MODERNISATION AND CONSERVATION IN THE MINSTER Peter Coffman, 11th March 1995

Why does the Minster look the way it does?

As a result of two opposing forces:

1. An impulse towards the new and different.

2. An impulse towards conservatism; we often fail to see the latter, or see the connecting thread between Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Early English and Decorated periods of building in the Minster.

Modernist side of the three main periods -

<u>Nave</u> - quintessentially Romanesque – of the Pont du Gard, Roman viaduct <u>Quire</u> - a different world: the Yorkshire school of Early English. <u>Chapter House</u> - Decorated – and it is!

BUT Continuity as well:

Unlike present day architects, who have a theoretical training and tend to turn their backs on the past, medieval masons trained as apprentices. Their education was oral and practical, and kept traditions alive.

<u>Norman Period</u> - William the Conqueror tried to identify his own authority with the spiritual authority of the church, hence the rebuilding; but the Minster still kept links with the past, e.g.

- 1. Porthole clerestory windows almost unique Norman work: Ledbury the only others; but found in Anglo-Saxon churches, e.g. St. James, Avebury.
- 2. Square Eastend c.f. Repton.
- 3. Central shafts in 3 windows of the central tower are sunk into the thickness of the wall c.f. Carlton in Lindrick.
- 4. Fragments of carving used as infill and illustrated in the British Archaeological Journal of Jan. 1853, must be A-S, and are one of the most fascinating links with Norman work ever discovered: they are identical with the billet, chevron, lozenge and beakhead decoration in the present nave, which is like a Norman lady wearing Saxon jewellery!

N.B. - where are these fragments? In someone's garden?

5. Nave aisle vaulting ribs, possibly masons forced by Norman patron to include them instead of the more modern groin vaulting – c.f. Durham, and contrast with Blyth.

Early English

Conservative features:

1. Zigzag string course Middle level string course

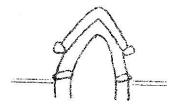
on outside walls retained

- Norman lady still, but has been slimming!

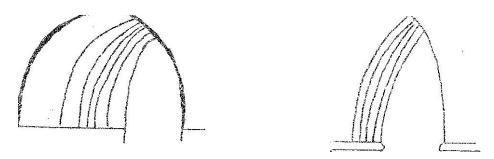
2. Corbel table wavy at top



3. Windows: externally the inner order is continuous, outside it is an arch with capitals, joined to a string course, outside that is a hood mould. This is similar to the nave windows.



- 4. No vertical features in clerestory those there now were added later.
- 5. Construction of inside arches similar to those in nave, with double soffit rolls, but flatter ones.



Chapter House

Modern in having large windows and naturalistic instead of stiff-leaved foliage.

but conservative features:

a) Outside -

- 1. String course at base of windows.
- 2. Arched corbel table under roof.

b). Inside -

- 3. Fillets on shafts of piers copies on pillars of entrance arch, and taken down through the base and up through the necking.
- 4. Nailhead decoration on 2 capitals above the foliage.
- 5. String course put below the perpendicular windows.

N.B. This fact sheet is rather full of technical architectural terms! It is hoped to do something later to elucidate these.

