

DETECTIVE WORK IN THE MINSTER

M.R. Petch 1974

In September 1974 Sgt. Petch visited Southwell and discovered some striking evidence in the mason's marks on the pulpitum which related to the building of the Minster and other churches he is studying. He has kindly allowed the following observations to be published. [Extract from the Friends annual report]

'One of the most interesting of mediaeval architects,' writes John Harvey in *'The Mediaeval Architect'* (1972), is Master Ivo the mason in charge of work at York in 1331 for Archbishop Melton. He can be identified as Ivo de Raughton, mason, who had taken up the freedom of York in 1317. His highly individual style of rich curvilinear also appears on other works patronised by Archbishop Melton; the nave and the reredos behind the High Altar at Beverley Minster (1324-34); the great east window of Selby Abbey begun about 1330 and the shrine of St William at York, of which substantial fragments survive. The same influence is felt in the Southwell pulpitum and the south rose window at Lincoln Cathedral.

This brings me to the research which I am carrying out at St. Mary's Church, Beverley and to the recent discovery of an extremely important graffito associated with a mason's mark. On the 19th June 1974 I was occupied in cleaning slurry and whitewash from fragments of carved stone which date from the high decorated period (c.1335). By late afternoon I had completed my task and was clearing up tools and buckets of water when I decided to check markings which I had noticed on a stone earlier in the day. This stone had had a heavy deposit of slurry on all six surfaces and had taken most of the afternoon to clean. On closer examination I was astonished to find that the graffito appeared to me to read Ivo de Raughton. Linked with this graffito, on the same stone, I discovered a mason's mark and a cornice of 'Beverley Stud ornament' which has been thought to be unique to the Beverley area. This feature can best be described as a knob carving resembling the upper surface of an open umbrella. It occurs, so far as I know, in only two other places: Bainton Church in the East Riding of Yorkshire (which is wholly curvilinear) and the nave and transept clerestory parapets at Lincoln Cathedral, where de Raughton is known to have worked.

To return to the mason's mark, all the other stones which I found and cleaned in the priest's room at St. Mary's, Beverley, bore a similar mark to the one on the important stone. Clearly a further investigation was required on known works which have survived. This led me to Southwell Cathedral and the one and only mason's mark I found, on the half-pier on the north east corner of the entrance passage of your pulpitum. This mark is exactly the same as the one found associated with the graffito in St. Mary's, Beverley.

A further interesting feature of this study is de Raughton's other stylistic design feature which is seen on most of his works or assumed works. This is a band of free-quatrefoils which are connected to one another to form a frieze and are not separated into divisions by uprights between each quatrefoil, as is seen in later works of the perpendicular period. The pulpitum of Southwell has two such at the base of the western face. The Bishop Borghorsh tombs which abut on to the plinth of the shrine of St. Hugh in Lincoln Cathedral,

dated 1335, also have this feature. Above all, the stone in St. Mary's, Beverley, which bears the graffito and mason's mark, has this same feature carved on both sides, as does the external parapet of the chapel of St. Michael at St. Mary's. This parapet consists of a band or frieze of free-quatrefoils similar to those in Lincoln and Southwell, but have in addition the stud ornament on the quatrefoils, and on the upper and lower supports.

Yet another design feature of de Raughton's is the pierced parapet, which was always crenellated. His parapets are always pierced with trefoils, which leaves the parapet with a beautiful flowing motif – almost snake-like. The Southwell pulpitum bears this feature and is unadorned with any other decoration other than the usual cusping which is associated with the trefoils. The parapet on the west face is of the usual flowing form, but the base of the trefoils are double-cusped in a curious way so as to indicate a debased quatrefoil.

On to Lincoln. The pulpitum has the same parapet design as the eastern face of the Southwell pulpitum and is again undecorated with anything other than cusping. A look at the south nave parapet and the west face parapet of the transept shows an incredible change from the normal practice. Here he has built the flowing parapet, but has left it unpierced, and has instead covered it with stud ornament decoration. Where the corbel-table is positioned, he had even introduced studs along with his normal 'bust' decoration. Surmounting this parapet is a series of lovely niches which are again covered in stud decoration. Not the common ball-flower decoration for him, he went one better and introduced his stud decoration, which gave that mark of individuality.

Finally, to St. Mary's, Beverley, and the priest's room. Here, whilst doing the research, I came across the fragments of a pierced parapet comparable to the one on the east face of the Southwell pulpitum and those at Lincoln. This is again covered with stud ornament and is, when laid out, a full eighteen feet in length. This parapet again bears a mason's mark akin to the one on the important stones bearing the graffito and mason's mark. It would appear to me that Ivo de Raughton's last work was at Beverley St. Michael's chapel and was his greatest design.

In conclusion, the chance find of a graffito seems to have opened the door to reveal a man of great individuality – an architect and artist of the first rank, who was hitherto virtually unknown. Present research indicates that he was responsible for works of a far wider horizon than was previously thought. It seems to prove that Ivo de Raughton worked at Southwell, Lincoln and Beverley. What has been attempted, with the facts set out above, together with stylistic elements, is to present evidence that this man was the 'unknown master' (as Dr. John Bilson described him) who was responsible for that 'Gothic masterpiece', St. Michael's chapel at St. Mary's Church, Beverley; hence also work at Lincoln and the Southwell pulpitum.