

DATING OF MISERICORDS
By Ron Cripps 12th April 1997

Dr. R. Laxton, Mathematician at Nottingham University, who also conducts Tree Ring Dating Section of Archeological Dept took three test pieces from the Bishop's, Provost's and Assistant Bishop's Stalls which produced datings indicating that the Misericords were probably made between 1325 and 1350.

Lady Pamela Wedgewood, Medieval Art Historian and Member of our Fabric Advisory Committee visually dated the Misericords as 1340 for reasons as follows:

- 'Globular" seaweed of greenery occurs in carvings well advanced into C14th
- Fall of drapery and simple mouldings suggest not beyond middle C14th
- Hair styles, facial features and head-dresses all C14th

Parallels in Luttrell Psalter - a manuscript for which circumstantial dating c1340

Source unlikely to have been Thurgaton Priory (where there are 3 Misericords of 15th C included in the 1853 restoration): they in no way match those at Southwell.

Pevsner quotes document stating "stones for the pulpitum were being carried in 1337". Lady Wedgewood and Charles Tracey believe the Misericords were part of the pre-Ewan Christian Prebendal Stalls. John Harvey's Dictionary of Medieval Architects associates the Pulpitum with IVO DE RAGHTON, under patronage of Archbishop Melton of York. (See also York, East front of Carlisle, Beverley Reredos and Great East window at Selby).

- Carvings:
- Bishop's stall: Dryads with tails turning into foliage.
 - Bishop of Sherwood's stall: Green Man with two boughs from mouth
 - Archdeacon of Nottingham's stall: Samson breaking jaw of lion
 - Dean's: Owl or beetle like body or cloak, human head & tail turning into branch
 - Assistant Bishop: Kneeling figure holding foliage
 - Archdeacon of Newark: Seated figure with a bough springing from side.

This decoration further confirms date in that it is in line with the heyday of marginalia just prior to the Black Death - the Church was sanctifying old superstitions.

DATING OF BREAD PEWS

Dr Laxton dated three samples from Bread Pews, 2 from late C17th and 1 from late C12th.

Owing to wide divergence the remaining 5 samples were not followed up. However the C17th samples match those obtained from the North Quire Aisle roof, replaced after 1711 fire. So, do the bread pews date from around 1230 - were they damaged in the 1711 fire - where were they then sited since, if in present position they would surely have been completely destroyed and not just in part?

DATING OF ROBERT THOMPSON'S WORK

Born 1876; apprenticed as Engineer at Gleckheaton; at 20 joined Father's general woodworking business. Robert influenced by Bromflet's carving at Ripon which he saw travelling to and from Gleckheaton and before 1910 was undertaking Church work. Working either on a huge cornice with another carver, Charlie Barker, who 'murmured something about being poor as Church mice', Robert Thomson promptly carved one. He believed this was about 1919. Until 1930 all mice had front paws but then they were left off due to splitting. (No other means of dating work). Each carver had own style and usually the craftsman producing an article carved his own mouse, in his own style. Incised mice were used where Churches requested this in order to prevent the mouse intruding. Thomson died in 1955 There are 21 mice in the Minster