Tower: The eastern face shows the pitch of the original roof of the Nave, much steeper than the present roof. The short upper section of the Tower was added after the Norman period.

The Exterior of the Chapter House: The "'tomb" by the wall is a camouflage for the ventilation shaft for the central heating. The pointed spire was renewed in 1880.

Carvings on the north-west corner: At the top of the main buttress, starting from the right.

1. Eve eating the apple.
2. Eve driven from the garden.
3. Satan holding Eve's soul.
4. Eve being taken to heaven by an angel.

Lower down: Starting from the right.

1. A Fish.
2. A Ram.
3. A Boar or Pig.
4. Ox or Cow.

5. In the corner [on the same level] next to the Pilgrims Chapel. A Winged Bat

Below the Chapter House parapet [in pairs]: Starting from the right.

1. A lizard- like animal and a man shouting
2. A Cockatrice and a Crowing Cockerel [the cockatrice is a mythical serpent reported to have been hatched from a cock's egg and having the power to kill with a look].
3. A Sphinx and Centaur.
4. A Mermaid and Satyr.
5. An Angel [St Matthew] and a Lion [St Mark].
6. An Ox [St Luke] and Eagle [St John].

Not seen from the ground: Samson and the Lion and Jonah and the Whale.

On the corner of each buttress (in pairs) starting from the right:

1. A Sheep and a Goat.
2. Two incidents from Gideon's victory over the Midianites.
3. A Layman and a Cleric [Provost Heywood].
4. A Cherub and a Seraph.

Not seen from the ground: Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary.

Under the parapet of north side the Quire are the Saints in the Book of Common Prayer [SEE BELOW *****].

The East Window: 12 windows are visible from the outside, but, because the 4 highest of these are above the vault only 8 are visible from the within the Minster. Early English churches usually had an odd number. The Minster has an even number because the central rib of the Quire vault supports the east end.

On the south side of the Quire: at the base of the eastern pinnacle of the flying buttress are 3 heads. Carved in the 1970's by the then resident stonemason - starting from the left:

1. Bishop Wakeling
2. Provost Pratt.
3. The former Minster Architect Mr Dowland.

Notice the tombs of the first two Bishops and their wives (Ridding and Hoskyns) .

The flying buttresses were added in the C14 about 100 years after the Quire was built. During the C15 a building existed outside the wall of the South Quire Aisle, which was used for a time as the Library. It was demolished in the C18.

The exterior of the South Quire Transept (the Candle Chapel): There was previously a door in the south wall and between the windows is the head of Eric Freckingham [a former benefactor] carved by Rory Young.

On the east wall of the main South Transept are the marks of the arch and the roof of a Norman doorway.

The South Doorway: Norman, but unusual because the central arch is almost flat - usual Norman zig-zag decoration. The C19 Replacements were machine-cut.

South side of the Nave: On the western end of the south side was the Booth Chapel, built from 1480 as two Chantry Chapels for the Booth brothers, both of whom became Archbishop of York. After the closure of the Chantry Chapels during 1547, it was used as the Library and then as the Grammar School, before being demolished in 1784.

The three reproduction C12 windows at the west end of the south side of the Nave date from the 19th Cent.

*****Under the parapet of north side the Quire are the Saints in the Book of Common Prayer from east to west.

St Antony	17th Jan	St James brother of John	25th Jul
St Paul	25th Jan	St Anne	26th Jul
St Chrysotom	27th Jan	St Oswald	9th Aug
St Polycarp	23rd Feb	St Bernard of Clairvaux	20th Aug
St Mathias	24th Feb	St Bartholomew	24th Aug
St David	1st Mar	St Aidan	31st Aug
St Patrick	17th Mar	St Ninian	16th Sep
St Cuthbert	20th Mar	St Theodore of Tarsus	19th Sep
Annunciation of the BVM	25th Mar	St Matthew	21st Sep
St Leo the Great	11th Apr	St Michael & All Angels	29th Sep
St Anselm	21st Apr	St Luke	18th Oct
St George	23rd Apr	St Edward the Confessor	13th Oct
St Mark	25th Apr	SS Simon & Jude	28th Oct
SS Philip & James	1st May	St Hilda	17th Nov
St Athanasius	2nd May	St Edmund King & Martyr	20th Nov
St Augustine of Canterbury	26th May	St Andrew	30th Nov
St Boniface	5th Jun	St Clement	23rd Nov
St Columba	9th Jun	St Nicholas	6th Dec
St Barnabas	11th Jun	St Thomas the Apostle	21st Dec
St John the Baptist	24th Jun	St Stephen the Martyr	26th Dec
St Peter	29th Jun	St John the Evangelist	27th Dec
St Mary Magdalen	22nd Jul		

[there is more information about the saints on Fact Sheet No 12 by Jos Hall]