

REPAIR TO ONE OF THE SIMPSON CHOIR STALLS

This is an extract from Canon Nigel Coates' report to the Friends' AGM of 20th June 2015, with photographs by Alison Salter:

You will know how exquisite the Simpson carvings are in our choir stalls. They are perhaps underrated given the justly famous stone leaves of the chapter house.

Last year an elderly lady from Halifax contacted the Minster, wishing to offer a box to replace the Simpson cartoons that the original drawings were held in. She wished to do this in memory of her late husband who loved the carvings. After enquiries we discovered that they had to be kept in a cardboard box which maintain the right level of acidity and not a more expensive wooden box that she was suggesting. We therefore made the suggestion that a repair of the Simpson carvings might be an alternative. If you look on the South side of the front row where the choristers sit this time last year you would have seen a hole in the tracery which was damage no doubt done by a chorister's elbow decades ago. We arranged for its repair and I now challenge you to find where it is! The woodcarver TJ Murphy, from Ravenshead, has done an exquisite job. She has carved four blackberries, several leaves and stems with thorns which were then placed in the tracery at some six points. She first carved in lime – a relatively soft wood and then finally from that carving finished the piece in oak before placing it in the hole and ensuring the six anchor holds were glued.

One might question what the point is of such carvings but the choir stalls I think are celebration of life in wood in as much as the chapter house is in stone. It is done to adorn our worship and for the glory of God, not for a utilitarian or functional purpose alone but something that inspires something that lifts our hearts.

I want to suggest to you that as friends if we can help people catch a glimpse of the glory of God in our wonderful Minster then we are fulfilling our purpose of enhancing its adornment. The lady was sending us a small contribution each month and her gift was generously supplemented by the Friends.



See also Factsheet 293, added in November 2017, of TJ Murfin's notes on her repair