

Exterior Carvings
By Jos Hall 9th June 1990
Includes supplement of 1995

Visitors are often amazed by the number of carvings inside the Minster, but not many look at those on the outside.

Restoration and Replacement

Both inside and outside some are original, some replace ones which have worn away. If original only partly worn, it can be removed, built up in clay, and copied, but if badly worn, the modern carver took ideas from contemporary carvings elsewhere, or used his imagination.

Interior: lowest row on screen replaced 1812-14; other replacements in Quire and Chapter House all done by John Gregory and John Cook 1851-75.

Exterior: when the Minster became a cathedral, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners took on responsibility for restoration. Most exterior carvings which needed replacement were done 1950-70.

Western Towers: the last part of the Norman building to be completed. SW tower Transitional in style. On corbel tables under eaves are rows of heads, 8 on one side and 9 on the other, including kings, queens and devils. Eastern sides of towers are the earliest.

North Porch: devils' heads on dripstones include one swallowing Judas.

Walls of Nave: scallops and zigzags originally went right round the building, including the Norman Quire. South side has 15th cent, heads on the dripstones.

Pilgrims' Chapel: North side has 2 small pinnacles with carvings taken out and copied in the 1950's: a bishop, a king and 2 angels. In 1956 a sculptor called Harvey was asked to do some work, and carved heads of Mr. Clulow, Mr Wragg, Malcolm Fisher (a 9-year old choir-boy) and Mr. Paling the dog-whipper.

Chapter House: all figures on pinnacles and crockets renewed, also figures on buttresses. South side: Eve tasting the forbidden fruit, St. Michael, Satan clutching Eve's soul, and an angel carrying Eve's soul to heaven. West side; the "butcher's shop": pig, ox, sheep, and fish and a dragon said to represent indigestion! Figures on the Chapter House itself had to be replaced entirely, with Provost Heywood's agreement. They are a cockatrice and cock; a sheep and a goat; sphinx and centaur; man lapping and man drinking from cupped hands (see Judges ch.7); a mermaid and satyr; the 4 evangelists and their symbols a cherub and seraph; Samson and lion; Jonah and the whale; and the Virgin Mary and Gabriel.

East Wall of Pilgrims' Chapel: (visible only from vergers' vestry) has the heads of the 20th cent, masons and their marks. Under the eaves the 14th cent, carvings have survived.

North Face of Quire: C14 heads, unrecognisable, have been replaced by saints from the B.C.P. Calendar, including 2 popes wearing the triple crown.

South Face of Quire: original C14 heads, except on flying buttress, which has heads of Bishop Wakeling, Provost Pratt, and architect Dowling.

Supplement to Fact Sheet No. 12

THE CARVED HEADS ON THE NORTH FACE OF THE QUIRE

One of the notable architectural features of the Minster is the number and variety of the carved

heads on the outside of the building. Many of these are quite ancient; for example the 12th century corbels at the top of the two western towers and the 14th century heads of people and animals at the top of the Chapter House.

Not all the carvings are so ancient but nevertheless are of great interest, The Chapter House booklet gives some information on those on the exterior of the Chapter House but there is nothing immediately available on those on the Quire - hence this note.

In the restoration work of the 1960's under the direction of the then Architect, Bernard Dowland, much work was done on the north side of the Minster including the Chapter House. The mason at the time was Len Potts with Peter Hand doing most of the heads on the Chapter House and T Murphy the Saints heads on the Quire.

Originally there had been 43 carved heads on the north face of the Quire but on close examination they were seen to have deteriorated to the point where they were no longer identifiable, According to Mr Dowland this was probably due to neglect of the roof guttering over the centuries with the result that they had become saturated with water and simply disintegrated. In the circumstances a completely new set of heads had to be devised and it was agreed with Provost Heywood that they should be Saints taken from the Calendar of Saints in the 1928 Prayer Book. All the names below can be found in the Calendar with, the exception of Polycarp. I can only surmise that he had some special significance for Provost Heywood and was therefore included.

Starting with St. Anthony (the 17th Jan,) the heads run from east to west in their date order {with 2 exceptions). Perhaps of particular interest are the two Popes Leo and Clement whose triple tiaras can clearly be seen.

I give below the names of the Saints with a brief note about each and their symbols as appropriate. Many of the carvings are, I fear, rather difficult to see because of the proximity of the Chapter House. Binoculars are essential to note the detail. However I have in my possession a copy of Mr Dowland's original drawing and would be glad to show it to anyone interested.

St ANTHONY (17th Jan) d.356 - A hermit who is looked upon as the founder of monasticism. One of the "desert fathers". His symbols of a bell and a pig are unfortunately not shown on the carving.

St PAUL (25th Jan.) d.c67 - The Apostle. The symbols of St Paul are a sword and a book. A sword can be seen behind his head.

St CHRYSOSTOM (27th Jan) d.407 - Bishop of Antioch and honoured as one of the great Doctors of the Church. The others being Athanasius, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. It is said that many of his sermons and letters are as relevant to-day as in the 5th century.

St POLYCARP (23rd Feb) d.c155 - St, Irenaeus tells us that Polycarp had "known John and others who had seen the Lord". The annual festival of St. Polycarp, still observed, is the first regular commemoration of a martyr of which there is a record.

St MATTHIAS (24th Feb.) Apostle, 1st Century, after Christ's ascension Matthias was chosen by lot to fill the place of Judas.

St DAVID (1st March) 6th Century. Dewi or David, the patron Saint of Wales.

St PATRICK (17th March) d.461 - The patron Saint of Ireland, Look for the shamrock on his mitre.

St CUTHBERT (20th March) d 634 - One of the great northern Saints who lived a great part of his life on Lindlsfarne. He is buried at Durham. Note the Celtic cross on his mitre.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - Here celebrated on the feast of the Annunciation (25th March), Note

the fleur-de-lys on both sides of the carving.

St LEO THE GREAT (11th April) d 1054 – Pope, Leo was a great reformer and leader at a time when the Roman church was under attack from Attila the Hun and the Vandals under Genseric. Note the triple tiara.

St ANSELM (21st April) d.1109 - He was Abbot of Bec and later became Archbishop of Canterbury. One of the outstanding figures of the medieval Church.

St GEORGE (23rd April) d.303 - Patron Saint of England about whom legends abound. He was possibly a soldier of the Roman Army.

St MARK (25th April) Evangelist 1st C The author of the Gospel according to Mark. His symbol is a winged lion not shown here but can be seen in the Minster east window.

St PHILIP and St JAMES (1st.May) 1st C. Apostles - Philip was one of the earliest of the twelve. Jesus said 'follow me' to him the day after he had asked Peter and Andrew to be his disciples. Philip is here associated with James, commonly referred to as James the Less.

St ATHANASIUS (2nd. May) Bishop, d.373. Athanasius was one of the four great Doctors of the Church. The Creed which bears his name is only rarely used these days but can be studied in the Book of Common Prayer. Note the opening words of the Creed on his Collar 'QUICUNQUE VULT'.

St AUGUSTINE (26th May) Archbishop. d,605 -. Augustine is sometimes called the Apostle of England. He arrived in Kent in 597 and established his See at Canterbury. Note the shape of his mitre.

St BONIFACE (5th June) Bishop d.754 - Boniface was born at Crediton in Devon. After becoming a priest he left for Germany, never to return . He was martyred in Holland whilst on a missionary journey.

St COLUMBA (9th June) Abbot and Missionary, d.597, Columba was born in Donegal about 521; became a priest and later founded the monastery on Iona which played such an important part in the Christian history of the north.

St BARNABAS (11th June) Apostle, 1st century, Barnabas is styled Apostle although not one of the twelve. He worked closely with St Paul and went with him on his first missionary journey to Cyprus. Barnabas is regarded traditionally as the founder of the Church in Cyprus.

St JOHN THE BAPTIST (24th June) d.c29 - The fore-runner and herald of Christ. He is usually shown wearing a robe of skins, as in the Nave window, but it is not clearly depicted here.

St.PETER. (28th June) Apostle, d.c64 - Peter, the leader of the Apostles; brother of Andrew with whom he was called by Jesus to be a fisher of men. His symbol of two crossed keys is, surprisingly, not shown here.

St MARY MAGDALEN (22nd July) 1st century - Mary of Magdala whom Jesus healed of "seven devils" was one of the women who followed and ministered to Him. She was present at the Crucifixion and it was to her that the risen Christ first appeared.

St JAMES (25th July) Apostle, d.44, James was the fisherman brother of St John and is called "the greater" to distinguish him from the other Apostle James the Less. With Peter and John he witnessed the transfiguration of Christ and His agony in the garden. He was the first Apostle to be martyred. According to Spanish tradition, he visited Spain and preached the Gospel there. However that may be, his shrine at Santiago became one of the pilgrimage sites of the Middle Ages although there is no evidence that his body was ever there. James is often represented as a pilgrim and his emblem, a

cockleshell can be seen on the carving,

St ANNE (26th July) St Anne is traditionally regarded as the mother of the Virgin Mary. In antiquity she is often depicted with a book teaching the Virgin, to read.

St OSWALD (9th Aug.) King and Martyr d.642. Oswald became a Christian at Iona. He it was who invited St. Aidan to Northumbria to live at Lindisfarne (Holy Island), and is regarded as one of the great northern Saints [Not to be confused of course with "our" St Oswald, Archbishop of York 962 to 992].

St BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (20th Aug.) d 1153 - Bernard was one of the founders of the Cistercian Order at Cîteaux. He established a house at Clairvaux in Champagne from which Rievaulx and Fountains in this country sprang. Look for his emblem of a beehive (with one bee!).

St BARTHOLOMEW (24th Aug.) Apostle C1st - very little is known about Bartholomew except that he was called to be an Apostle. Was he perhaps also known as Nathaniel? He was martyred by being flayed alive and his emblem, a butcher's knife, is seen on the carving.

St AIDAN (31st Aug.) Bishop and Missionary, d.651. Aidan, an Irish monk from Iona was sent to Lindisfarne in 635 and established his headquarters there in the reign of King Oswald. His emblem is a stag which can be seen here in the carving.

St NINIAN (16th Sept.) Bishop and Missionary, d.432, Ninian was a Scot who was educated in Rome and returned as Bishop to the Picts. His headquarters were at Whitehorn, a place of medieval pilgrimage. His mitre bears the Celtic cross.

St THEODORE OF TARSUS. (19th Sept.) d.690 - A Greek monk from Tarsus, Theodore was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 667. He had a great reputation as an organiser and administrator and provided the then fragmented Church in England with a framework which is the basis of the present Diocesan system. His mitre bears the Chi Rho symbol,

St MATTHEW (21st Sept.) 1st C, Matthew, or Levi, was called by Christ to leave his employment as a tax gatherer and to follow Him. The first Gospel is attributed to him. The emblem of the 'Divine Man' was assigned to Matthew in ancient times because his Gospel teaches about the human nature of Christ.

St MICHAEL (29th Sept.) Archangel - On this day we commemorate all Angels and especially Michael, 'the Captain of the Heavenly Host'. He is seen here with wings and a sword.

St LUKE (18th Oct.) Evangelist 1st C, St Paul refers to Luke as "our beloved Luke, the physician". He was the author of the Gospel that bears his name and of the Acts of the Apostles. His symbol is a winged ox shown here on the carving together with a book.

St EDWARD THE CONFESSOR. (13th Oct.) d.1066 - Edward re-founded the Abbey of Westminster, where he is buried; the only English Saint whose relics still rest in their medieval shrine. His title 'the Confessor' distinguishes him from Edward the Martyr.

St SIMON AND St JUDE (28th Oct.) Apostles - Nothing much is known about Simon or Jude except that they were two of the twelve Apostles. Jude has enjoyed great popularity since medieval times as an intercessor for those in desperate straits.

St HILDA (17th Nov.) d.680. Abbess, Hilda was baptised by Paulinus. She was a friend of Aidan and became Abbess of Whitby. Amongst her subjects were St. John of Beverley and Caedmon, the first English religious poet. It was at Whitby in 664 that the supremacy of Canterbury was established,

St EDMUND (20th Nov.) King and Martyr d.869 - Edmund was proclaimed king of the East Angles at

the age of 15. He was killed in a Danish invasion and buried at Beodricsworth, now Bury St., Edmunds. Note the arrow transfixing his neck.

St ANDREW (30th Nov.) Apostle and Martyr, Andrew the first of the twelve Apostles is the patron Saint of Scotland. His symbol is a cross saltire X.

St CLEMENT (23rd Nov.) Pope d c101. Clement is regarded as the 3rd successor to St. Peter at Rome. He is venerated as a martyr. According to legend he was tied, to an anchor and thrown into the sea. Note the triple tiara and the anchor on the carving. Trinity House which looks after lighthouses began as a guild of the Trinity and St Clement.

St NICHOLAS (6th Dec.) Bishop 4th C. one of the most popular Saints of Christendom although nothing is known of him except that he was a Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, "Santa Claus" is here shown as a Bishop with his Crook.

St THOMAS (21st Dec.) Apostle and Martyr, Thomas is often called "Doubting Thomas" from the occasion when he was asked for proof of the risen Christ. He is regarded traditionally in India as the founder of the Church. Thomas is also called "Didymus" meaning twin. Note the appellation on his collar.

St STEPHEN (26th Dec.) Martyr Stephen was the first Christian to be martyred. He was one of the 7 deacons appointed to help the Apostles. He died by stoning - watched by Saul whom we know as St. Paul. Stephen's symbols are a palm leaf and stones seen here on the carving as he shields his face.

St, JOHN (27th Dec.) Apostle and Evangelist, d.c100 - John was a Galilean fisherman who, with his brother James, was called to follow Jesus. The fourth Gospel, three Epistles and the Book of the Revelation are attributed to him. His symbol is an Eagle seen here by his side.

FOOTNOTE

I have added only brief notes on the Saints but fascinating stories or legends are attached to them all. Their symbols appear in so many places throughout Christendom that they are worth a study in themselves. There are several books available from the bookshop should anyone wish to do any further reading.

Jos Hall 1995