

Talk on “Woodwork in the Minster” by Harold Brooke 11/1/1992

We enter by the West door, which is made of oak and according to Pevsner, is probably 12thC, with medieval ironwork. However, Rev Arthur Dimock in his book of 1898 says the oaken doors are of the same date as those of the, North porch", which I think is more probable, However, the 15thC is another date which has been suggested. There is very little mention of the door in the books I have looked at - only the doorway itself.

Immediately inside the west door, on both sides are some painted deal pews, which are late 18thC,

On a pillar on the side is the Bishops & Provosts board, erected in 1886, designed by Sims and made by Houghtons of York.

There are two notice boards at the top of the N aisle, both made of oak; the larger of these made by Thomas Long of Nottingham in 1959 (who also made the notice board outside, near the West gate, in 1960), and the small one by Robert Lee of Southwell in 1947.

Adjacent to these is a large oak table, given by the Friends in 1958.

Next in the N aisle is the North door, which is early 14C and the tracery was carved out of the solid wood. It is datable by reference to its traceried surface alone, The motif is reticulated ogee, with quatrefoils inserted in each recticule; the cross sections of the continuous raised muntins conform to rolls with three fillets - which were of maximum popularity between c1270 and c1330 and a date close to 1300 is suggested for this door.

The inner porch was designed by Sims in 1978, and built by Houghtons, of York.

The nave pulpit, a fine example of late 19thC work, was designed by G F Bodley and made by Ratty and Kett of Cambridge. The carvings on the pulpit depict the following: centre panel, Mary & Jesus; left panel, St Augustine of Canterbury; right panel, St Paulinus of York, with King Eadwig and his wife on the far left panel. On the ledge inside the pulpit is the following inscription: “To the Glory of God and in memory of Rev John Gordon and Frances Octavia, his wife”. It was donated by a Miss Gordon, presumably a daughter, and was dedicated to at Evensong on September 11th 1898 by Bishop Ridding.

The nave organ console is made of oak, and built in 1934 by Hill, Norman & Beard of London, the architect being Caroe.

Natural oak kneeler by Thompson of Kilburn, N Yorks,

Kneelers by Francis & Dart of Crediton, Devon

Bishop's Throne + 2 Archdeacon's Seats – 1908 - made in oak. Paid for from the Bishop Ridding Memorial Fund. Designed in 14thC gothic style and build by Advent Hunstone of Tideswell. On the back of the Bishops' chair are the Arms of Southwell and a mitre, and on the Archdeacons' chairs are plain shields supported by angels. Unfortunately all these are now in the triforium .

The Bishop's present throne, situated under the pulpit, was a memorial to Bishop Moseley and the desk was given by the parish as a memorial to Bishop Hoskyns in 1926, being, dedicated on Sunday December 5th 1926. Originally these two were separate, but were joined together in 1942, and in 1985, when Bp Whinney came, were altered by Sims. If you look at the desk, you will see where the sides at the back have been sawn

or planed off and spoilt the desk.

The nave chairs were made in 1980, by Reynolds of Ludlow, at a cost of £28 each,

The nave altar, chairs and 3 seater bench were made by Houghtons of York, designed by Sims, and were originally in the Pilgrim's chapel. The platform was designed by Sims, but was built by one of Mr J Radford's men.

The oak credence table near the altar was donated in 1938 by Mary Edith Cauldwell.

That altar rails, five in front of the altar and two behind, were designed by Caroe probably in 1934, as they are all very similar to the screen against the organ console, which was also by Caroe in 1934.

Before we leave the nave, I must mention one thing which a lot of visitors admire – the roof. This is barrel vaulted, made from oak in 1879-1880 during Ewan Christian's restoration, when the pitch of the roof outside was restored to its original state. This replaced a flat roof which was erected after the fire of 1711 and later work done in 1802. In his report to the Bishop of Lincoln dated July 21st 1875, Christian suggested the re-roofing of the Minster with the exception of the Quire and central tower. The estimate for doing the nave in oak with lead on the roof outside was £3500. The work was done by Mr Clipsham of Norwell but the actual cost was approx. £10,000.

Leaving the nave, we go into the crossing where we see the organ. The pipes are built into a carved oak case made by Francis & Dart of Crediton about 1934. This was designed by architect Caroe.

The belfry floor is comparatively new, being designed by Dowland in 1961 and from it is suspended the floor which had to be replaced in 1973.

In the S transept are the Bread Pews, the only furniture that survived the 1711 fire. These are made of oak and are the 15thC "poppy head pews".

The south door is painted deal of the 18thC.

Inside, adjacent to the porch door are the flower cupboards, given in 1974-5 in memory of Agnes Bunting, who was housekeeper to the Conybeares.

The War Memorial on the E wall is oak and was designed by Caroe in 1919.

Above the War Memorial is a coat-of-arms, bearing the initials C 1 [Charles 1] and the date of 1629, but the coat of arms is that of James 1. This may have been started during James [until 1626] and then erected after he died, with the later initials.

The cope chest against the S wall was given in memory of Edith Caudwell in 1962. It was designed by Caroe and made by A Robinson of Kingston-upon-Thames at a cost of £552.12.0d. it normally houses 14 copes.

The carving on the W wall [Flight into Egypt] is by Robert Kiddey, a local art teacher from Newark and was given to the Minster in 1987 by George Bennet.

The Kelham Madonna & Child stands at the top of the s Quire aisle with a description on the wall. It was designed by Alan Coleman and came to the Minster in 1974, being transported here by the then Vicar Choral, Charles Knowles.

In the N transept we find the electricity cupboard, made from oak in 1936 and designed by Caroe.

There is an oak collecting box stand here made by Robert Lee of Southwell in 1921.

There are one or two others of this type around the Minster.

The screen dividing the N transept from the Pilgrim's chapel, except for the carved panels at the bottom, was designed by Sims and made by Houghtons of York in 1984. It was delivered the day before the Queen came on Maunday Thursday 1984., much to the Provost's relief, and even greater relief when it all fitted. The remainder is the original built by Cornish & Gaymer (of cider fame).in 1904, and designed by Caroe. When the old part of the screen was dismantled , the following was found written in pencil:- This screen was erected G Arterton and S Hollis, May 1904 for Cornish & Gaymer, North Walsham, Norfolk.

The furniture in the chapel was also designed by Sims and built by Houghtons in 1988-9.

In the N quire aisle is the Frontal cupboard made in 1920 by Robert Lee of Southwell. This was made from the oak beams which were removed from the nave roof during the Christian restoration.

The library door is 17thC, made from painted deal.

The vestry doors are oak, designed by Caroe about 1919-1920.

Into the Chapter House: where we see the table which came from Gedling Church and originally was a sounding board. The chair commonly referred to as Cromwell's chair, is probably 17thC, but little is known about it. When the chair was last repaired, the timber used was from this date.

Also in the Chapter House is a small Jacobean walnut table used by the Chapter. This is probably one of the best pieces of furniture in the Minster.

At the end of the passage there is a similar table to the one from Gedling, but this is a much later copy.

Near the vestry door in the Quire aisle is an oak table, given in memory of Canon Gem.

In St Thomas's chapel is a small altar which at first sight looks like a cupboard. It was found by Mr Nevil Truman, a well-known Nottingham architect, and bought by the Minster about 1933. It was found in a dealers shop covered with brown chocolate paint, but underneath were the original colours, traditional in the medieval period, of red, blue, green, white and gold. The altar came originally from a church in Devizes, Somerset, but was found by the dealer in a farmer's house, with its front panel made into a door so that it could be used as a cupboard. It has been carefully restored. It was probably made by a village carpenter in the reign of Charles 11 and its interest lies in the fact that he adopted the then defunct Gothic style instead of the current Classical which was then almost universal. The painting on the front panels may be either figures of Saints or merely drapery. All this makes the altar both rare and interesting.

The large altar and kneeling benches in this chapel are by Thompson of Kilburn.

The credence table carne from the Bishop's chapel

At the end of the N aisle is the Airmen's chapel, which was originally where the present pilgrim's chapel stands. The altar is made from wood taken from crashed aircraft in World War 1, and was made at an RAF station near Sheffield. The panels are made from broken propellor blades. It was used in the church at RAF Norton Woodseats, near Sheffield and presented to the Minster in 1919, as a memorial to the men of the RAF at Norton Woodseats.

The oak kneeling desk was made by RAF Cranwell in 1926, £20 being collected by the RAF for this. The communion rails were made by RAF Newton in 1984. The triptych is by Hamish Moyle in 1988.

And finally the Quire:- The first thing one sees on coming through the screen are the pews. All these were made from oak by Cornish & Gaymer of N Walsham. The most interesting are the two blocks on each side, which were carved by Charles Henry Simpson, who worked for Cornish & Gaymer. These were done in the last years of the 19thC, starting in 1886. They are well worth studying depicting birds and flowers, and, if you remember we had look at these during one of Jos hall's talks. The original Simpson cartoons are in the library, on condition that these are never copied.

The eastern four blocks were designed by Caroe and installed in 1902, again by Cornish & Gaymer. The estimate for these was £998, for which a subscription list was opened and read as follows; the Bishop - £250; Archdeacon £100; Canon Lewis - £500; Canon Goodber - £100; a total of £950 from four clergymen. In the end the cost was £1098, but I don't know who paid the extra £100.

The misericords are a fine example of 14thC work, and are the oldest wood carvings in the Minster. Little has been written about these.

The Quire pulpit was also designed by Caroe, built of teak, and was made by Robinson of Bloomsbury. Th carving shows the Virgin & Child. This was a gift of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and was dedicated by Bishop Ridding, on the 9th May 1897.

The music stand is oak made in 1947 by Robert Lee of Southwell.

In the Sanctuary is a credence table made from oak in 1925 by Francis & Dart of Crediton in Devon.

A triple kneeler made by Thompson in 1948.

The Provost's desk is 1957 made from oak by Thompson. It is a memorial to Rev W J Conybeare who was Rector from 1919 - 1945 and bears his Coat of Arms.

The altar rail and kneelers are oak and also made by Thompson in 1950, and two similar ones are in the Saints chapel.

A chair and oak kneeling desk were given in memory of Joseph Whittaker of Rainworth who died in 1932.

People ask why there should be a carving in the Quire of Henry 111. Well, on July 12th 1237, Henry gave orders to Robert de Ros of Mansfield to give to the Archbishop of York 150 oaks from Sherwood Forest for the building of the church at Southwell, and as the Quire was being rebuilt at this time, the timber must have been intended for use here. Some of this timber is most probably still in the roof space.

The wooden oak screens at the W ends, of the Quire, were erected between 1875 and 1887 by Cornish & Gaymer, to replace the plaster screens built by the Bernasconis. They were carefully modelled on the original wooden screens, some fragments of these being found in the room above the chapter house passage by Ewan Christian. Originally, Christian wanted to put up iron grills here as screens, but finally agreed with Street to put up the present ones.

The reredos in St Oswalds chapel is of bleached oak and designed, by Caroe. There are also two kneeling benches in memory of John Haxley, Canon of Norwich, who was formerly at the Minster from 1883-1900.

So, we can see that over the years the Minster has been served by craftsmen from all over the country - Southwell, Nottingham, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Surrey, Devon, Shropshire & London.