

FASHIONS IN FITMENTS

Changes in Cathedral Furniture

By Gerald Cobb, F.S.A.

THE discerning visitor to our ancient cathedrals will often be dismayed by the tastelessness of much of the internal fittings and embellishments that meet the eye, in spite of many recent efforts to improve or replace them.

For, in the majority of cases, these fittings date from the period of the great Victorian "restorations", which descended without exception, but fortunately, with varying weight, upon all our greater churches.

The older guide-books (and some recent ones) either accept them without comment, or rejoice that such "beautiful" work replaces the "hideous" (i.e. Classical) creations of the 17th and early 18th centuries, or the "poor and unworthy" work of the earlier Gothic Revivalists.

Nowadays, with our less restricted appreciation of styles of craftsmanship, we admire what our grandfathers thought offensive; and, perchance an old photograph comes our way, of an interior before the "restorer" got to work, we are astonished at the charm and picturesqueness of much there shown and which was later so light-heartedly swept away.

The story of the changes from the Disolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII, follows a familiar pattern, certain periods being especially fruitful of these metamorphoses.

Firstly, the Reformation, from the point of view of our subject, largely negative, but which seems to have been less destructive of fittings, than of plate and portable treasures, in the cathedrals and other great churches that survived.

Secondly, after nearly a century of neglect and the short-lived revival under Laud, came the Civil War and Protectorate, when a great deal of damage was sustained, especially at Old St. Pauls, Peterborough, Lichfield and Durham. This led to the introduction, in the years that followed, of new furniture of the classical or baroque style then in vogue. At Durham, Bishop Cosin's stalls and font canopy were a remarkable exception, being more Gothic than Classic—and, as such, have survived to the present day!

Then with the (at first dilittanti) interest in the mediaeval period,

engendered by Horace Walpole and others, in the second half of the 18th century, we get the drastic and "Gothick"-izing activities of James Essex (at Ely), James Wyatt (at Salisbury, Lichfield and Hereford) and the early Revivalists.

These activities were continued and developed by Bernasconi (in Roman cement), the younger Wyatt ("Wyattville" of Windsor), Gwilt (at Southwark), Cottingham (at Rochester, St. Albans and Armagh), the Smirkes (at York), Blore (at Peterborough and Westminster), and many others until the late 1840s, when the Revival passed from its second stage into its full blooming under Scott, Street, Pearson and the rest.

But in place of the former playfulness and naïvety of expression of the first phase, and the often crude imitations of the second (not without a certain charm) there succeeded this third stage, distinguished by its meticulous correctness of style and fussiness of detail so characteristic of the mid-19th century; with its ironic corollary—the closer the imitation, the more lifeless the work.

Just as Gothic was despised in the 17th century, so in Scott's time, the Baroque was deemed pagan and utterly out of place in a mediaeval church. But this revulsion only reached its climax in his time—for 80 years it had been developing and it is significant that hardly any classical fittings remained in our cathedrals for Scott or his contemporaries to eject.

Under the earlier phases of the Revival, the pulpitum was usually retained, or if destroyed, a new stone screen was erected in its place, as at Ely, Peterborough, Salisbury and Winchester; and this for the practical consideration of keeping warm in an unheated church. But with the third phase, when heating of cathedrals was a practical proposition there was no more need for a division between choir and nave, and these new screens were in their turn, swept away, besides at least three of the mediaeval ones (Chichester, Bristol and Chester) and the charming rococo-Gothic choir-screen set up at Beverley *c.* 1730.

And in place of the former fittings, usually so needlessly destroyed, were installed the wonderful but dreadful metal screens and marble reredoses, etc., the designs for which flowed so freely from the over-worked office of Sir G. G. Scott and his professional contemporaries.

During the last 400 years, a bewildering variety of furniture was in being or was produced, as style succeeded style, or mingled with each other, or, latterly as the mediaeval styles were imitated in turn. Much of this craft-work was short-lived; new fittings were introduced to depose those fallen from fashion only to be themselves superseded as taste changed; and it is only by assembling contemporary descriptions and pictures—first prints and then photographs—of the interiors of our greater churches since the Reformation, that we can realize what we have lost in

these changes, and how different the interiors must have looked from time to time (Figs. 1-4).

To take the last point first:

At Canterbury and York, the high altar has been moved eastwards of its original position (as also, for a time, were those at Salisbury and Lichfield) while at St. Paul's, London, Bristol, Hereford, Chester, Ely and Peterborough, the whole choir has been shifted—at the last three places, twice.

Besides the retention of the choir-screen, the efforts to keep warm in an unheated church, resulted in the erection of extra screens or panelling and hanging of curtains. At Southwark and Selby, the choir was separated from the nave by wooden partitions reaching to the ceilings, at Lichfield, Wyatt set up a glass screen in thin perpendicular tracery, completely filling, with the organ-screen, the eastern arch of the crossing, while at Beverley, the choir was closed by screen, organ and fifty-feet high curtains (Fig. 5 and 7). How different these interiors look now—and others where solid screen and organ have been removed!

At Lichfield under Wyatt, the aisles were separated from the choir by solid walls (later removed) and, for a time, at Canterbury and Westminster the series of splendid tombs flanking the presbytery were completely hidden from view (except from the aisles) by high panelling connecting the stalls with the reredos.

Then, as practically all services were held in the choirs of our great churches,¹ extra space had to be found by galleries above and pews before the stalls. At York, Charles I complained of the overweening pews and at Wells, the stall-canopies were truncated to make way for the galleries. Unfortunately, when the choir there was "restored" in 1847 these canopies, instead of being made good, were replaced by stone ones, and the stalls pushed back in fives *between* the piers, instead of in an unbroken line before them. This also, as regards position, was done at the same time with Bishop Cosin's stalls at Durham, but later they were replaced by Scott.

The numerous changes of altar and reredos—sometimes of stalls, pulpit and Bishop's Throne—from mediaeval to Jacobean, to Baroque, to "Gothick", to Victorian—must have altered, not only the appearance, but

¹ In a few cases, whole or part of the services were held in the nave—at Wells, there is a fine mid-sixteenth century stone pulpit there; Bishop Montague gave a nave pulpit to Bath Abbey; at Exeter pews and pulpit were set up in the nave in 1677 (for occasional services?—the first sermon preached there was not until 1684—Britton's *Exeter*, p. 101), where they remained until mid-nineteenth century; at Beverley the nave was fitted up for services with pews, galleries, pulpit, etc., in the restoration of c. 1716-40, but in 1828 services were resumed in the choir, and at Salisbury the sermon was preached in the nave until the time of Bishop Hume (1766-82)—(Dodsworth's, *Salisbury*). But it was not until the 1850's that popular services in the naves of our Cathedral's were introduced, with seats, choir stalls and pulpit and not until between the two Great Wars that nave altars became general.



FIG. 1
 EXETER. Choir, W., c. 1865 showing Bishop's Throne, 14th century,
 Organ case, 17th century and stalls and Pulpit, 18th century.

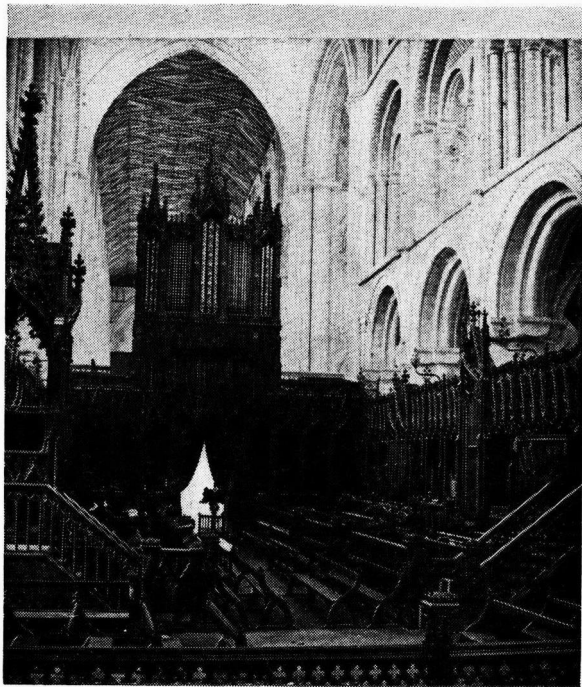


FIG. 2
 PETERBOROUGH. Choir, W., c. 1865, showing Blore's furniture
 of 1827-30.

CATHEDRAL FURNITURE OF VARIOUS PERIODS

the very atmosphere of these "places where they sing", especially when the pews and galleries were set up and again when they were taken away.

In Victorian times, at Hereford and Chester perpendicular east windows were replaced by others of earlier style and the east end of the choirs opened up. At Rochester the upper part and at Worcester and Oxford the whole of the east walls were rebuilt when great windows were removed and replaced by presumed "restorations" of the original designs.

At Ely the open timber roof of the long Norman nave was ceiled and elaborately painted in 1858-65; at Chester, the open timber roof of the choir was "vaulted" first in plaster¹ and then in oak, while that in the nave, where the original springers remained, was covered by Scott by a beautiful lierne vault, also in oak, which must have greatly improved the interior.

But the greatest alteration of all was at Llandaff, where after centuries of neglect and eventual ruin, a small classical church (Italian temple as it was dubbed by the horrified Victorians!) was built inside the mediaeval walls of the ancient cathedral by John Wood senior, of Bath. Having been suitably furnished, it was opened in 1752 and remained just over one hundred years to the great restoration under John Pritchard.

Among the more remarkable fitments we have lost, besides those at Bath, Beverley, etc., mentioned later, the following are noteworthy:

Westminster Abbey. Splendid classical marble altar-piece, designed by Wren and carved by Grinling Gibbons, made originally for the R.C. Chapel of Whitehall Palace and given to the Abbey by Queen Anne. This was removed in 1820 (a great vandalism) and fragments of it are now in Burnham Church, Somerset (See Jocelyn Perkins' *Westminster Abbey. Its Worship and Ornaments*, Vol. I, (1938).).

St. Bartholomew-the-Great. The curious altar-piece "a very spacious piece of architecture, painted of stone-colour in perspective"² with arched panels (for the commandments) and obelisks, after the manner of Elizabethan and Jacobean monuments, particularly that to the Countess of Hertford (c. 1600) in St. Benedict's Chapel, Westminster Abbey. It is stated to have been 32 feet high, to have been painted on canvas and the large Royal Arms at the top are said to have been those of Charles I. Removed in 1828 (E. A. Webb's *Records of St. Bartholomew's Smithfield*).

Exeter Cathedral had also a painted 17th century altar-piece, but in the "Gothic" style, designed and painted in 1638 by "Mr. Wm. Cavell, Lymner". This is described by John Hooker's continuator³—"A very

¹ In 1819, the open timber roof of the nave at Christchurch, Hants was hidden by the existing plaster "vault".

² New View of London, 1708.

³ Quoted on p. 527 of Boggis' *History of the Diocese of Exeter*, 1922.

elegant and grand performance in painting; it perspectively represents the front of, and three arched entrances into, as t'were, another cathedral church, the gateways appearing as perfect cavities, with roofs and sides curiously moulded. The portraits of Moses and Aaron, supporting the two Tables of the Decalogue, seem as if really standing forward in full relief, the first cloth'd in golden raiment, the other with a mitre on his head . . . The drapery of both really admirable." This remained until 1818.

Wimborn Minster. Splendid canopied choir stalls of about 1600, illustrated in Hutchin's *Dorset*, 3rd Ed., 1868 Vol. III, p. 208. Wickedly removed in 1855.

Oxford Cathedral. Charming choir seating set up c. 1630 by Bishop Brian Duppa. Re-arranged in 1850 and finally removed under Scott. Also the eccentric wooden "Gothic" screens between the eastern arcade of the North Transept, with reversed semi-circular heads forming, with the Norman arches above, three large circular openings!

Winchester. Inigo Jones' beautiful stone choir-screen of the composite order, with bronze statues of James I and Charles I by Hubert le Sueur.¹ The screen was removed in 1820, the statues being placed in niches in a new and handsome stone screen designed by W. Garbett and seemingly inspired by the west porch of the cathedral and its side panels. This was in its turn demolished by Scott in 1873. After long neglect and uncertainty the centre portion of Jones' Screen has found refuge in the FitzWilliam Museum at Cambridge.

Gloucester. The bizarre front of the choir-screen, designed by Kent in 1741, replaced in 1818 by the present dull façade² (Fig. 6).

Rochester. The polished wooden facing of the pulpitum, 1791, consisting of Gothic arches, tracery and pediments, variously described as "a poverty stricken imitation of ancient pointed work . . . merely punched out: drops crotchets, finials, barely hinted" (*Gent's Mag.*, Oct. 1798), as "carved in imitation of the pointed style" (*Hist. and Antiquities of Rochester*, 1817) and by Sir. W. St. John Hope (*Arch. Cant.*, XXIII) as "panelling and tabernacle work, all of the flimsiest character, of deal painted and grained in imitation of oak, and with crochets and finials cast in plaster-of-paris, glued on and painted"! But this he takes to be Cottingham's work of 1825-6³ (Fig. 10).

On this screen was erected a fine organ by Green in a "Gothic" case designed by the Rev. Mr. Ollive (*Gent's Mag.*, Nov. 27th, 1791) who

¹ These are now at the west end of the nave.

² Aymer Vallance, p. 105.

³ See Aymer Vallance, p. 49.

also, it seems designed the screen-facing at the same time. All were swept away by Scott *c.* 1875.

Worcester. The delicately designed sounding board to the remarkable 17th century Gothic stone pulpit still in the choir. It was octagonal with carved drapery and ribbons on its perimeter and hands at each corner holding the ribbon (Fig. 3). Removed under Scott.

Of the scanty furniture of the 17th and 18th centuries still remaining in use in our greater churches, beside the Worcester pulpit just referred to; mention should be made of the remarkable early 17th century screen and stall-work at Cartmel, Lancs.; Bishop Cosin's stalls and font canopy at Durham; the return-stalls of 1682 at Canterbury; the baroque fonts at Canterbury (1639), Exeter and Durham (the last, a very delicate example¹); the organ-cases at Tewkesbury (partly late 16th century and originally at Magdalen College, Oxford) Gloucester and Exeter; the font cover and inner doorcases at Beverley (*c.* 1730); the lovely brass chandelier and chain, 1680, at Southwark, the sole survivor of the fine furniture shown in Moss and Nightingale's *St. Saviour's, Southwark*, 1818; and the attractive coade-stone, fan-vaulted choir-screen in *St. George's, Windsor* (1790-1) designed by Henry Emlyn, carver.

Here is a quick survey of the changes at a few of our principal churches:

Bath Abbey. Ever since its rebuilding was commenced *c.* 1500 at the instance of Bishop Oliver King, this church, not much more than half the size of its 12th century predecessor, has had a strangely chequered existence. Left unfinished at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, stripped of its roofing and everything saleable, its carcass was given in 1560 to the Corporation of Bath for a Parish Church. Many efforts were made to raise money for its completion (Thos. Bellot or Billet, steward and Executor of Lord Burleigh, was conspicuous for his gifts, including the first choir-screen (appearance unknown) and glazing of the east window with "varigated coloured glass in a mathematical but picturesque manner, which he called "billet-wise" being a play upon his own name"² (Peach's *Britton's Bath Abbey*, 1887, p. 69)), but it had to wait till the time of Bishop James Montague, 1608-16, for its eventual completion and consecration. He covered the nave and its aisles with charming plaster ceilings imitating groining, presented a fine stone pulpit for the nave,³ and the west doors, carved in high relief with his arms. He was buried in the nave under a handsome monument.

By the middle of the 18th century, the interior must have presented a

¹ This font and that at Exeter were removed by the Victorians, but later replaced.

² Removed to two north clerestory windows when the east window was re-glazed *c.* 1873.

³ Illustrated opp. p. 66 of Peache's *Britton*.

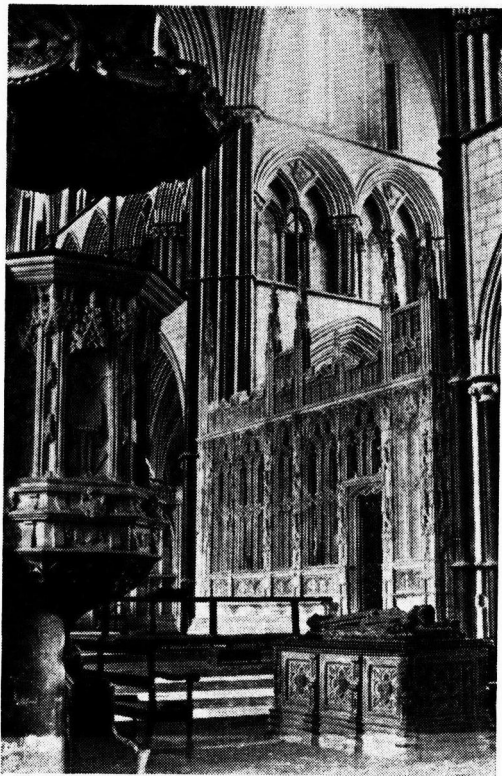


FIG. 3
CHOIR PULPIT, early 17th century (?). Sounding-board
now gone—note hands at corners.

WORCESTER

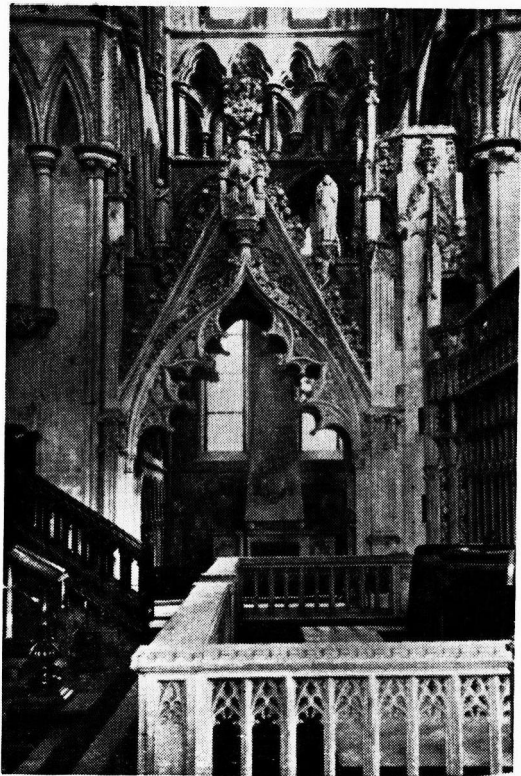


FIG. 4
PERCY SHRINE, 1340, with STONE ALTAR-RAILS of c. 1827 and
reconstructed altar-screen of 1825-6. *Photo. N. B. R.*

BEVERLEY

most picturesque appearance.¹ The choir-screen consisted of a low wooden partition with six Doric columns supporting a gallery above, bearing a fine organ by Abraham Jourdain (set up 1708). The space between was later glazed. There were no stalls, but Prior Bird's Chantry Chapel was bedaubed with many coats of whitewash and mutilated to receive "the clumsy, mis-shapen wooden seat called the Bishop's Throne" (Warner's *History of Bath*, p. 250)—appearance unknown. There were galleries, two on the south and one the north, and a handsome "three-decker" pulpit with ogee-topped sounding-board (see Natte's Engraving, 1806). The altar-piece presented by General Wade in 1725 was "of costly marble, veined black, gold and purple, in the rococo style of the period, a drawing of which is in the British Museum. The central compartment was adorned with a picture representing 'The Wise Men's Offering'.² The altar itself was enclosed by an exceedingly fine communion rail of wrought iron, which now acts as a balcony to a house in Lansdown Place. It has been asserted that the altar-piece was removed to the Palace at Wells.³ General Wade also presented velvet cushions and silk curtains for the choir in 1726"—(Hick's *Bath Abbey* (Homeland Handbooks) c. 1913, p. 84)—(Has illustration from photograph of the balcony.).

From 1825-38, an extensive renovation was undertaken (Either now, or earlier, the spandrels of the great square-beaded east window were stopped up (Hick, p. 90)—probably an improvement, for the placing of a square head in such a position seems a veritable piece of wrong-headedness on the part of the original builders—they were opened up again in 1872.). The screen and organ after being extended further towards the nave, were finally removed and replaced by a new screen and enormous organ, designed by G. P. Manners which effectually blotted out all but a small glimpse of the choir-vault. (See woodcut in *Illustrated London News*, Jan. 7, 1854, where even the glimpse is closed by a curtain!) The rest of the old furniture was also superseded by new, all in the "Gothic" of the period. Bishop Montague's west doors "were repaired and recarved at the expense of the Corporation, by Mr. James Jones, of this city in a

¹ See Plate in Storer's *Cathedrals*.

² Britton's description (1824) is very unkind: "The fittings up behind the altar . . . affect something of architectural character, and were clearly intended to be adornments to the place. A considerable mass of marble formed into columns with entablature, pediment, etc., is employed; and doubtless designed to imitate Roman, not ecclesiastical architecture, and therefore has no analogy to the window above or the arches at the sides. Had the screen of the contiguous chapel [Prior Bird's] been taken as a pattern and imitated . . . something beautiful and harmonious would have been produced (p. 93).

³ But Peach's *Britton*, p. 60, says "it was sold some years ago and now forms one side of the hall of Grosvenor Villa".

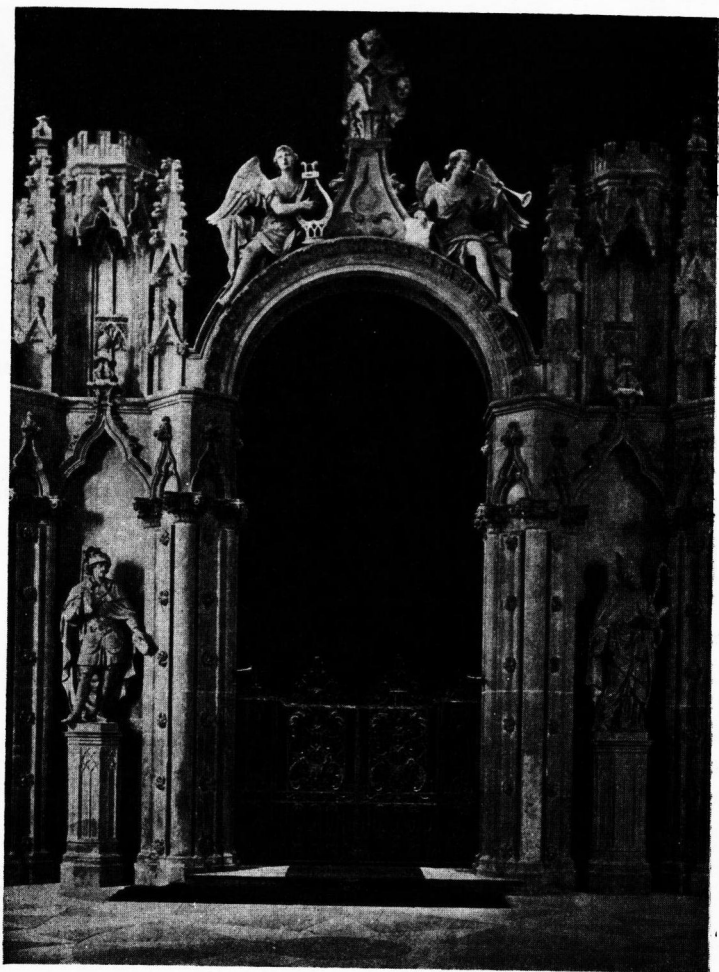


FIG. 5. WEST FACE

The West Face of the Choir Screen of *c.* 1730, destroyed by Scott.
(*Courtesy of Messrs. Batsford.*)

BEVERLEY MINSTER

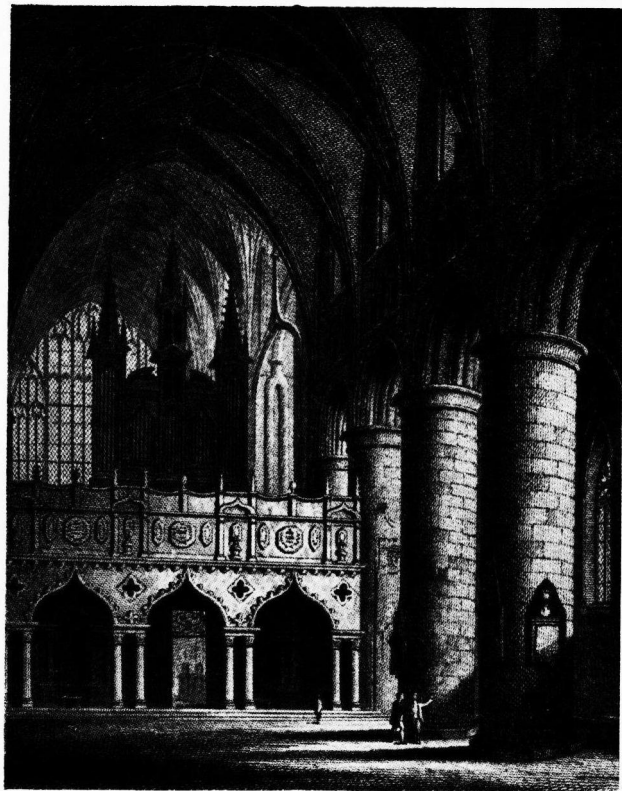


FIG. 6
GLOUCESTER, 1741, by Wm. Kent.
(from Storer's *Cathedrals*, 1818).



FIG. 7
BEVERLEY MINSTER, the East Face of the Screen and
Organ.
(Photo: *National Buildings Record*).

VANISHED CHOIR SCREENS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY

manner most creditable to that able sculptor, and a brass plate commemorating these circumstances, has been placed behind one of the shields" (Report of work carried out by the Corporation at this time [mainly clearing the exterior of abutting houses and making good the walls and roofs.]—Peach's *Britton*, p. 44.). When Bishop Montague's pulpit went I do not know,¹ but the Bishop's Throne was now sold and Prior Bird's Chapel restored by Ed. Davis who published an illustrated monograph on it in 1834.

By this time, the walls and pillars of the church were encrusted with monuments (over 600 of them), well shown in Plate 8 of *Britton's Bath Abbey*. The pillars were, it seems, cleared first, but it was not till Scott's "restoration" of 1864-74 that the tablets were arranged tidily beneath the aisle windows. In this restoration, the choir-screen and organ were removed (the former, reduced in width and height, now does duty as a western lobby, while the latter was rebuilt in the north transept). Mr. Manners' furniture was all replaced by "correctly" designed fittings, and lastly Bishop Montague's nice ceilings were superseded by exact copies of the stone fan-vaults of the choir and its aisles. With its walls and poorly designed pillars standing out in their newness, and with no screen to break its length, Bath Abbey now presented a bareness and emptiness that apparently was much admired! This "Lantern of England" must have been very glaring before its many windows were filled, as they rapidly were, with stained glass.

Beverley. After long neglect, this most beautiful church was in a dangerous state when the great restoration of 1715-40 was begun. Beside remarkable structural repairs and the addition of an ogee dome over the crossing (said to have been designed by Lord Burlington²), the interior was provided with much furniture, mostly in the classical style, which was acclaimed at the time as the following, from *Gent's History of Rippon*, 1733, will show. After remarking (p. 88) "'Tis certainly pleasant to view this fabric at a distance, on a summer's day, with its beautiful dome, and a ball gilt with gold, glittering by the refulgent beams of the sun" he goes on to say (p. 91) "To describe all its present beauties: The . . . Pavement in the body of the church, margin'd with black marble: that in the choir, still more exquisitely fine, of four different colours in form of a hexagon or cube: The altar, built after the Corinthian order . . . curiously arched above, with the emblem of St. John . . . The table being of fine white marble presented . . . by John Moyser, Esq.; The skreen at the Back of (and ancient decay'd Spire-Work like Canopies over) the

¹ It is shown in Vertue's Engraving of 1750.

² Forster (*Beverley, A Brief History*, 1955) says, c. 1750; but this is impossible, as the dome is shown in a wood cut (from an earlier engraving!) in *Gent's Rippon*, 1733.

stalls, artfully mended and supply'd: The carved skreen of fine white *Roche-Abbey* stone dividing the choir from [the nave] done after the old *Gothick* order: The new pulpit, desk, and cover of the Font . . . The nicely contrived Seats with neat Galleries for the Parishoners in the Side Iles, of the *Dorick* Order (resembling those of *St. Alban's* at *Rome*), supported by Pillars of wood, without any Damage to those of Stone, which uphold the church; the large Effigies of the Four Evangelists . . . with their proper Emblems beneath, which adorn the Inner Side of the Great West Door; up to which on the outer are new and handsome round steps of fair and white stone . . . would swell my Volume to a greater Degree than design'd".

How taste had changed in 100 years may be gleaned from Sir Stephen Glynne's description of the choir-screen in 1825—it had "a very good effect when viewed at a distance, but on approaching it, the horrid mixture of Italian work with "Gothic", of festoons of flowers, canopied niches, figures with harps, arches both pointed and semi-circular, etc., becomes too evident, and at once stamps this gorgeous screen the production of corrupt taste and a false idea of magnificence".¹

This screen, which old photographs show to have been a beautiful design, remained until Scott demolished it in the 1870s. It sustained a fine organ by Snetzler set up in 1767² and in the niches on either side of the central archway were lead figures of St. John of Beverley and King Athelston, the work of W. Collins, of Driffield, 1731³ (Figs. 5 and 7).

In 1824 the cupola was removed from the central stump (which now looks painfully unfinished), the pews and galleries demolished in the nave and services resumed with new pulpit, etc., in the choir—not without opposition. The reredos was taken down, exposing the mutilated Mediaeval altar-screen. "Mr. Comins who had been bred up in the cathedral works at York . . . under Mr. Shute"⁴ was in charge, and in 1825 he 'restored' the screen—or rather rebuilt it as described by Poulson (p. 682) Comins "carefully examined the mutilated work of the original, took casts of the ornaments and mouldings and carved an entirely new pinnacle of exquisite beauty". Everyone was so pleased that it was decided to restore the whole, and the first stone of the new screen was laid in March, 1825 and the work completed in February, 1826 (Late in the 19th century the niches were filled with figures and backed by mosaic!). Poulson adds "a range of stone altar-rails, quite in character

¹ Quoted in Aymer Vallance, p. 154.

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³ Robt. Guinnis' *Dict. of British Sculptors, 1660-1830*, but Vallance says 1781—a misreading of the date on the back of the figures?

⁴ Poulson's *Beverlac*, 1829, p. 679.

with the screen, has since been added". It is interesting to note that very similar communion-rails were set up in York Minster after the fire of 1829. Both sets disappeared in Scott's time, those at York re-appearing in the Lady Chapel about the turn of the century, but are now gone. Old photographs show these rails to have been very handsome—far better than their Victorian successors (Fig. 4).

In 1866 Scott was called in. He removed the altar-rails and pulpit of 1826 and demolished the choir-screen and organ, and in their place was built a wooden screen (one of his last designs¹), with carving by James Ewell of Beverley. On it has since been erected a fine organ. While regretting the loss of its predecessor, we should be thankful that there is still a screen with the organ in its proper place upon it.

There yet remain in Beverley Minster of the early 18th century fittings, the wonderful and charming font-cover (dismissed by Hyatt (Bell's *Cathedral Series*—'Beverley,' 1898) as "an inappropriate canopy of elaborately carved oak"), the two lead figures from the choir-screen and the iron gates from its archway, and a remarkable series of carved doors—8 or more of them. Some of these, as at the west doorway, are on the inside only, the other side being, presumably, mediaeval. The inner west double doors are a most beautifully designed composition (although the figures of the evangelists could be better), the details of tracery and foliage and heads being very naïve and delightful.

Canterbury. The earlier changes in the choir have been set out in an article by W. D. Caröe in *Arch.* LXII, in which he says that the mediaeval reredos and altar-screen² were destroyed in the Civil War. He illustrates a very accurate oil-painting by Johnson, c. 1657, showing the choir without any altar-piece, but the floor worn in the places of the former doorways to the space beyond. Whether the old altar-screen was only partly destroyed, or whether a temporary screen had been previously set up immediately after the Restoration, does not appear; but in 1664 Christopher Hartover of Deptford was employed to add "joined and carved work . . . to the full completing and perfecting of the screen now standing . . . at the east end of the quire". Apparently later, a canopy on Ionic columns was added,³ and as shown in Dart's plate (c. 1726) the whole altar-piece must have been a very handsome and unusual design (Fig. 8).

In 1675 the lateral choir-screens of Prior Eastry (1284-1331), were covered by beautiful panelling, with coved top, 12 feet in height above the

¹ Scott's only example of an *organ-screen*—at least, in its traditional position.

² Described in a document in the handwriting of Somner, auditor to the cathedral at the Restoration, as a "Skreen of Tabernacle worke, richly overlaid with gold."

³ Caröe's article, p. 360.

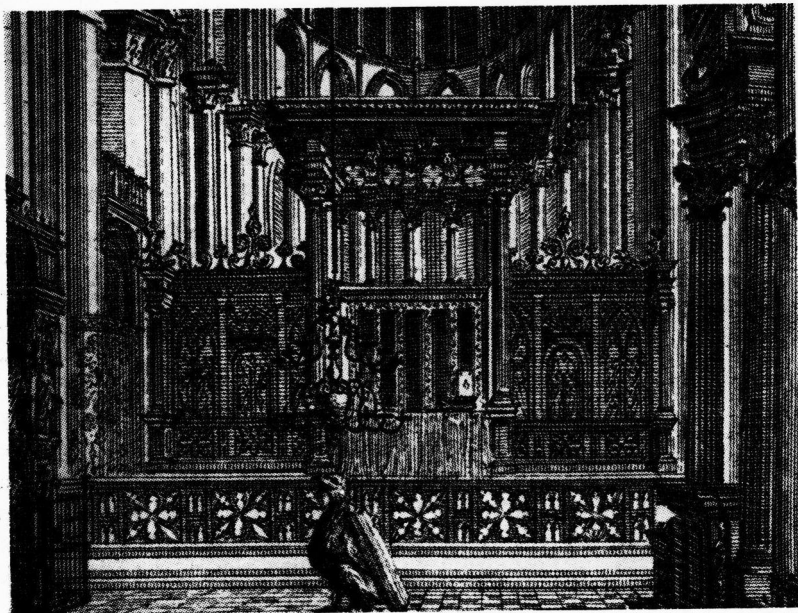
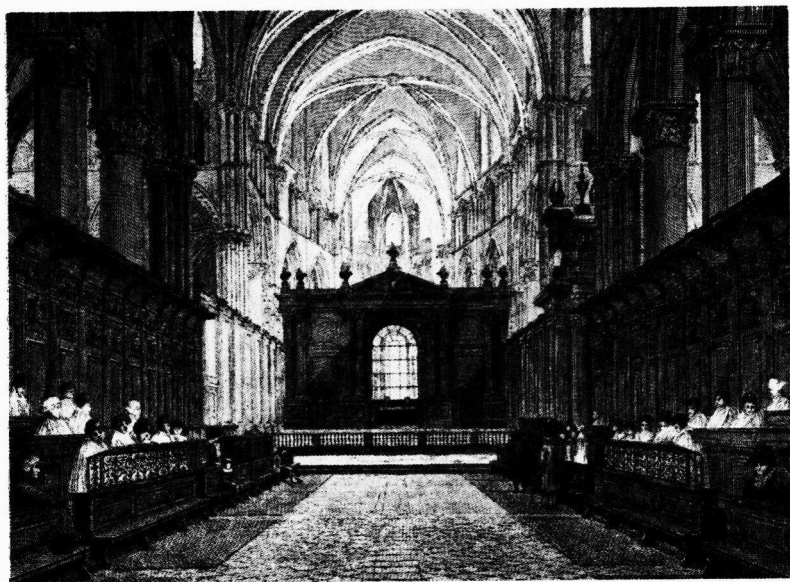


FIG. 8
HARTOVER'S ALTAR-PIECE of 1664 and later. Enlarged from Dart's view, 1726.



Nash del.

Published, 1805.

FIG. 9
BURROUGH'S REREDOS of 1732, with DAVIS' PEWS and WAINSCOTING, and the Throne of 1706.

CANTERBURY—FORMER ALTAR-PIECES

stalls, the work of Roger Davis, joiner of London, who was instructed to make the design accord with that "lately set up in the Hall of the Mercers' Company in London". It extended 70 feet from east to west. In 1682, Davis was employed again—to make the very fine canopied return-stalls at the west end of the choir, happily still with us, though Scott was in favour of their removal.

In 1704, the "old Monkish Stalls"—a double row on each side of the choir were removed and replaced by "two ranges of pews of right good wainscott," the work of John Smallwell, joiner, of London, who agreed, for £300 to make them of as good workmanship as those in St. Pauls', London.¹

In 1706 Archbishop Tenison replaced the old throne (described by Somner, 1640, as "a close seat . . . sometime richly guilt and otherwise well set forth") by a handsome erection with columns supporting a curved pediment and mitre (now in the south east transept). It was enriched with carvings by Gibbons and remained in use until 1844 when it was superseded by the present lofty canopy of stone tabernacle work designed by Austin and the gift of Archbishop Howley.

In 1732, out of a legacy from Dr. Grandorge, a prebendary, a new reredos was set up designed by James Burrough, fellow and later, Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. It was of prosaic design, but well made and expensive. In the centre was a semi-circular headed panel between double columns. Whether this panel contained the Decalogue, I do not know, but in c. 1750 "a large piece of crimson velvet in a carved and gilded frame" was placed there, but later, the whole panel was cut out and replaced by a window of plate-glass² (Fig. 9). This aperture must have been an attractive feature of the altar-piece—its greatest beauty, according to Britton. It is curious that Hartover's altar-screen was not wholly destroyed, the side pieces at any rate being left as a backing to this screen of 1732, as shown in a back view (Plate 18) in Woolnoth's *Canterbury*, 1816. This view and that in Dart, show these side screens to have been a hybrid design, composed of round and pointed arches, with figures in niches and elaborate cresting. Probably this mixture was the result of incorporating the earlier screen.

At the same time as Burrough's reredos, the panelling connecting it with the stalls was set up, thus completely enclosing the choir.

In 1825 a great change came about: Burrough's reredos was removed with its older backing, and a new altar-screen was revealed, not in the ancient position, but further east, at the top of the flight of steps leading to the Trinity Chapel, to make way for which the stone patriarchal seat

¹Caröe p. 358, Woodruffe and Danks' *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral*, 1912, p. 346.

²Chron. *History of Canterbury Cathedral*, 1883, p. 338.

was dislodged from its primitive position which it had maintained for centuries and was relegated to Becket's Crown. This new screen, the work of Austin, is said to have been inspired by the closures round the Crypt Lady Chapel. It was a poor and thin affair, consisting of a series of open panels with pointed and cusped heads graduated in height from the centre and glazed. Towards the end of the century, it was partly backed by paintings of angels, and for a time, completely closed in— attempts to render it more satisfactory. Lastly in 1921 it was taken away and the altar left without any backing other than the perspective of the Trinity Chapel and apse—a most unusual and effective arrangement.

Meanwhile, Davis' beautiful panelling was removed in 1836 and Eastry's monotonous screens once more exposed—and glazed. The pews remained until 1879, when the present carved stalls, backing and seating, designed by Scott, were set up.

THE ORGAN. In 1540 mention is made of two organs in the choir, one of them, on the pulpitum. But the first large organ was made by Launcelot Peace in 1662. It had a beautiful case by George Woodroffe and was placed in the second arch on the north side of the choir, where, though several times rebuilt, once by Father Smith, the organ remained until 1784. Then it was removed and a new organ by Green was erected on the choir-screen where it continued till 1827. It was then rebuilt in the south triforium, where it and its successors have remained ever since— sans case, for it is invisible!

THE FONT. This handsome and elaborate piece of baroque furniture on the north side of the nave, was given by John Warner, Bishop of Rochester in 1639. It was broken by the Puritans, but the pieces were collected and kept till the Restoration, when they were put together and the restored font re-presented by the bishop. In 1787 it was removed from the nave and set up in the ancient Water Tower¹ where it remained until 1896² when it was brought back again to the nave. Its canopy is suspended from some fine ironwork, bearing the Stuart Royal Arms. Its ancient railing (shown in Dart's view of the nave, 1726) has disappeared.

IRONWORK. The west and south-west porches are closed by some fine ironwork, partly mediaeval and partly 18th century. These gates were made up c. 1750 from the 15th century iron Rood-screen which till then stood under the western arch of the crossing, as clearly shown in Dart's view. Besides this screen, there was another, standing at the top of the steps to the Trinity Chapel, where now stands the High Altar. When it was removed I do not know.³ Gostling thus describes it: "The west

¹ Which hence gained its mis-nomer, "The Baptistery".

² Warner's *Canterbury Cathedral*, 1923.

³ It was there when Gostling wrote his *Walk through Canterbury*, 2nd Ed., 1776, but gone "some years" when the new edition was published in 1825.

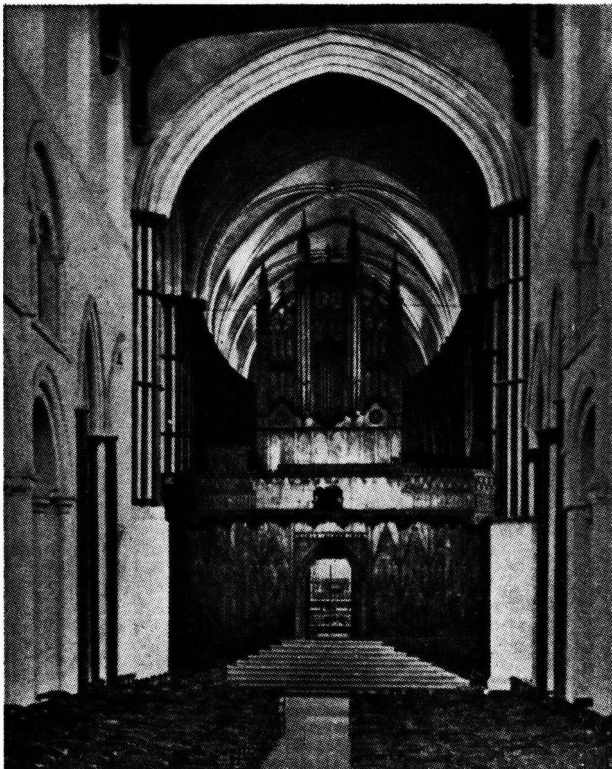


FIG. 10
ROCHESTER, 1791. Designed by the "Rev. Mr. Ollive".



FIG. 11
PETERBOROUGH. By John Carter, c. 1780.
(organ omitted to show the apse).

J. Storer del.

end of this chapel is parted from the place where the patriarchal chair stands, by a fence of Ironwork, finished at the top with a rail and cornice of wood, painted with some of those ridiculous and trifling fauces with which the monks were . . . fond of making the preaching orders of friars appear . . . contemptible". This screen is well shown in the two paintings of the choir reproduced in *Arch.* 62, (Plates LX and LXV), but in the accompanying article Carøe confuses it with the Rood-screen when he refers to the ironwork in the porches.

Peterborough. Of the mediaeval altar-screen (destroyed in the Civil War) Gunton¹ gives an illustration. It was of stone tabernacle work, after the manner of the Percy-screen at Durham, with three spires reaching high towards the ceiling.

When the choir was re-installed at the Restoration, everything was of the plainest description, but painted boards from the destroyed Lady Chapel ceiling lent a touch of colour to the backs of the stalls. Of this arrangement we have a picture in Bridge's *Northamptonshire Collections* c. 1725, (but not published until 1791) "The Inward View of the Choir". Until the second quarter of the 18th century, the choir was situated under the crossing and extended into the nave where the mediaeval pulpitum with the Rood-screen in front of it remained intact. They are clearly shown in the Plan and "The Inward View of the Nave" in Bridge's *Collections*. The Rood-screen was a light one of wood and extended across nave and aisles a bay and a half in advance of the pulpitum.

In 1734² the choir was moved into the eastern arm of the church. New furniture was set up c. 1780, including a new reredos and choir-screen (or new facing of the old one) from designs by John Carter. Britton calls them mean and petty and says it was hardly credible that one so versed in our mediaeval architecture could have produced such poor designs. From the view in Storer's *Cathedrals* (1816)—the only one I know of³—the screen was "richly carved" as the description of the plates calls it. It shows three arched panels (round, pointed and "Tudor") each side of the central doorway. They were filled with designs seemingly more suited to lacework than for ornamenting a solid screen, but the whole design must have had a quaint charm of its own (Fig. 11).

In 1827-30, all this choir furniture was removed and entirely new reredos, stalls, throne and stone screen with organ above were erected from designs by Blore in the "Gothic" of the period⁴ (Fig. 2). The

¹ *History of the Church of Peterborough*, 1686.

² Rev. Owen Davy's *Guide to Peterborough Cathedral*, 6th Ed., 1886, p. 68.

³ Organ omitted, to show the apse.

⁴ "The whole of the woodwork was undertaken and admirably executed by a native carpenter, Mr. Ruddle. The stonework was also by a native mason, Mr. Thompson". Craddock's *Peterborough Cathedral*, 1864, p. 120, note.

screen was bright with metal shields (later put in the Library). Of these new fittings there are numerous photographs. Blore's reredos was the centre-piece of a series of stone screens filling the lower part of the apsidal arches, and they remained in position right up till just before the late war. In 1894 a marble and alabaster baldichino (altar-canopy it was called to avoid legal complications!) was erected, over the new altar, which must have greatly changed the appearance of the apse. It was the work of Robert Davison of London, who also wonderfully paved the whole chancel with marbles and mosaic. Lastly, at the re-arrangement of c. 1935, Blore's screens were taken away, the arches being now open for their full height—a doubtful improvement.

Meanwhile, in 1883, the central tower, long in a dangerous state, was demolished, and rebuilt during the next three years; and the choir was moved once more under the crossing—or rather on each side of it, for the Altar, Pulpit and Throne were to the east and the stalls to the west of the tower. Blore's fittings, except for the apsidal screens, were all discarded in favour of beautifully made furniture in the lifeless "Gothic" of the High Revival. The new arrangement did not include a proper screen at all, but the return-stalls had mere boarded backs to the nave—most unfinished-looking. In 1894 an anonymous donor gave "pillars and choir-gates" (Appendix to *New Guide to Peterborough Cathedral*, 1893). These clustered pillars, presumably part of a proposed elaborate screen,¹ were placed each side of the choir-entrance, and very stupid they looked with nothing to carry!

Lastly just before the late war, this entrance with the pillars and return-stalls were removed, a low panelled wall with carved tracery taking their place—a very decided improvement.

¹ The design seems to be unpublished and unknown.

BOOK REVIEW

Outrage, by Ian Nairn. The Architectural Press, 1955. 12/6.

The Architectural Review devoted its June 1955 number to illustrating clearly and uncompromisingly the insidious and ordered despoliation of the landscape which is threatening the whole of our country. The readers of the *Review* should presumably be amongst the 'already converted' in this respect, and the reprinting of this issue in the form of an inexpensive book, under the title of "Outrage", should help to bring this revealing publication to the notice of the general public. And yet, perhaps the architectural and planning professions need particularly to be reminded of this threat of universal Subtopia, for it becomes clear that the public authorities and planning departments are often all too ready to acquiesce in the creation of mediocrity in our environment. Only pressure of public opinion can halt this alarming tendency, and if this book receives the circulation it richly deserves, it should do much to arouse the public to meet this threat to their very standard of living.

R.B.W.-J.