

THE QUIRE

By Jos HALL 11 November 1989

N.B. This fact sheet does not cover the windows or ornaments, as these were dealt with on previous occasions.

Shape and style

- 1 Dimensions: 128ft. long by 73ft. wide, or 98ft. including aisles.
- 2 Shape: square East end copied the previous Norman quire; triforium and clerestory into one; small transepts: these features make it a small-scale copy of the whole minster, and are entirely English, being first found in Ripon. The whole quire originally highly decorated in colour.
- 3 Dates: 1170 Tower completed (central tower?) Quire started soon after.
1233 taking shape: bishop's register of that year records 30 days' indulgence to those helping. c1250 probably completed.
Flying buttresses added in 15th cent.
- 4 Materials: a) yellowish stone re-used from Norman quire
b) lighter stone with blue veining.

Richard Beaumont thinks (a) from Mansfield Woodhouse, (b) from Mansfield.
Masons' marks show that at least 50 masons were employed.

Changes

1. Colour:

- a) Originally highly coloured.
 - b) 17th & 18th centuries whitewashed all over.
 - c) 19th century Ewan Christian asked permission from the Bishop of Lincoln to repaint in the original colours, which he had found on the vaulting; but he was refused.
 - d) When the quire was cleaned in 1981, the architect saw colour showed when the stone was wet, but faded as it dried. This seen in the Blessed Sacrament chapel, with traces also on the screen, and on the third arch of the sedilia.
2. Floor level: old pictures show levels found by Ewan Christian in 1851 different from today's; a flight of steps immediately in front of the high altar.
 3. Early 19th cent, Quire had galleries and screens at each side.
 - a) 1802 Plaster screens built out at right angles from the pulpitum (i.e. stone screen) by Italian sculptor, Bernasconi, hence damage at each end of pulpitum. These screens were said to have been given to Nottingham City Museum, but are now lost without trace.
 - b) High galleries over aisles; storage for coal underneath.
 4. Sedilia formerly in quire, not sanctuary.
 5. There used to be a special seat with canopy originally reserved for the Prior of Thurgarton.
 6. Iron gates into quire, replacing solid wooden doors, given by Mrs. Player in 1934, and made by Frederick Cauldron of Brant Broughton.

Features of Interest

? of the original 9 chantry chapels were in the quire:

St. Thomas' 1241, now the Blessed Sacrament chapel.

St Peter and St Paul, probably the present Airmen's Chapel.

Present Southwell Saints' and St. Oswald's. N.B. This chapel is dedicated not to King Oswald of Northumbria, but to Archbishop Oswald of York, who was a nephew of Oskytel, and died washing pilgrims' feet on Maundy Thursday in Worcester.

2. Masons' marks are most easily seen on pillars in the N. aisle.

3. Heads: bosses on N. side are of Archbishop Walter de Grey, with mitre, and Henry III, with crown. On the blind doorway in S. aisle are of Henry IV, identified by "SS" on collar, from his motto 'souvent me souvient'; and his queen, Joanna, though this is a replacement.