

No Higher Art Embellishing Christian Churches in the Modern Age

By

MATTHEW SAUNDERS

The AMS and The Friends are both concerned with churches, their protection and embellishment. The AMS does it through its casework, by commenting on proposals to alter or extend listed places of worship, sometimes through the addition of new works of art. The Friends can engage more directly, either by taking a church into care, or by subsidising the introduction of new works of art into churches in use through the generosity of Father Cottam. It was he who endowed the Cottam Will Trust, that we administer, which funds the offer of grants towards "the purchase of objects of beauty to be placed in ancient Gothic churches for the furtherance of religion". Thus the Vestry Hall will receive in any one year information on many schemes, proposed or executed, which confirm the present vibrancy of Church Art. Here we share some of the excitement at the overview we are granted of an aspect of contemporary art, which receives practically no recognition in the mainstream media. When did you last see a new stained glass window, religious statue or organ mentioned, even in the local press?

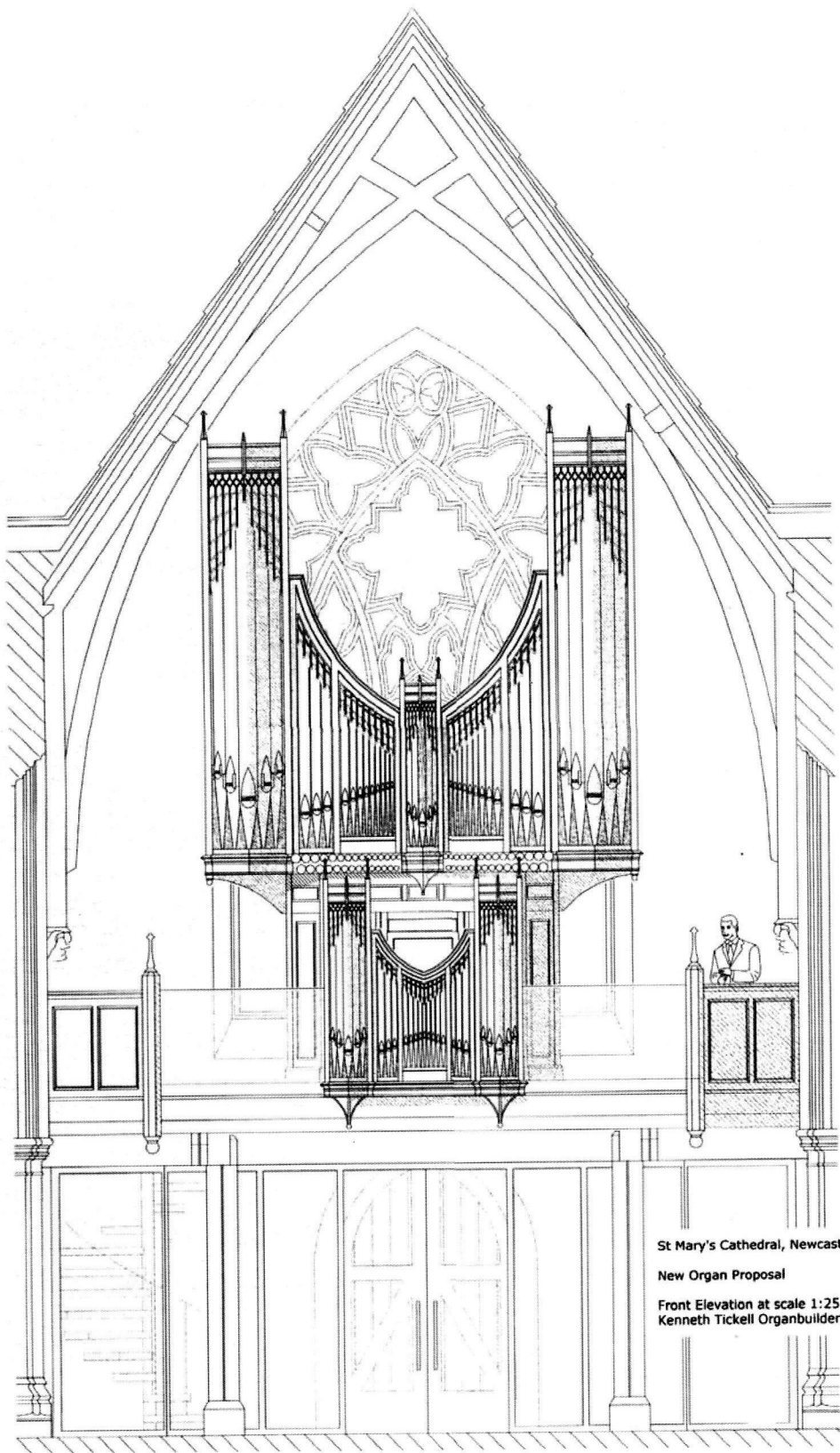
And space dictates that these examples are a mere selection.

It is a cliché of the press that the Established Church is in retreat, in the pejorative use of that term. In fact the rate of redundancy, although there are dire predictions of a tsunami of closures on the horizon, is significantly lower in England than it was twenty years ago. Moreover many churches feel sufficient confidence in the future to raise money for works of reordering and extension and to commission works of art in the 2,000 year old tradition of offering God the numinous and the best.

Sometimes we have to oppose what it is being proposed as it satisfies neither of those two criteria. But on occasion the artist and the architect concerned has risen to the challenge and provided new work that respects and enhances its setting. That excellent magazine "Church Building" (in unconscious emulation of its 19th century equivalent "The Church Builder") writes up many projects but its audience, although appreciative, is select. Art and Christianity Enquiry (ACE) founded by Rev Tom Devonshire Jones, armed with an articulate and authoritative newsletter, is a powerful advocate of Modern devotional art, although it exudes little sympathy for more traditional, more accessible art.

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance nearly all great art was inspired by the Christian story. That is no longer so but the retrenchment is by no means as absolute as some have supposed.

We hope that these cases will help to prove how lively is the patronage of the modern day Church.



St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle
New Organ Proposal
Front Elevation at scale 1:25
Kenneth Tickell Organbuilders

Fig. 1

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, Tyne and Wear, Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St Mary

A.W.N.Pugin would have been pleased had he been able to return to Newcastle and witness how subsequent generations had lent a grandeur and unity to his cathedral, which dominates the townscape opposite the Central Station. Dunn and Hansom's full-bloodied spire of 1872 adds an appropriate vertical accent that Pugin, on site between 1842 and 1844, had been unable to provide. The present day Cathedral authorities are carrying on the tradition of adding visual pomp to an interior that had suffered some post-war loss of character. Alongside the encouragement given to new stained glass windows, by Joseph Nuttgens, plans were announced late in 2010 for a completely new organ and organ case at the west end. To take the place of an internal screen of the 1980s, the architect, Kevin Doonan, and organbuilders, Kenneth Tickell, plan a substantial and brand new instrument sitting in its own gallery. There would be some loss of light from the west window but this sacrifice is quite common given the tradition of western organ galleries. It doesn't resonate too well with the scheme that Pugin hated organ galleries dominating west ends – but then Pugin's dislikes were legion, and inconsistent

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

The habit of introducing new gargoyles or finials as part of restoration campaigns at British cathedrals is now firmly established. Somehow there is less fuss where the newcomer is so high up that its age cannot be gauged. Here the modern age can flatter the principal donor in the fundraising campaign by a portrait in stone where the medieval mason would more often than not have mocked his social superiors or played with images of the devil. Here, (Fig. 2) in work completed at Lincoln Cathedral in 2010, Michael Thacker has been inspired by the precedent of medieval fantasy.

WINDRUSH, St Peter, Glos

One of the most vulnerable of all external features on an ancient church is the cross mounted on the east gable. The frosts begin the damage before the winds bring it down. At Windrush, David



Fig. 2

Ackerman, the parish priest decided that the fractured stump at his church (Fig. 3) was not bearing proper witness. He set about raising money for a replacement, designed and carved by the celebrated artist, Rory Young. The Cottam Will Trust, administered by The Friends, was pleased to make a contribution to the cost. The completed work was finished in the Summer of 2010. The photos (Figs. 4 and 5) taken at close quarters demonstrate the quality of the carving although the diminutive scale and its location, a good 25 feet from the ground, dictate the use of field glasses to allow proper appreciation



Fig. 3

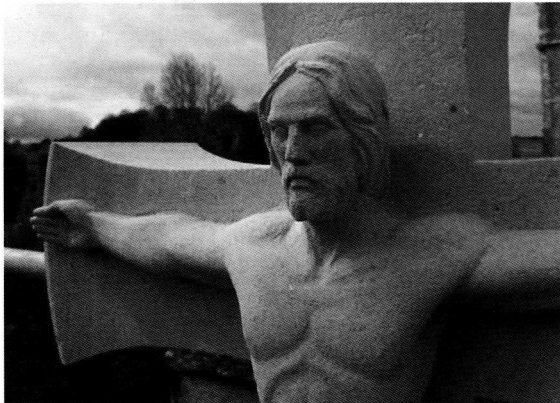


Fig. 4

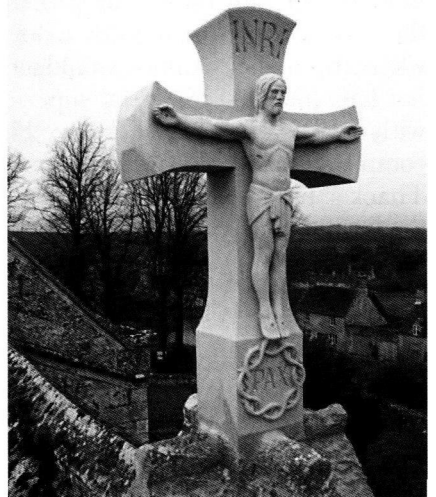


Fig. 5

WYCK RISSINGTON, St Laurence, Glos

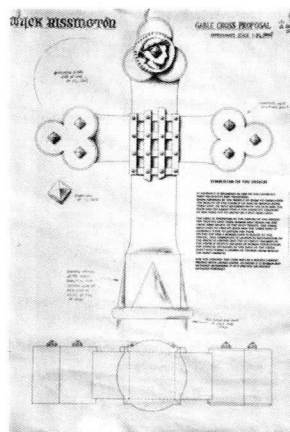


Fig. 6

And elsewhere in the Cotswolds, much the same pattern was repeated at Wyck Rissington, once again with help from the Cottam Trust. The cross here was installed in January 2011. The designer is Richard Bossons, who worked with Rory at Windrush. It takes the place of a much broken cross by the Cutts Brothers of 1879. The symbolism comes from the dedication of the church. St Laurence was ordered by the Prefect of Rome to hand over the wealth of the church. He said he would do so in three days. He duly returned with the poor and the sick and declared "This is the Church's Treasure". He was then put to death by slow burning on the iron grill which has come to be his motif. Hence the grill at the centre of the design. The trefoils and the three Roman nail heads on the cross arms relate to the Holy Trinity, the three days that St Laurence took to gather the

poor, and the three

nails used in the crucifixion of Jesus. On the top arm a Roman coin is nailed to the trefoil. This symbolises St Laurence's repudiation of the Prefect's orders, and the ultimate triumph of the Church despite decades of Roman persecution. The conical detailing at the foot of the Cross shaft forms a crown of thorns from which the shaft emerges.

STINCHCOMBE, St Cyr, Glos

This serious-minded little boy is St Cyr who was martyred along with his mother, St Julitta, in the 3rd century under Diocletian. The fine Cotswold church of Stinchcombe is one of only a handful dedicated to this saint and the parish decided to commemorate the Millenium by filling an empty niche on the tower with a statue carved by Rory Young. The Cottam Will Trust contributed £2,000 towards the total cost of £4,500

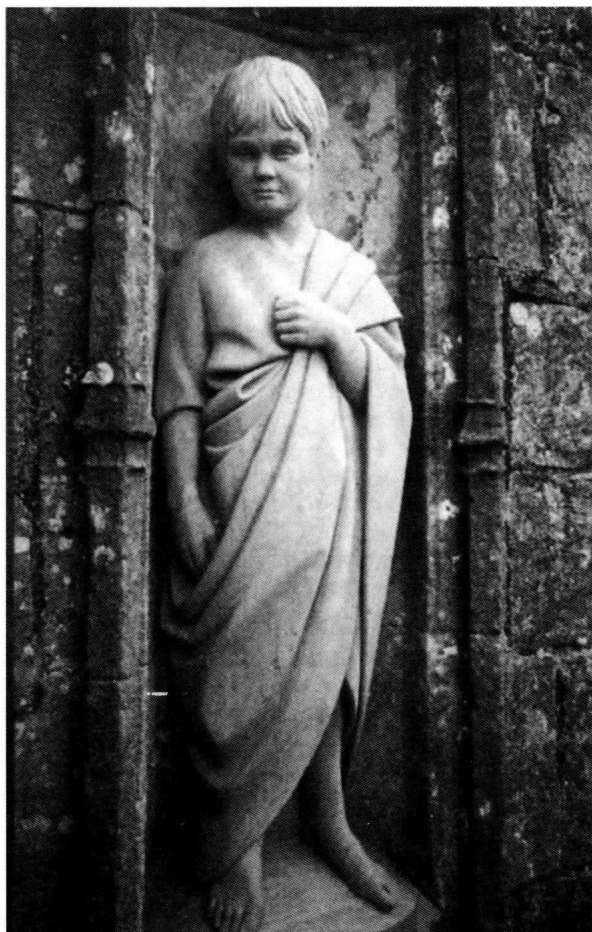


Fig. 7

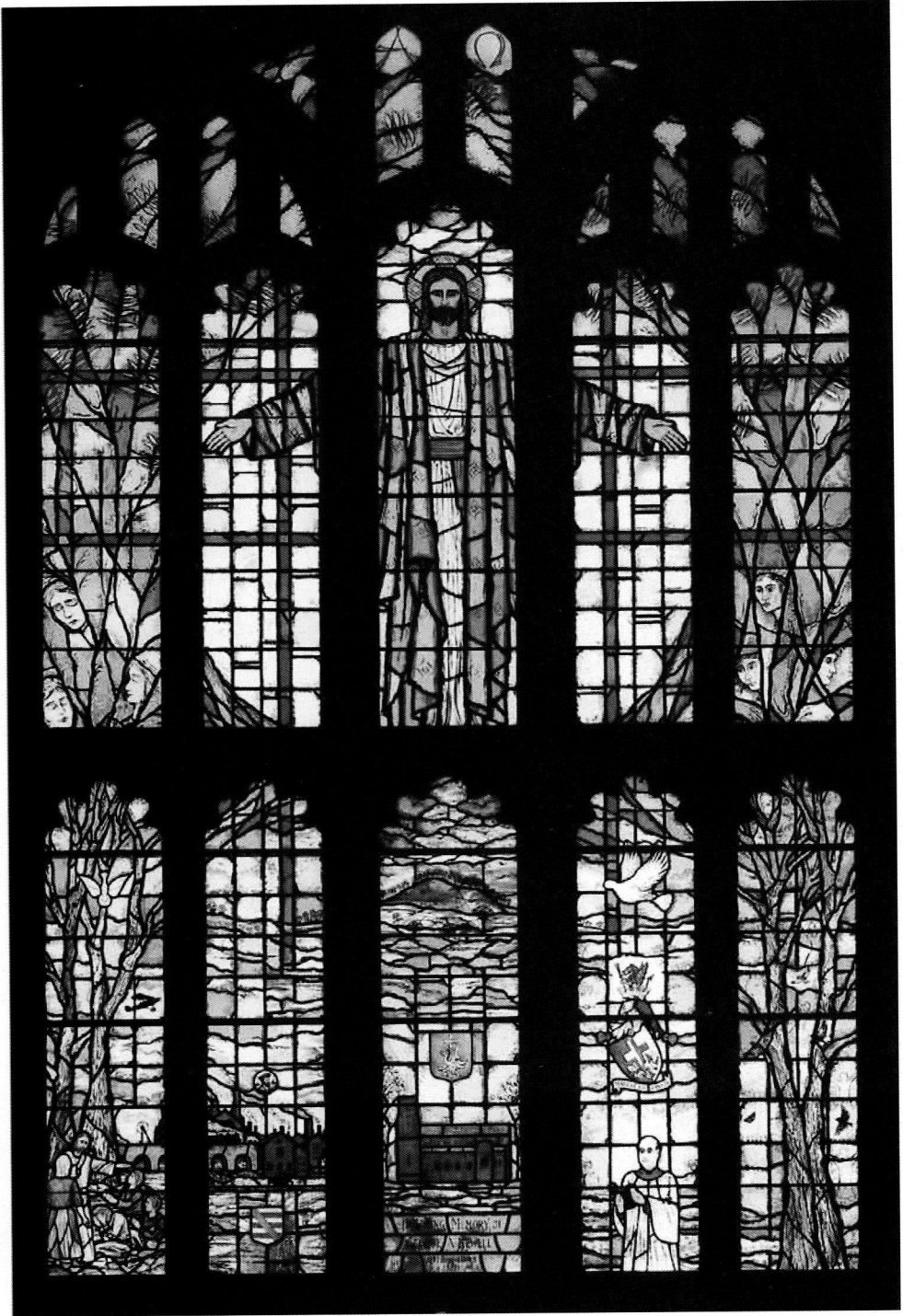


Fig. 8

ASPLEY, NOTTINGHAM, St Mary

Michael Stokes east window at Apsley (replacing plain glazing of 1934) was installed in 2008 (Fig. 8). Trading under the name of MDS Stained Glass since 1985, Stokes has completed more than 100 stained glass windows, 13 of them for the biggest prize in nearly all churches, the east window in the chancel above the main altar. Most of his work appears in the East Midlands where he is based but Fig. 9 shows another east window he executed slightly further afield at St Mary's Clophill in Bedfordshire (in 2005). St Mary's built in 1847 has devoted a number of legacies in recent years to adding to the beauty of the church interior. Stokes' style is naturalistic and, sadly for illustrations in Black and White, there is a careful reliance on colour tones

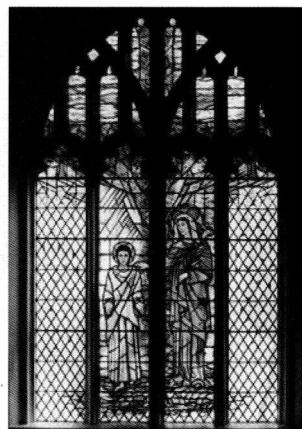


Fig. 9

LIVERPOOL, St John, Tue Brook

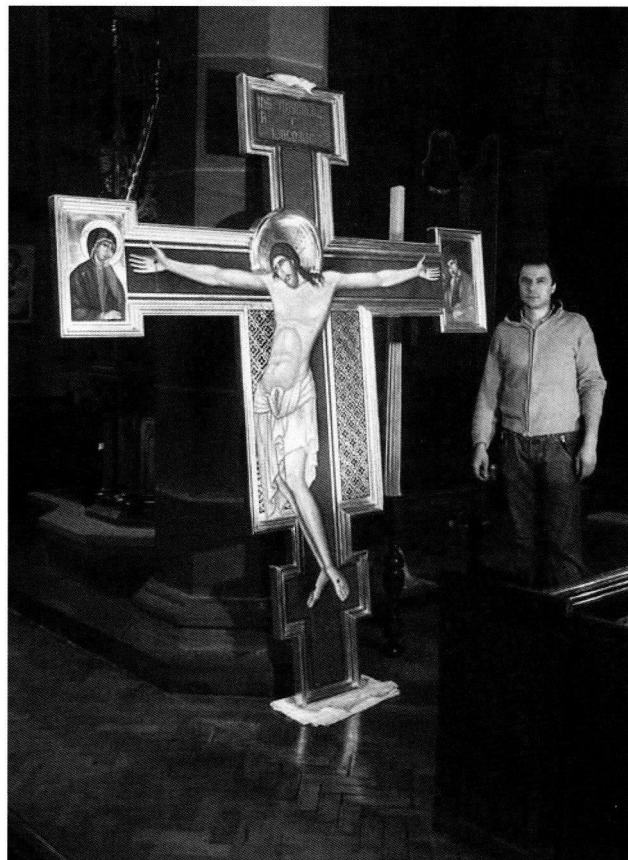


Fig. 10

The romanticised tradition of the roving artist, fed by grateful monks in return for a new fresco, is deep in the Western European psyche and is founded in truth. The friar with the paintbrush. In recent years it has manifested itself again in the practice of artists from freshly liberated Eastern Europe coming to the West to ply their age-old trades. Many come to fellow Eastern Orthodox communities to provide icons in their own churches. That of the Serbian Orthodox in Kensington is full of such work. But the journeys are not necessarily as cosy as that. Itinerant Romanian artists have spent the last few years producing exquisite, if unashamedly derivative, work, in the Bodley church at Tuebrook, in return for board and lodging. This crucifix, in distinctive acrylic paint, is by Christinel Paslaru, who is shown standing by his work of 2010 in Fig. 10.

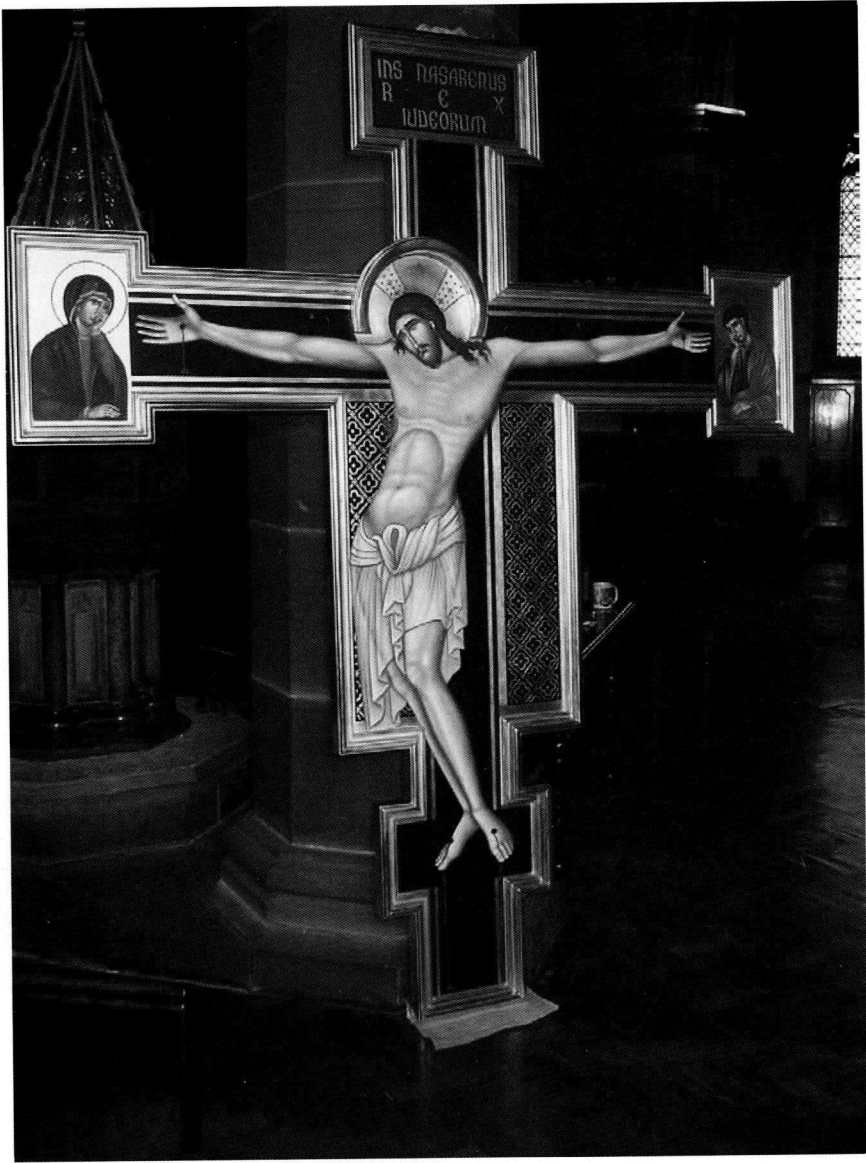


Fig. 11

WREXHAM, St Giles

St Giles, one of the greatest churches in Wales, one of the so-called Stanley churches of the 15th century, is proposing a major reordering which will provide a new altar and a crescent of choirstalls and sedilia behind. The designers are BB Architects of Newtown. We have objected to the corollary (the ejection of the present stalls designed by Benjamin Ferrey) but the two are not mutually exclusive. The hart (the symbol of St Giles) wrapped around the central cross of the altar seems dangerously close to sentimentalism but there is a welcome vigour to the rest of the woodwork, rising above the catalogue pieces which are so often the easy resort of an unimaginative or cash-strapped PCC.

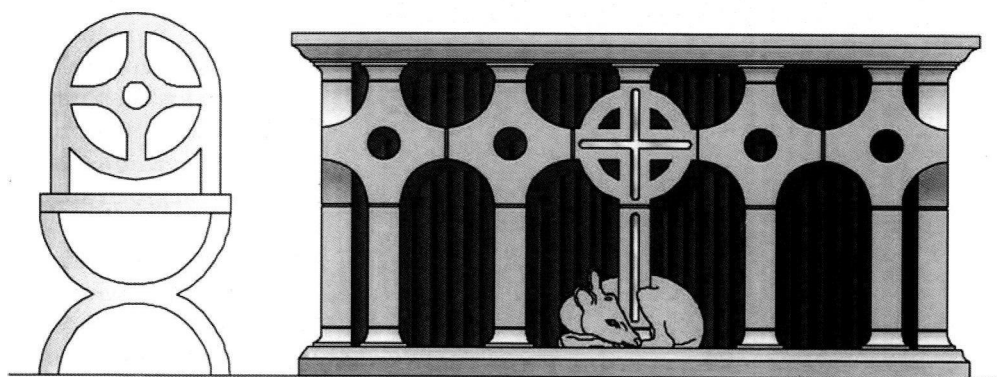


Fig. 12

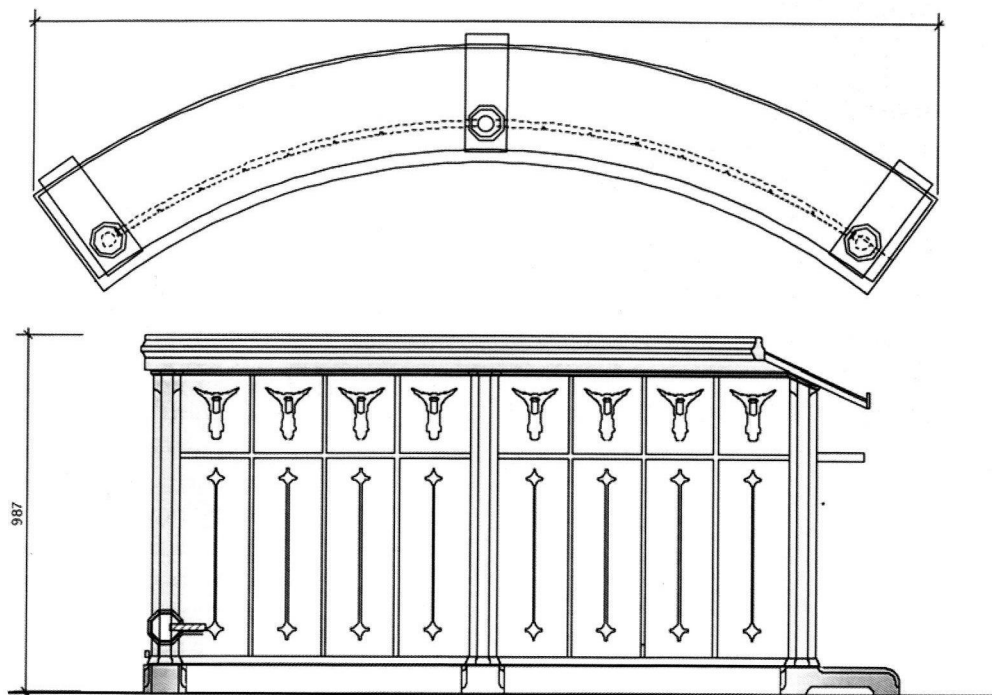


Fig. 13

NORTHAMPTON, St Matthew

One of the most celebrated of all clerical patrons of ecclesiastical art in the 20th century was Walter Hussey. He established a tradition of Modern Art in a Gothic context, successively, at St Matthew's Northampton, where he was priest from 1937, and Chichester Cathedral where he became Dean in 1955. The traditions he established there have outlived him.

Hussey, a modest and shy bachelor, often seen around the parish on his pushbike, had a great capacity to inspire loyalty and affection, not least from Mrs Cotton, his

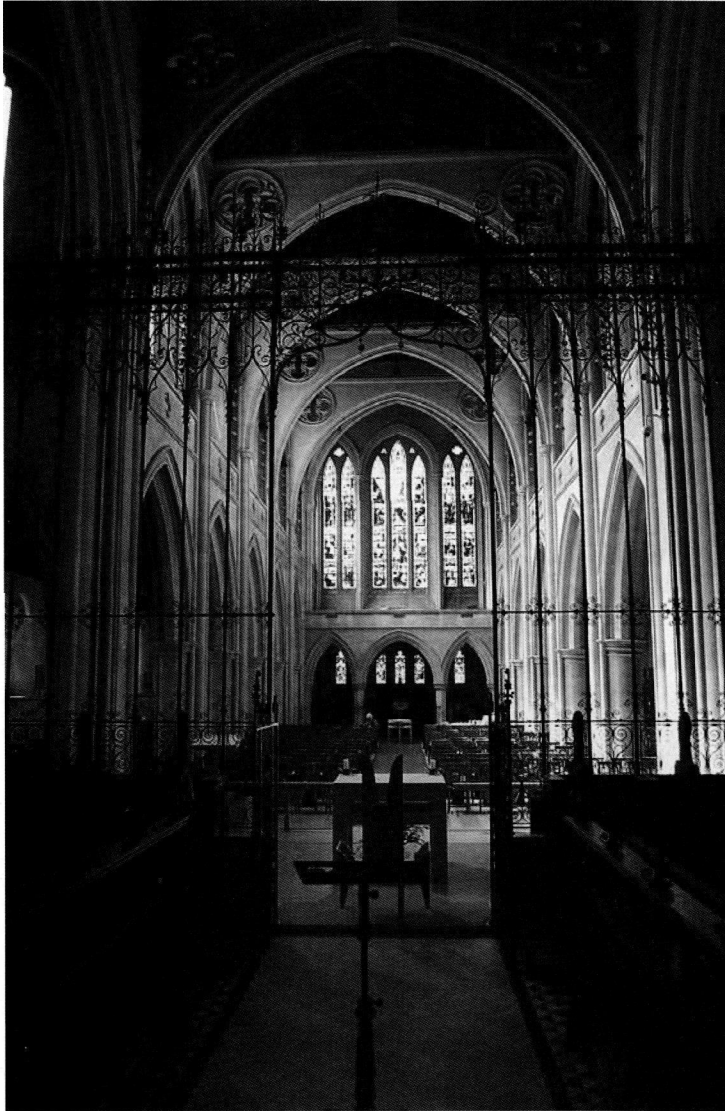


Fig. 14

devoted housekeeper who ran his household in both Northampton and Chichester. In a remarkable and late burst of dynasticism his predecessor as vicar at St Matthew's was his father (John) Rowden Hussey. Indeed Rowden was the first vicar, serving from the dedication of the church in 1893 right through to his retirement 48 years later.

St Matthew's (Fig. 14) is a noble work by the little-recognised Matthew Holding, clearly owing a great deal in its ambition and noble proportions to his master, Pearson. Its architectural strength, and the superb acoustic, inspired Hussey to bring Music and the Arts of international importance to this High Victorian, High Church sentinel in the Northampton suburbs. Hussey was a competent performer on the trombone and Music

was a great love. In 1943 he sought to finance an anthem for the Jubilee to be sung by the choir at St Matthew's. William Walton turned him down but Benjamin Britten agreed (and was paid £25). Michael Tippett provided a fanfare for the same occasion. In 1944 the Northampton-born Edmund Rubbra, in Army fatigue, conducted his newly composed motet "The Revival" in the church and in 1945 the composer of that year's anthem was Lennox Berkeley. The 1946 commission resulted in Gerald Finzi's ravishing "Lo, the full, final sacrifice" which is now a carnerstone of the Anglican chord repertory. Kirsten Flagstad sang in St Matthew's on 2nd July 1947 (charging 100 guineas) and endeared herself to Mrs Cotton by a very un-diva determination to do her own ironing.

By that stage, St Matthew's was well and truly established as a location for artistic adventure, in the plastic as well as ethereal arts. On a rather dismal day in February 1944 Sir Kenneth Clark unveiled Henry Moore's "Madonna and Child" (Fig. 15), a commission from Walter, paid for by Rowden. The idea had in part been sown by Walter's conversation with Harold Williamson, the Principal of Chelsea College of Art which had been evacuated to Northampton. Much of the power of the design, apart from the imbuing of the iconic image with the naturalism of a restless child and the caring grasp of a mother, came from the material. It was Moore himself who chose the two ton block of



Fig. 15

veined Hornton Stone where the tones flow from a rusty yellow to an almost basalt grey. With perhaps forgiveable hyperbole, Sir Eric MacLagan writing in 1947 opined that Hussey and Moore had created "the finest religious work of art of our time".

One of those attending the dedication service was Graham Sutherland and Walter took the occasion to raise with him the possibility of a matching commission for the south transept, facing the Moore in the equivalent position to the north. The eventual decision

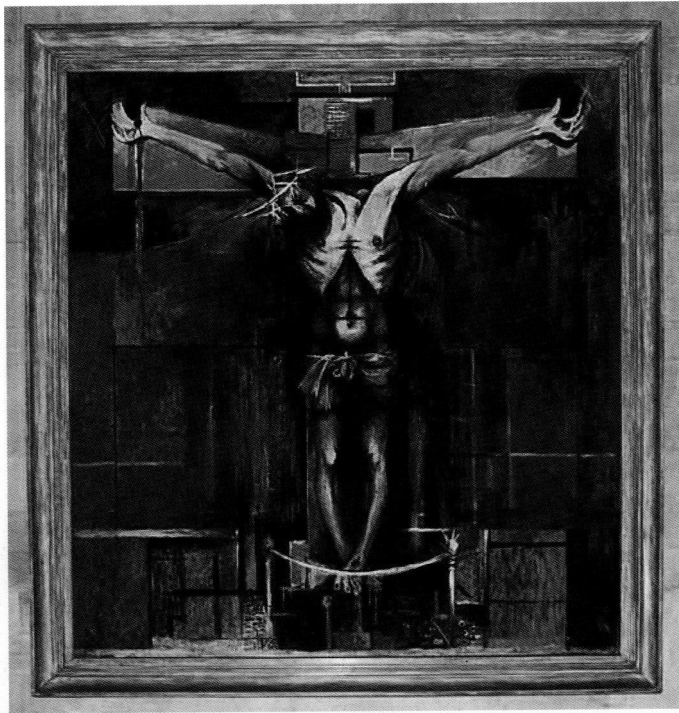


Fig. 16



Fig. 17

on the subject matter came down in favour of the Crucifixion. The resulting work, hung in 1946 (Fig. 16) was harrowing where Moore exuded repose. But then as Kenneth Clark declared – “Just as Moore’s Madonna, although entirely modern, was obviously in the tradition of Romanesque sculpture, so Sutherland’s Crucifixion is the successor to Grünewald and the early Italians”. Is it a coincidence that both artists estimated the cost of their own commission as between £300 and £350.

By 1955 Walter was preparing to head to Chichester and decided to mark his passing on with a commission to John Piper to design vestments (in addition to a personal commission to Piper to portray Holding’s towering East End).

Hussey had sown seeds that still flourish in the church with subsequent commissions for new Stations of the Cross by David Thomas, husband of the stained glass artist, Margaret Traherne, and nephew of the poet, Edward Thomas (1983), and *The Risen Christ* (a memorial to Walter himself) by Malcolm Pollard (1990) a cartoon like form which

hovers at the crossing. From the traditional school comes the extremely accomplished statue of St Matthew by Ian Rank-Broadley (2009), the sculptor responsible for the moving naturalism of dead and heroic soldiers at the National Memorial Arboretum in Warwickshire. (Figs 17 and 18). Anywhere else but in a church such outstanding work would have been recognised critically



Fig. 18

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

We follow Hussey to Chichester where he went in 1955 to serve as Dean. As he said in his autobiography, "Patron of the Arts", it had been a long cherished ambition to be in charge of a great cathedral. There, as at Northampton, he nurtured an artistic tradition that still flourishes.

Not that he established it. It was Bishop Bell, in post from 1929 until 1958, who led the way. This he did on the back of a conference he convened in 1944 at a time when it seemed permissible to trust in a more optimistic future. He intended it to "promote greater understanding of the power of human creativity" and in particular the ability of the Church to join in that promotion. The list of attendees sends the mind into a spin – T.S.Eliot (a founder member of The Friends of Friendless Churches), the art critic, Eric Newton, the architect, Edward Maufe, the artist, Hans Feibusch, Gluck, the novelist, Dorothy Sayers, Duncan Grant and Henry Moore. Feibusch was one of those who was able to follow through. His *Baptism*, placed over the font in the cathedral in 1950-51 (Fig. 21) was accompanied by an *Ascension* of 1952-53 for Bishop Bell's private chapel in his Palace.

But it was Hussey who took on the lead role once he was in post. As at Northampton, he championed Art in all its forms. For many the name of the cathedral is synonymous with the Chichester Psalms, commissioned from Leonard Bernstein in 1965. Other commissions, Hussey and post-Hussey, have gone to Herbert Howells, Lennox Berkeley, William Walton, Geoffrey Burgon and John Taverner.

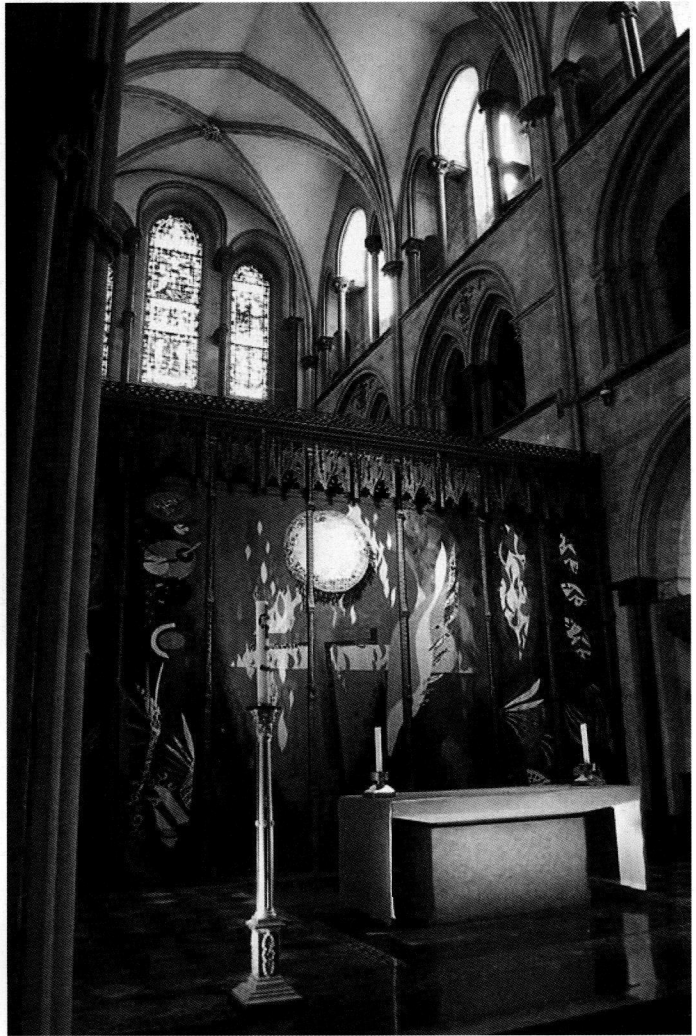


Fig. 19



Fig. 20

But our story is of Art that can be seen and here Hussey left his cathedral with the great High Altar tapestry by John Piper (1966) (Fig. 19), the intimately sized Graham Sutherland “Noli me Tangere” (1960) depicting Mary Magdalene recognising the Risen Lord on Easter morning, (Fig. 22) and, just before his retirement, the window by the then 80 year old Marc Chagall. (Fig. 23) The ecstasy inherent in the brief, to capture the spirit of Psalm 150 – “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” – is translated by the artist into a whirl of dancing figures, influenced no doubt by his Hassidic Jewish background.

Hussey guaranteed that Chichester will forever be synonymous with Modern Art when he left his own personal art collection to provide the bedrock of the display in the gallery at Pallant House in the city. But the torch was taken up in the cathedral itself by the deans who succeeded him when he retired in 1977, Robert Holtby (1977-89) and John Treadgold (1989 – 2001). Post Hussey arrivals included the new



Fig. 21

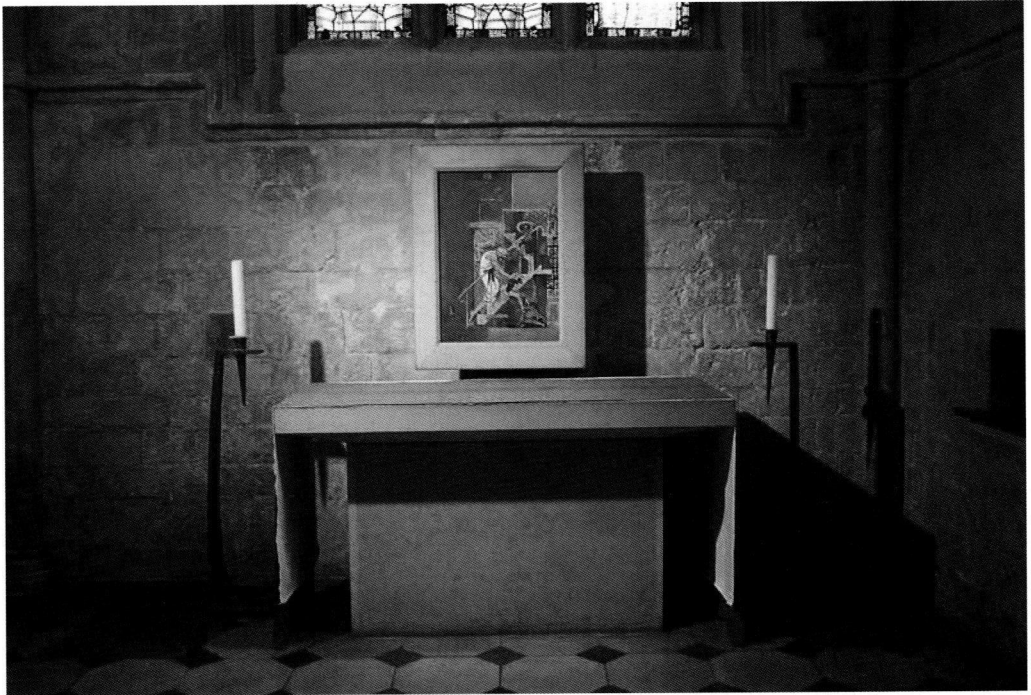


Fig. 22



Fig. 23

font by John Skelton (1982-83), a painting of the *Baptism of Christ* by Patrick Proctor (1984) and the bronze, *Christ in Majesty* by Philip Jackson in the Lady Chapel. The penultimate Cathedral architect, Donald Buttress, has himself established a reputation for contextual new design in the several cathedrals for which he has been responsible, Llandaff and Westminster Abbey, as well as Chichester.

The most controversial newcomer is likely to be the most recent. In 2009 the Dean and Chapter launched a competition for a new work of art to be placed in the most visible position of any – hovering over the Arundel Screen at the western face of the Crossing (Figs. 23 and 24), which had itself been reinstated, following removal in the 19th century, in memory of Bishop Bell. And as if to stress the continuum, the competition was launched in tribute to Walter Hussey, on the centenary of his

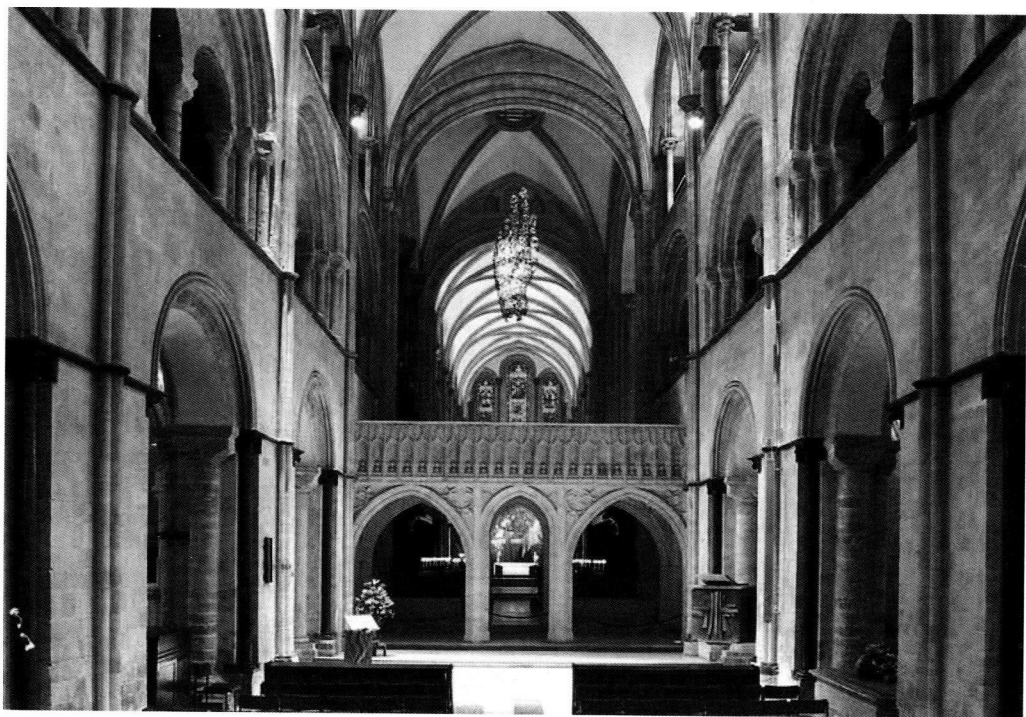


Fig. 24

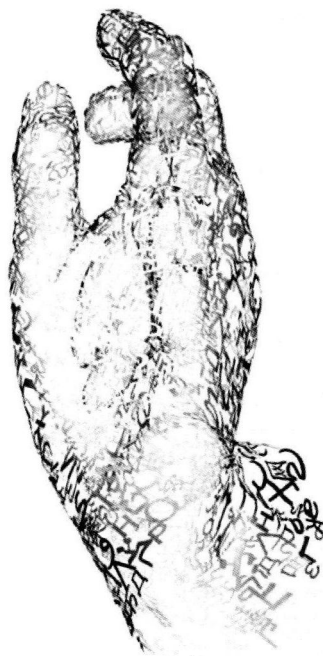


Fig. 25

birth in 1909. The winner was the Catalan artist, Jaume Plensa, born in Barcelona in 1955. His sculpture entitled "Together" is the hand of the resurrected Christ, raised as in the Blessing. A "cloud" of letters form the hand, taken from eight alphabets -Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Cyrillic, Arabic, Hindi, Japanese and Chinese. They offer a deliberate evocation of Jesus as the "Word made Flesh" and point to the beginning of the Church at Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit enables each member of a multi-lingual crowd to hear in their own language (Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2). The gesture of the hand "communicates the forgiveness and blessing at the heart of the Resurrection, connecting these beautifully with priestly gestures during the service of Holy Communion" (in the words of the Cathedral's press release). (Figs 24 and 25.)

The material is to be matt finish stainless steel and the size, to be determined from a scale model installed in the space, will be approximately 2.5-3m high.

The Cathedral Fabric Commission will have to grant permission before the work can be installed.

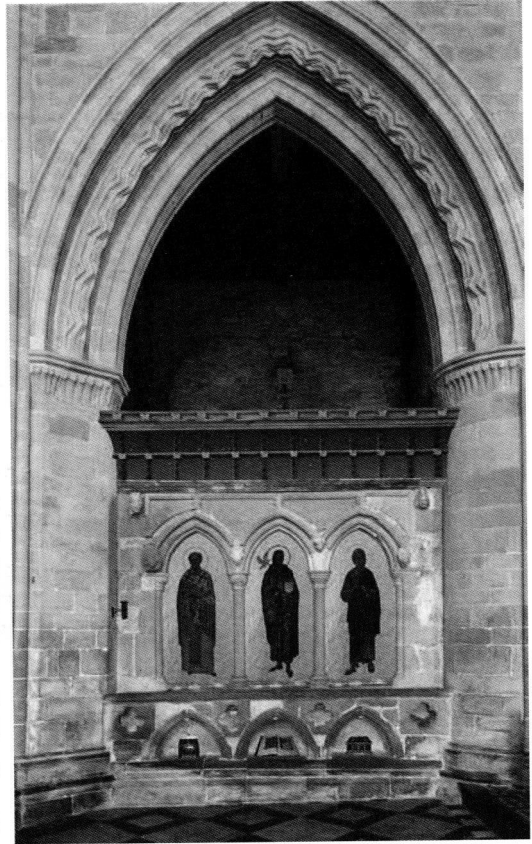


Fig. 27

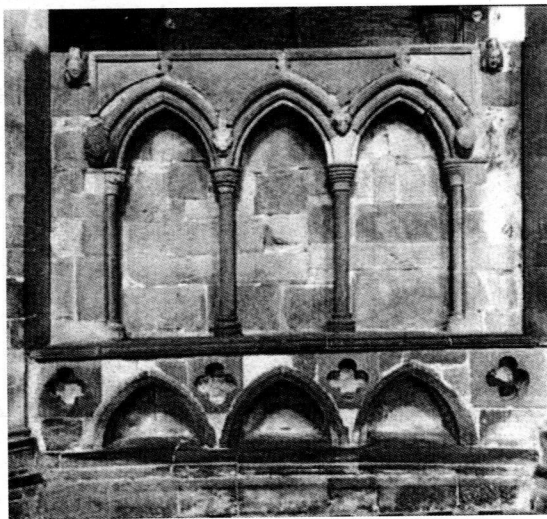


Fig. 26

ST DAVID'S CATHEDRAL, PEMBROKESHIRE

Plans have been announced to restore some of the lost dignity of St David's Shrine, to rescue it from the stripping and chipping of the iconoclast. Fig. 26 shows its present state. The photomontage (Fig. 27) shows the overall design by Caroe and Partners, with new icons of St David, St Andrew, St Patrick, St Non and St Justinian. There is clear evidence of a lost canopy although the model to be followed will be that of the existing canopy over the sedilia. The icons will be painted by Sarah Crisp of Solva and the canopy created by Des Harries.

EGTON BRIDGE, ST HEDDA's RC, NORTH YORKS

Thomas Denny's windows are almost impossible to convey in Black and White but we shall have to try. This is his latest commission – a window in memory of the Blessed Nicholas Postgate, to go into the sumptuous mid 19th century church of St Hedda, which he was asked to create in 2010. Postgate, so intimately associated with North Yorkshire is shown walking across the Moors and, unusually in Denny's work, this single figure is dominant. But there are miniature scenes too, so Lillputian that we shall have to take the word of the artist who intends to depict “fragmentary images of places and objects encountered by Nicholas on his life journey: a suggestion of 17th century Douai, an imaginary Yorkshire manor house, representing the various houses where he was chaplain, a peartree in blossom (one such in Pickering bears his name) a daffodil (he is said to have introduced these into Yorkshire, a slipware collection plate from the Egton Mass House, where he worshipped, his signature and his rosary. These things need to be subtly embedded in the lower section of the window”. An inscription – “Blessed Nicholas, pray for us” – will be incised on two slate panels either side of the window.



Fig. 28



Fig. 29

ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS, TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Of all the ecclesiastical commissions of the last two or three years this was the one which received the oxygen of publicity in tankfuls. It clearly helped that it was located in “the nation’s parish church” and came as part of the very high profile £37m development scheme within, and mostly under, James Gibbs’ masterpiece. It was completed in time for the service of rededication in April 2008 and took the place of a window introduced after the War. The artist was the Iranian-born Shirazeh Houshiary in association with the architect, Pip Horne, who have been working together on a number of projects for ten years. The artist’s own explanation is probably the easiest means of explanation – “The warp and weft of the shot-peened stainless steel framework evokes the agony of the Cross, whilst the central ellipse creates an icon of contemplation. It can be seen as the light at the centre of existence, the glory of God and of the light with which He illuminates our lives – or it can be seen as universal, transcending cultures. The ellipse

echoes the architectural and decorative elements within the church such as the burst of gold in the sanctuary and the oval windows either side". The glass itself is mouth-blown etched on both sides with a subtle, feathery pattern, derived from Houshiary's paintings. The panels graduate from a periphery of more transparent glass to a denser, whiter, centre. The ellipse itself is lightly etched to make it moderately brighter. The St Martin's Art Advisory Panel which advised the PCC on the choice was chaired by Sir Nicholas Goodison and included Charles Saumarez Smith, Secretary of the Royal Academy of Arts, Richard Cork, the art critic and Rev'd Tom Devonshire Jones, founder of Art and Christianity Enquiry.



Fig. 30

WINSHAM, Somerset, St Stephen (photo, Chris Akroyd)

These handrails recently introduced make a visual virtue out of practical necessity by meeting the needs of the infirm with some design flair.



Fig. 31

BLACKFORD, Somerset, St Michael
(photo, Chris Akroyd)

One of the windows of John Hayward, showing the Good Shepherd, (2001) that he designed after his retirement to Dorset.

LONG ASHTON, Somerset, All Saints
(photo, Chris Akroyd)

This brand new oriel lights a new community meeting space at the west end



Fig. 32



Fig. 33

**CLAVERLEY,
Shropshire, All
Saints**

Gothick has become willowy, if symmetrical, in this screen by Arrol and Snell intended to create an enclosed space within the South Gateacre Chapel at Claverley. The pews would go but the other fittings including the splendid chest tomb to Sir Robert Broke, Speaker of the House of Commons (d.1558) stay.

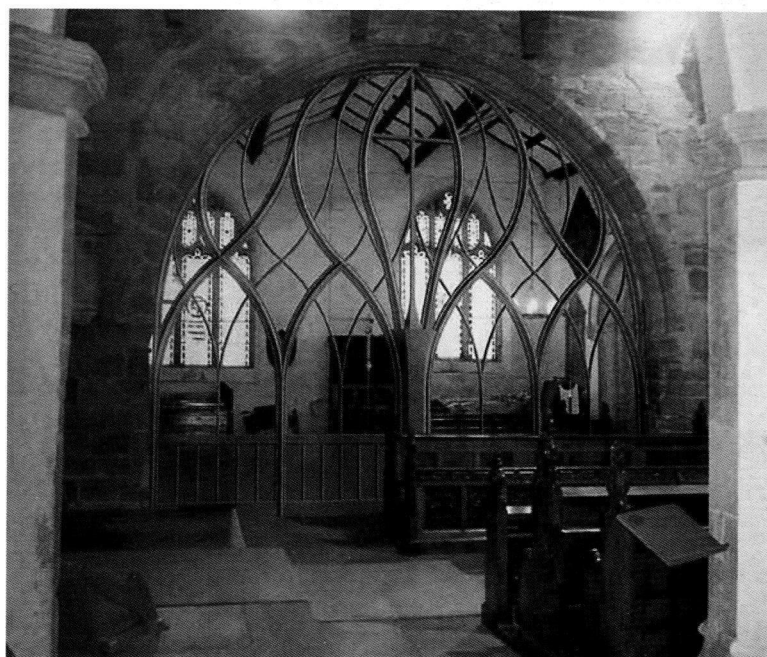


Fig. 34

ELLERTON PRIORY East Yorks, St Mary the Virgin and St Lawrence

Ellerton is a simple early work by Pearson nestling by the edge of a vast expanse of flood meadow (ings) owned by a conservation trust. It was rescued from almost certain demolition, after redundancy exacerbated by severe stone decay, by The Ellerton Church Preservation Trust. The key players were Phil Thomas, presently Secretary to the York DAC, and his partner, Stephen Warburton, Conservation Manager of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. They set about repair but coupled that with embellishment.

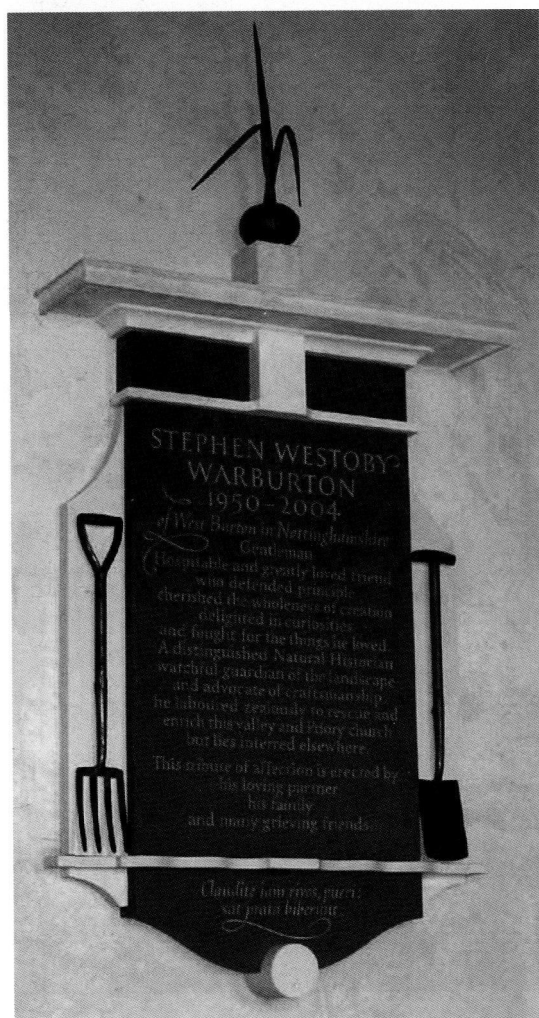


Fig. 36

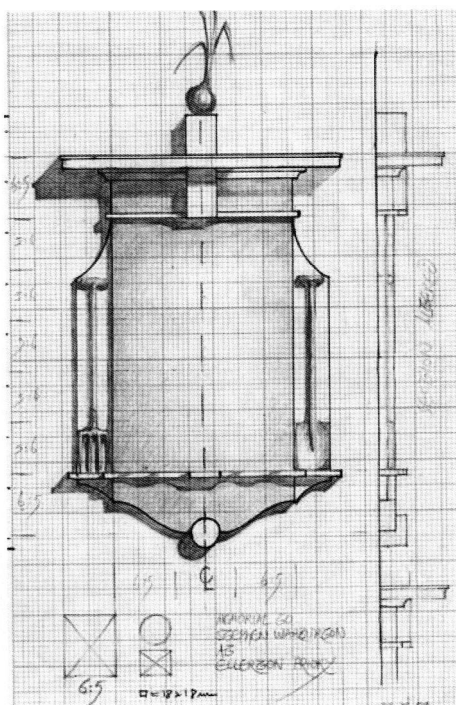


Fig. 35

Among the newcomers are fine new windows by Helen Whittaker, Alfred Fisher, Ann Sotheran and Andrew Anderson (and a resited one by Percy Bacon). But very sadly one of the most intense of the works of art is now a memorial to Stephen who succumbed to cancer in his early fifties in 2004. It was created by 5 of his friends. The design and text (Fig. 35) are by Phil, the copper sculpture is by Harold Gosney, the letter cutting by Peter Coates, the architectural stonework by Peter Maris and the fixing itself by Marcus Jacka and Peter Coates. The traditional flavour and Classical language speak of Stephen's love of church crawling and his special fondness for those 17th and 18th century monuments which extolled virtues and offered dire warnings all in the context of lengthy, high-flown epitaphs. The

materials, creamy magnesian limestone from South Yorkshire, figured green Cumbrian slate and patinated copper, are intended to evoke the character of early 20th century Arts and Crafts work with its emphasis on colour and texture, collaboration and fine craftsmanship. And the whole design is shot through with other symbols – the section of solid circular stone piping at the base represents the newly-created world. The projecting wavy moulding a little higher betokens the waters of creation and, more immediately, the River Derwent, a few hundred yards to the west across the fens. The exaggerated projection of the stone cornice at the top represents Heaven whilst the undulating curve to the edge of the slate predella (the panel at the base) suggests the shape of a bird in flight, perhaps a curlew or owl over the Ellerton fens or indeed the Holy Spirit.

Either side of the inscription panel, where you might expect to see garlands of flowers or military trophies are copper sculptures of Stephen's own spade and fork, doughty companions in his garden and allotment. The copper onion right at the top immortalises his love of that species, as much for its spectacular flower-heads as its pungent taste.

The latin inscription on the predella is the last line of Virgil's Third Eclogue which Stephen liked to translate as "Now close the sluice-gates, lads, for the meadows have drunk their fill" – summing up very nicely the very special Waterlands surrounding the little church, that he did so much to conserve.

The authorship of the small memorial on Welsh slate to Ann Roberts (Fig. 37), put up in the church in 2005 is given away by the typically tilted letters. This is a work by Charles Gurrey whose most powerful commission of recent years has been the new statuary on the west front of Guildford Cathedral.

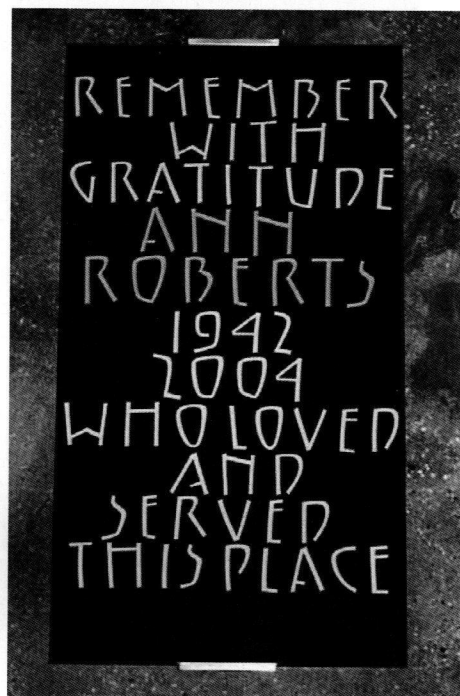


Fig. 37

EAST CLANDON, Surrey, St Thomas

One of the most talented stained glass artists active today is Helen Whittaker, now attached to the York-based Barley Studios. Fig. 39 is her latest window of 2009, in memory of Thomas a Becket in one of churches dedicated to his name.

FAIRFORD, Glos, St Mary

To coincide almost exactly with the completion of the conservation programme on the outstanding scheme of late medieval glass at Fairford, the PCC commissioned a new nave altar that was installed in 2009. The design was inspired by the canopies portrayed within the glass although the slim legs that result have an almost Georgian Gothick feel. (Figs. 40 and 41.) The construction is in timber but the leaves are multi-coloured marquetry.

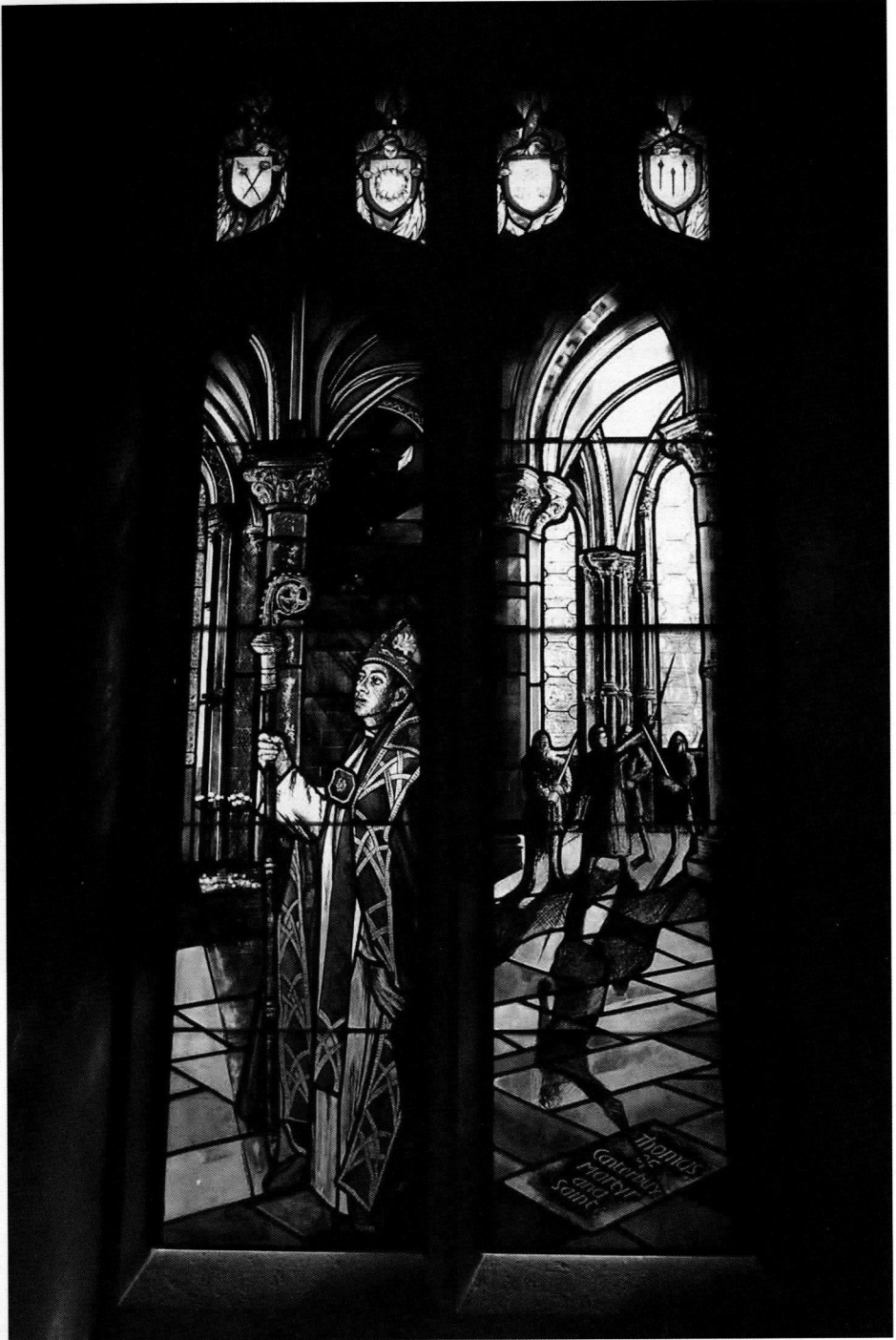


Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41

**LIMPSFIELD,
Surrey, St Peter**

Limpsfield must have more famous 20th century composers and musicians buried in its churchyard than any other English parish church. It contains the mortal remains of Frederick Delius, Sir Thomas Beecham, Eileen Joyce, Norman del Mar and Jack Brymer. No wonder that the parish chose to mark this distinction by asking John Hayward, who had already designed an icon and a processional cross for the church, to conceive a window to St Cecilia, patron saint of music. This was his very last work, finished in April 2007, the month before he died at the age of 77. It came as the denouement to a career during which he produced 200 windows. He began working for "Faithcraft" but set up his own studio, at Bletchingley in 1961, his first commission being the windows introduced into St Mary le Bow during the postwar rebuilding. Apart from a complete wall of glass "Images of Heaven" at



Fig. 42

Croydon, his largest work is probably the Great West Window at Sherborne Minster, which replaced, very controversially, Pugin's original which had faded.

SALISBURY, St Martin, Wiltshire

The Church of St. Martin is the oldest in the city of Salisbury, predating even the Cathedral and the foundation of the city of New Sarum in the early thirteenth century. The Chancel, the oldest part of arguably the oldest building in the city, now contains a unique new Sanctuary, the product of a long-term collaboration between the incumbent, Rev. Keith Robinson, David Gazeley of Watts & Co. of Westminster and the church architect, Antony Feltham-King of Salisbury-based Michael Drury Architects (now trading as St. Ann's Gate Architects).

The work to the Sanctuary was completed in April 2006, and involved the alteration of floor levels and general re-paving, the creation of a new high altar, and the re-decoration and re-lighting of the chancel space.

The inspiration behind the new design is the New Jerusalem as described in Revelation 21. The embodiment of the concept centres on the hanging Pyx, containing the reserved sacrament. This is suspended above the new high altar, where the gilding of the Pyx is echoed in the design of the gold-plated metal panels surrounding the new Purbeck marble altar.

The altar can also be read as a geometric puzzle, a double cube, described by the shape of the mensa and stone base, with the sides formed by perforated metal panels, representing the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. Behind and between the gates, the central core of the altar is inlaid with mosaic panels, based on Cosmati work found in the Cloister of St. John Lateran in Rome.

The collaborative ethos which started with the rector, architect and designer, continued into the construction process, with the main building contractor, archaeological contractor, architect and specialist suppliers all contributing to the success of the project.

The new pavings and the Purbeck marble for the new altar were supplied by WJ Haysom Ltd. of Worth Matravers in Dorset. Haysoms produced accurately dimensioned stone sections from the architects drawings, which proved essential in co-ordinating the efforts of the metalwork specialists who were producing the metal frames in Croydon, and the mosaic specialist who was working in Somerset. The proof of the accuracy of all concerned came on April 7th 2006, when the final piece of the altar, the mensa, was winched into place, capturing the metalwork into the assembly for all time.



Fig. 43

The full-sized design drawings for the mosaic panels were produced by David Gazeley of Watts and Co. showing the geometry of the pattern, and these were realised by Nick Durnan of Somerset. These panels contain green and red porphyry, marble and gilded glass tesserae from Italy. David Gazeley's design for the metal panels was interpreted by Richard Fox of Fox Silver. Laser cutting was judged to be too coarse a technique for such fine work, so a specialist water jet cutter was employed to cut through the brass panels to create the intricate patterning. These were then gold-plated at Fox's workshop in Croydon and assembled on site to surround the marble core of the altar.

The scheme won the President's Award of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA) for 2006.

CORSHAM, Wiltshire, St Bartholomew

The tradition of the effigy on a chest tomb is now virtually dead – but not quite.

The parish church at Corsham contains one of the very last examples (photo, Brian Woodruffe). This is the alabaster effigy of 1960 to Lady Eleanor Methuen, who had died in 1958. The design is by her husband and sculptor was Frederick Kormis. She is depicted at the foot as a small child with a sketchpad.



SWINDON, St Augustine, Wiltshire

St Augustine is easy to dismiss from the exterior – a rather grim red brick basilica of 1907 (by W.A.H.Masters). But its very lack of pretension has driven its congregation to redress that by paying, over the last 20 years, for works of embellishment. These have, for the most part, been inspired by its Byzantine architectural form. The photo (courtesy,

Brian Woodruffe) shows the half dome to the apse painted by Fleur Kelly (in egg tempera) in 1989. It shows a seated Christ Pantocrator, framed by a Mary with the Christ Child and St Augustine. Fleur completed further commissions for the church, painted panels and two triptychs, in 1994 and 1998.



PURTON, St Mary, Wilts

This very medievalising sculpture sits in one of the niches on the tower at Purton that the iconoclasts of the Reformation had cleared of the original statuary. It is one of several at the church by Simon Verity, who left for America some years back to complete the great Gothic Cathedral at Washington in the USA.

(The last 3 examples are all taken from "Parish Churches of Wiltshire: A Guide" by Brian J Woodruffe, published in 2010 by the Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust. www.wiltshirehistoricchurches.org.uk)



DURHAM CATHEDRAL, The Galilee Chapel

The Dean and Chapter at Durham have a conscious policy of introducing sometimes challenging art into the Cathedral. A rather grim Paula Rego showing St Margaret of Scotland is one. This example, set in the delicate backdrop of the Galilee is a carving in ash of The Annunciation by Josef Pyrz. The Virgin Mary listens concentratedly as the revelation begins. Pyrz was born in Poland in 1946 but escaped the Communist authorities to settle in Paris when he was 33. He envisaged the statue being placed in a Romanesque Cathedral and is apparently well pleased with its present location. The statue is the gift of the Jerusalem Trust and an anonymous benefactor.



BATH ABBEY, Somerset.

His altar frontal recently introduced into the Trinity Chapel at Bath takes its inspiration from Revelations 22: 1 – “The Angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city”. The work is by Jane Lemon and The Sarum Group.



