

The 14th Century Choir Stalls of Lancaster Priory



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Contents

Main text:

Introduction, review of scholarship, abstract.....	1
I. Description of the stalls, original appearance and afterlife.....	5
II. Provenance	13
III. Context in the construction of choir stalls in England	21
IV. Stylistic Context and significance	25
V. Misericords and other figurative carving	37
VI. Conclusions	47

(Word count: 12,898)

Appendices:

- I. Catalogue of Canopies
- II. Catalogue of Misericords
- III. The Gandy Sketchbook

List of Illustrations, Illustrations and Bibliography

Introduction

The county of Lancashire is not well endowed with many surviving monuments from the Decorated Period (c.1290-1350) of English Gothic architecture. The odd cusped piscina in a chancel is usually all one will come across as a legacy of this period of inventiveness in English Art, in which the potential of the Gothic to convey sacred meaning was explored with greater exuberance and creativity than ever before.

This setting makes the oak choir stalls at the Parish Church of St. Mary, Lancaster, better known as Lancaster Priory due to its pre-Reformation role, all the more curious. Accepted as dating from the 1340s, no other set of choir stalls in the country has such a level of exuberance in both foliate decoration and tracery. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described them as having “about the most luxuriant canopies in the country”¹. That two of the stalls were exhibited in the Age of Chivalry exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1987 is testament to their importance.

Scholarship on the Stalls

The stalls are briefly mentioned in the account of the Priory in vol. 59 of Chetham’s Society Transactions². The canopies are remarked upon for their “intricate design and elaborate workmanship”³, but their reference is so brief as to lead one to assume that they were not well known at this time.

Bond, in his 1910 *Wood Carvings in English Churches*⁴, recognised them as the “chef-d’oeuvre of English woodwork”⁵ and sees them as the “flamboyant version of

¹ Nikolaus Pevsner *North Lancashire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) p154

² William Roper (ed.) “Materials for the History of the Church of Lancaster, vol. 4” *Transactions of Chetham’s Historical Society*, 59 (1906)

³ Roper (ed.) p685

⁴ Francis Bond *Wood Carvings in English Churches I. – Stalls and Tabernacles Work II. – Bishops’ Thrones and Chancel Chairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910a)

Winchester [Cathedral's stalls of 1308]". The varied designs of the traceries and crocketing were seen as the "richest example in English woodwork"⁶.

Howard and Crossley's 1917 *English Church Woodwork*⁷ continued the flattering language: "bewilderingly elaborate traceries and masterly foliage carving"⁸. The construction however, was seen as "backward" and ultimately the stalls are "simply a single bay version of the Winchester design"⁹, out of step with the progress made in the medium of choir stalls.

Crossley went on to do a closer examination of the stalls in a paper "On the Remains of Medieval Stallwork in Lancashire"¹⁰. The woodwork of the seating is subjected again to unfavourable comparisons to stonework, the deep hollows recognised as unsuitable to the material. Yet the canopies are attributed as the "chief claim of Lancashire to a foremost place in the possession of medieval stallwork"¹¹.

The next survey of the stalls would not be until 1987 when Tracy considered them in his *English Gothic Choir Stalls*¹². He boldly stated "There is nothing comparable in wood or any other medium"¹³ and overall saw them as "an idiosyncratic product of north country art"¹⁴.

In the *Age of Chivalry*¹⁵ exhibition catalogue, Tracy describes them as the "most spectacular woodwork monument in the exhibition" and that they "manifest in a

⁵ Bond (1910a) p40

⁶ *ibid.* p44

⁷ F.E. Howard and F.H. Crossley *English Church Woodwork* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1917)

⁸ Howard and Crossley p16

⁹ *ibid.* p150

¹⁰ F.H. Crossley "On the Remains of Medieval Stallwork in Lancashire" *Historical Transactions of Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society LXX* (1919)

¹¹ Crossley (1919) p19

¹² Charles Tracy *English Gothic Choir Stalls 1200-1400* (London: Boydell Press, 1987)

¹³ Tracy (1987) p41

¹⁴ *ibid.* p46

¹⁵ Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (eds.) *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1250-1400* (London: Royal Academy of Art, 1987)

brilliant way the flowering of the decorated style in the North of England, itself a phenomenon of great importance”¹⁶.

The literature on the stalls consistently recognises their unique aesthetic form in stark contradiction to their regressive mode of construction. No study entirely focused on the stalls seems to have taken place.

Abstract

This study seeks to highlight the importance of the Lancaster stalls in medieval art by investigating some issues surrounding them.

In the first chapter, their original appearance will be considered. This will be conducted with reference to the extant stalls, the extent of their restoration and evidence of modification. A rediscovered antiquarian sketchbook will be used to reveal portions now lost and prior unknown to scholarship.

The second chapter will then investigate one of the longest standing issues around the stalls, their uncertain provenance and will also serve as an introduction to Lancaster Priory. This will use historical sources to consider the various candidates for their original home.

The third chapter will place them in the context of medieval choir stalls construction. It will serve as an introduction to the use of choir stalls in the medieval church, and

¹⁶ Alexander and Binski (eds.) p121

show how the Lancaster stalls fit in with the experimentation within the medium in the first half of the 14th century.

The fourth chapter will investigate them within the stylistic context. With comparison to other monuments, it will show how their intricate stylistic conceits can be shown to have roots in precedents around England at the time, and shown to be part of a pattern of local experimentation. Whether they can be linked with apparently similar monuments on the continent of later dates will also be considered. Then, the significance of their stylistic language to their medieval audience will be explained.

The fifth chapter will focus upon the figurative carving of the stalls, most importantly the misericords. It will attempt to ascertain the meaning of some of the more damaged subjects, and also to see all the seats working together as a programme of sorts. The meaning of some other carvings will also be investigated, all with reference to other misericords and illuminated manuscripts.

Throughout the study, the stalls will be referred to by their numbering from the east, ie: N1 – North side, first from east. The two canopies in the sanctuary will be referred to as S Sanc L[eft] and R[ight] and the Blind tracery panels N Sanc L and R.

The misericords in this and other churches will be referred to in this manner. For stalls with two ranks of misericords, U[pper] and L[ower] may be used. All the Lancaster canopies, the two blind tracery panels and the misericords are shown in their appendices.

I. Description of the stalls, evidence for original appearance, use and afterlife

This chapter will describe the current stalls, and then consider their original appearance and use, then recount their documented afterlife.

Description of the current stalls

The Lancaster stalls currently consist of fourteen canopied seats, two sets of five in the first westward arcades of the choir, and two sets of two in the next bay. The seating consists of well cut-back elbows in a figure 5 shape, the mouldings used similar to those of contemporary stone-masonry.¹⁷ All of the elbows have carving of either a human head or foliage, with a single exception of one full-length figure in the north stalls.

The exuberant canopy work consists of alternating gables over a traceried ogee arch and two-part pinnacles. In between the standards over the seats is an ogee arch, each of which is filled with openwork tracery unique to each one. The mouldings of this tracery are once again akin to stonework in windows of the period¹⁸. The four points of the cusping of the ogee have little portraits, flowers or leaves.

Above the ogee, naturalistic foliage rises to a finial. This is backed by the traceried openwork of the gable, which rises with crocketing to the same height as the pinnacles, with seemingly identical caps on top. The foliage that surmounts the ogee arch, covers the lower finial and provides the crocketing is consistent within each gable, and although some species repeat, the design is unique for each canopy. The

¹⁷ Crossley (1919) p6

¹⁸ *ibid.* p20

foliage can be generally described as naturalistic, although the crocketing consists of a repeating pattern of a species rather than individually handled leaves.

The front shafts that support the superstructure are patterned with tracery and rise to a pinnacle, which is stopped at the bottom by two little heads, humans and animals (fig 1). On top of this, a curious structure with a crenellated appearance then supports a shaft supporting the second pinnacle, which has four little figurative heads, many of grotesque creatures, around its base (fig 2) and is capped with a finial on top. On the stalls themselves, there are twenty-four pinnacles, eighteen between the gables and six on the corners of the sets, either side of the terminal gables.

The two seat sets contain some extra embellishments, such as portrait heads on the capitals supporting the ogees, a King's head under the shaft support on the south stalls, some tracery on the west sides (perhaps not *in situ*) with a grotesque (north) and lady (south) above and decorated tiles at the base of some of the shafts.

The reverse of the stalls has its divisions emblazoned with blind tracery in the manner of the stall shafts, although the wider area gives more scope for more elaborate tracery.

The roof over the seats is a cove, and the stalls are inconsistent in the arching at the ends, sometimes it being a full and sometimes a half arch. This inconsistency is likely due to the wood of the stalls having warped during storage and later reconstruction work having to compensate. Above this arch, there is a small crocketed gable closing off the canopies, decorated with a cusped ogee. (fig 3)

All of the seats have medieval misericords, except S3 and S4, which are lost.

In the south side of the sanctuary of the church are two medieval canopies and two pinnacles that flank a modern, slightly larger scale copy of one of the canopies (copied off S6, the tracery with the least elements), and two modern pinnacles. In the north sanctuary are two panels of blind tracery flanking another, identical modern canopy with a pair of pinnacles. In these two panels, an arch of tracery above 8 lights is enclosed within a cusped ogee and has small portrait heads incorporated into the cusps, rising in a finial surrounded by tracery is carved onto a gable. These gables are crocketed and rise into a modest finial.

Original construction

The stalls are clearly not in their original position and have been chopped up and moved about the church many times.

There is a join in the structure of the seating in both sets of lateral stalls that could lead us to assume that the lateral stalls were originally longer than five seats, and have been modified to fit within the new space of the current church, either when they were brought in from another church or when the choir was rebuilt. In their five seat form they fit well either into the arcades, as they do now, or across the aisles, as they would have done when forming a screen.

A sketchbook by Joseph Michael Gandy, relating to a journey to Lancaster he made in 1806¹⁹ provides us with vital evidence for the original appearance of the stalls and lost portions of woodwork. It was in private hands until its purchase by Sir John Soane's Museum in 2001 and has never been considered before in connection with the stalls.

As Tracy has remarked, the two seat sections are clearly the returns, the modern elbows marking where they would have attached to the laterals, which at their east end curve indicating a change in direction²⁰. In 1806, Gandy records on a plan of the seats "as they are now" (fig 4) that the two seat sections were originally of three seats. The current modern elbow carvings, where these return seats linked to the lateral stalls, are marked as "broken off" in his drawings and there are two now lost carvings on the other side of the section, closing off a third seat. So the canopies now in the sanctuary certainly would have originally surmounted seats, giving us a total of at least sixteen stalls.

Comparison of Gandy's drawings of the canopies and ogee traceries shows that the canopies then were not over the seats that they are now and that they were entirely disassembled sometime between his visit and their "modern appearance" recorded as early as 1874 by W. Goddard in the John O' Gaunt sketchbook²¹.

Most importantly of all, Gandy records that the stalls originally had traceried openwork in their backs. (figs 5, 6, 7) His sketches of the traceries show that they were just as flamboyant and intricate as the ogees. All of the seats' traceries are

¹⁹ Ian Goodall and Margaret Richardson "A Recently Rediscovered Gandy Sketchbook" *Architectural History* 44 (2001) p45

²⁰ Tracy (1987) p40

²¹ *John O' Gaunt Sketchbook* Vol. 1 (Lancaster: E.G. Paley and H.J. Austin, 1874-5) plates 9-13

sketched, although by his time two had been lost to provide for doors. His drawing of the back of the laterals also shows us the lost corner section. (fig 5)

He also provides us with sketches of what he believes to be the original desk fronts and other portions of woodwork, some of which survives today as the tracery on the west end of the returns. He records all the current misericords except the “Monastic School” (which must come under his two marked as “these two so mutilated so as not to be seen”) and one further one that appears purely foliate in its design. One of the elbows that appears ambiguous today is rendered as what appears to be a Virgin and Child, this will be considered further in the chapter on the Misericords and Figurative Carving.

The photography in Chethams²² (fig 8) and also series of drawings after lithographs in the Lancaster City Museum (fig 9) show the stalls when they were installed at the back of the church as a reredos. They all show the two double seats flanking the blind tracery panels, which flank four canopies, with the five seats in the arcades, except in the 1840s, when they were in the aisles against the east wall. This construction would seem to give us eighteen canopies. That Gandy did not record more than sixteen canopies shows that they must not have been original, but perhaps copies that were replaced by the current copies in 1936.

Gandy does not sketch any side elevations of the stalls. However, we can assume, that the sketch by Goddard (fig 10) of the side elevation with a half arch is misrepresentative of its original appearance. It should clearly always be a full pointed

²² Roper, frontispiece

arch as the columns on the front shaft are clustered, implying a support upward to the pinnacle, and a support of the bases of the arch. The back by contrast, where only the arch is being supported, has only a single column. The current plain, modern coving is likely much as it would have originally appeared as a comparison to the surviving medieval stall coving at Hereford All Saints shows²³.

Original liturgical use

We can then only know so much about the original appearance of the stalls, and know even less of their original use. Both the return stalls have more ornamentation, particularly the south pair. The prominent head of a bishop, abbot or prior²⁴ (fig 11) would lead us to believe this may very well be the seat of one of those figures: the prior if the stalls were made for their current church. This would match up with the fact that the Prior would be sitting in the return stalls in the place of honour, facing the altar from the right hand (as opposed to the sinister) side²⁵. The carving of a king above this head, being that its placement is entirely unique within the stalls, likely has some commentary on the connection of church and the monarchy.

Afterlife

The Lancaster stalls have had a colourful afterlife in the modern period. Their first recorded presence in the church may only be in 1806 when Gandy sketched them, as attempts to find inventories pre-19th century have proved fruitless. Gandy does not make it completely clear how they were used in the church, but we can assume they were being used as a screen dividing off the end of the building then as they were almost half a century later. The east end of the church served as a consistory court for

²³ Tracy (1987) p234

²⁴ *ibid.* p41

²⁵ Bond (1910a) p13

some time and the stalls used a screen for it²⁶, and it is likely that is how they were for Gandy's visit. He shows that two panels of the now lost openwork backs have been removed for doors (fig 5), one to the "vestry adjoining". During the tenure as churchwarden of John Hargreaves, before 1847, they were moved to the extreme east end of the church, all stalls facing west²⁷. This is when we can assume the openwork backs were removed and lost. After this the laterals must have been moved from the side aisles to their positions as recorded in the photography in Chethams, showing them under the arcades, facing north and south.

W. Goddard's sketches of the stalls in the John o' Gaunt Sketchbook of 1874-5²⁸ reveal the stalls' construction to be much as they are now, sketching the front elevation of what is now S3 and S4, although then they were on the north side of the chancel (fig 10). His sketches of the back elevation shows the damaged tracery patterns, which have since been restored, and the side elevation shows the cove of the right end of the south (then north) laterals in a half arch, as it is now. Although his drawings are labelled "oak stalls in chancel" the contents page lists them as "choir screens", showing that their significance was perhaps not well known then.

Crossley tells us that during the 1911-2 restoration of the church by Austin and Paley, in which the nave roof was restored and the chancel floor raised²⁹, the firm moved them to their current positions in the arcading³⁰. It does not seem that any work on the structure of the stalls themselves was performed at this time. A reredos was constructed of the remains of the stallwork, described as "Four further canopies form

²⁶ Roper (ed.) p685

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Paley and Austin (eds.) pp9-13

²⁹ James Price *Sharpe, Paley and Austin: A Lancaster Architectural Practice: 1836-1942* (Lancaster: Centre for North-west Regional Studies, 1998) p95

³⁰ Crossley (1919) p2

the reredos with five large pinnacles, and on either side are two large panels of blind tracery”.³¹

The fragments and modern canopies in the sanctuary today serve as a sedilia and Bishop’s throne and date from 1936³². This is likely also when the front stalls were added, and other minor restorative work was performed. The modern restoration work is fairly unobtrusive, and consists of two new figurative elbow carvings, a plain pinnacle on the south stalls, repairs to the tracteries on the reverse of the stalls and copies of the one surviving end gable to the stalls applied to all the sets. No attempt has been made to fill in the missing crocketing or damage to the finials.

The backs of the stalls were filled in with embroidered panels of saints, to designs by Guy Barton, in 1964³³. Two of the stalls travelled to Burlington House in London in 1987 to be exhibited in the *Age of Chivalry* exhibition at the Royal Academy.

³¹ *ibid.* p34

³² Clare Hartwell and Nikolaus Pevsner *Lancashire: North* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) p367

³³ Hartwell and Pevsner p367

II. Provenance

This chapter seeks to clarify some issues in the unclear provenance of the stalls, demonstrate why Lancaster Priory may not have been their original home, and assess the commonly cited alternatives.

The history of the Church of Lancaster sheds little light on the making of its choir stalls. It was originally founded as an Alien Priory of the Abbey of St. Martin in Sées in Normandy in 1094. Very little of the original Norman structure and its subsequent extensions survives in the current building which was thought by Pevsner to date from sometime as of 1431 but with no certainty³⁴. This date marks the suppression of Alien Houses throughout the country, and Lancaster Priory was at this date transferred to the Nuns of Syon, near London. It is most likely then, that the church was remodelled in the fashionable London style of the perpendicular that had triumphed as the dominant style of English ecclesiastical architecture. The chancel, however, may be of a slightly earlier date in late 14th century. It may have been part of a building programme interrupted by a suppression of Alien Houses in 1414, after which it was harmonised with a new nave arcade, chancel clerestory and outer walls³⁵. The west wall is partly of the original structure, with a doorway of 1340-60³⁶, but no decoration of any form remains to make any stylistic links between the stalls and the building. Gandy clearly saw no reason to believe that they did not come from the current chancel, as he shows them in his plan of their supposed original form of fitting, with original corner sections and returned stalls, between the columns of the arcades (fig

³⁴ Pevsner (1969) p153 He does note that the chancel arcade looks more like late 14th century than 15th.

³⁵ Hartwell and Pevsner p366 Seen as "highly speculative"

³⁶ *ibid.* p366

4). As will be discussed in the chapter on Stylistic context, moving the stalls out of their 1340s dating to fit in with this possible late 14th century rebuilding programme has little credibility.

That the nature of the stalls can be attributed to the Priory's links to the continent as Crossley proposes³⁷, or even a direct gift from their mother abbey is unlikely, as the chapter on the Stylistic Context will show that their aesthetic is more closely associated with the burgeoning decorated style of Yorkshire than any contemporary continental monuments. The Alien Houses, before their complete suppression in the 15th century, were taken in to the English crown's hands numerous times during the French Wars of the 14th century³⁸, so Lancaster's connections to France would likely not be strong enough in the 1340s to allow for any stylistic transmissions anyway.

No other set of choir stalls in the country pre-dates the structure they are in, always either being contemporary or post-dating the building, unless we include small fragmentary portions incorporated into entirely new furniture, such as some misericords at Exeter and at Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey. It would seem the trend in the middle ages was, that if the building were to be renovated, the furniture would also be renewed. Lancaster would be unique if it had kept its original stalls. Also, this building was of a political character, to replace the French-allied Alien House with one that stated its London connections through the perpendicular. Here we would assume the stalls, carrying as they would associations with the previous structure, would not have survived.

³⁷ Crossley (1919) p19

³⁸ "Alien house: The priory of Lancaster" Farrer, William and Brownbill, J. (eds.) *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 2* (1908), pp167-173. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38367> Date accessed: 09 April 2009.

So it is here we turn to the frequent opinion raised that the stalls were not designed for the church at Lancaster, but instead were transported from the nearby Premonstratensian Abbey at Cockersands at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century. All that survives today of the Abbey is a good knowledge of the ground plan and the 13th century chapter house which owes its survival to its use in the 18th century as the Dalton family mausoleum³⁹. This provenance is first noted in Bond, which he largely discounts on account of the Priory's 1367 income as being adequate to afford the stalls⁴⁰ but it is repeated as a possibility in the Victoria County History of Lancaster in 1914⁴¹ and also by Crossley⁴². Tracy allies himself with Bond as against the theory but provides no new evidence⁴³. Pevsner has it "they are said to come from either Cockersands or Furness Abbey"⁴⁴, seemingly the first citing of the latter. This persistent view of their provenance from the dissolution of a larger religious house at the English Reformation can be attributed to a number of counts.

Firstly, this situation definitely occurred at the nearby Whalley Parish Church, where the entire 15th century monastic stalls of Whalley Abbey were broken up and eighteen moved into the parish church⁴⁵. Of the other eighteen seats fragments can be seen in Blackburn Cathedral and Holme-in-Cliviger, Lancs. This situation is very different to the one at Lancaster however, as Whalley Parish Church is only a few minutes' walk from the abbey, and the fragments at the two other churches are seats and misericords

³⁹ Hartwell and Pevsner p250

⁴⁰ Bond (1910a) p43

⁴¹ "The parish of Lancaster (in Lonsdale hundred): Church, advowson and charities" Farrer, William and Brownbill, J. (eds.) *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 8* (1914), pp22-33. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=53257> Date accessed: 09 April 2009

⁴² Crossley (1919) p19

⁴³ Tracy (1987) p42

⁴⁴ Pevsner (1969) p154

⁴⁵ Tracy (1990) p4

only. That the Lancaster stalls were shipped largely intact, all the way from Cockersands or Furness is not an impossibility, but a different situation from that at Whalley.

Secondly, objections have been raised to a church of the limited size and thus income of Lancaster priory in the mid-14th century being able to afford the stalls. Bond's reasoning against this is that the Priory's revenue in 1367 was of eighty pounds and quite adequate to afford the stalls.⁴⁶ However, this is at least 17 years after the stalls' date and the social and economic upheaval of the Black Death. In 1291 the Priory's income was assessed at £80 a year, dropping to just £26 13s, 4d thirty years later following the Scottish attack on Lancaster in 1316⁴⁷. Closer still to the date of the stall work:

“In 1341 the value of the ninth was given as £26 18s. 9d., but this did not include the borough of Lancaster, 47s. 11d., and the small tithes and altarge, £22. The loss resulting from the devastation made by the Scots was estimated at 43 marks.”⁴⁸

So the pre-raid income of £80 would be matched (not accounting for inflation) in 1367, but in the decade of the 1340s, the Priory seemed to be making about half that total. The first set of rejected furniture from St Stephens' Chapel Westminster sold to the Nuns of Barking at £33 6s. 8d⁴⁹ c.1350, so we can see that stall work may have been beyond the finances of the Priory at this time. Of course, Cockersands was also

⁴⁶ Bond (1910a) p43

⁴⁷ “The parish of Lancaster (in Lonsdale hundred): Church, advowson and charities” Farrer and Brownbill (1914)

⁴⁸ *ibid*, Farrer and Brownbill (1914)

⁴⁹ Tracy (1987) p50

affected just as much by the Scottish raid, its assessment for tenths being reduced in the aftermath by five-sixths⁵⁰, putting it in the same financial situation and in no better position than Lancaster Priory to afford the elaborate stallwork.

Cockersands certainly did possess stalls, as they are mentioned in the inventory of the abbey at its dissolution in 1536:

“Item xxx stalles in the quere there valued by estymacion –lxvjs. viiiij*d*.”⁵¹

That these could be the Lancaster stalls is doubtful. The numbering of stalls as thirty may refer to lost laterals or front seats but the estimated value, even in the buyer's market of the Reformation, of 65 shillings and 8 pence seems altogether too low for such craftsmanship. The materials alone for the second set of stalls at St Stephen's Westminster, purchased between 1351 and 1357, total over £15.⁵² The choir at Cockersands was only 20 feet wide and 40 feet long, so fitting 30 stalls on the scale of Lancaster, accounting either for front stalls or further laterals, would perhaps be a tight squeeze, compared to the current chancel of the Priory, 70 by 60 feet. Since the choir and nave of the Abbey have been shown to be aisleless⁵³ this would further make the design of the stalls, with the tracery patterns on the backside of the stalls and their lost openwork back panels, to appear not suitable for the building, as one would expect the stalls in such a ground plan to be up against the wall. Furness Abbey, as an

⁵⁰ “Houses of Premonstratensian canons: The abbey of Cockersand” Farrer and Brownbill (1908), pp154-159

⁵¹ William Farrer “Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey of Premonstratensian canons, Vol 3. part 3” *Transactions of Chetham's Historical Society* 40 (1909) p1171

⁵² Tracy (1987) p78

⁵³ Hartwell and Pevsner p250

enormous building and one with enormous power and prestige, would certainly been able to accommodate and afford the stalls.

Another objection is often raised with regard to the number of staff within the Priory⁵⁴.

“An account of 1324–5, when the priory was in the king's hands, shows the staff employed, viz. the prior, five monks and two chaplains.”⁵⁵

These eight then, seem not to account for the (at least) sixteen seats of the stalls, which perhaps point us towards the conclusion they did indeed come from a larger house rather than this minor Alien cell. Bond states that a monastic church's stalls were dependent on its number of monks, but demonstrates that although Westminster Abbey had 64 seats in its stalls, it never recorded an excess of 52 monks in residence.⁵⁶ We know Cockersands had thirty stalls, yet it was recorded at the Dissolution there was a prior and twenty-one canons at the abbey⁵⁷. This shows that an excess of seats was typical in churches.

There were thirty monks present at Furness at the Dissolution, the number perhaps not having changed much from the Abbey's best days⁵⁸. Although we could assume lost front stalls here to make up the numbers, we would expect a church with the grandeur

⁵⁴ Andrew White *A History of Lancaster 1193-1993* (Keele: Keele University Press, 2003) p129

⁵⁵ “The parish of Lancaster (in Lonsdale hundred): Church, advowson and charities” Farrer and Brownbill (eds.) (1914)

⁵⁶ Bond (1910) p25

⁵⁷ “Houses of Premonstratensian canons: The abbey of Cockersand” Farrer and Brownbill (eds.) (1908) pp154-159

⁵⁸ “Houses of Cistercian monks: The abbey of Furness” Farrer and Brownbill (eds.) (1908) pp114-131
URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38348> Date accessed: 09 April 2009

of Furness to have stalls at least on the scale of those of the similarly Cistercian abbey of Whalley. Whalley's furniture originally had at least six returned seats as the Lancaster furniture did⁵⁹, but had perhaps thirty laterals, as we have seen. As shown in the previous chapter, the join in the lateral seats could make it possible that the Lancaster stalls could have been much larger than they currently are, and in that form, suitable for Furness.

The decoration of the stalls themselves can give us little in the way of clues. That one of the misericords features figures in habits might imply a monastic setting, as all our candidates so far are. Their dress is most likely Benedictine, and does not show any characteristics of Cistercian, Premonstratensian or Franciscan garb. The mitred head on one of the return elbow carvings may represent a Prior, Bishop or Abbot who sat there. That one of the elbows on the North laterals may be a Virgin and Child as covered in the section on the Misericords and other sculpture could be due to the Priory's dedication to St. Mary, yet Cockersands was similarly dedicated and the figure was ubiquitous in medieval art. Nothing on the stalls then, can give us significant evidence towards a particular provenance.

So although we are given no direct evidence that the stalls do not originate from Lancaster Priory, we can see that the air of suspicion is warranted. Cockersands Abbey, however, does not hold particular claim to be the source of the stalls, any more than the alternative of Furness, or even buildings with less remains, such as Lancaster's Dominican House, where Dalton Square now stands, or the Franciscan house in Preston. The Dominican House had a chantry for Sir Thomas Lawrence of

⁵⁹ Tracy (1990) p4

Ashton in the 14th century⁶⁰ and there are remains of what may be a funerary monument from the church in the Lancaster museum, which reminds us of the possibility that the mendicant (begging) orders could have provided a better avenue for lay sponsorship of the expensive stalls than the Benedictine monks at the Priory, or the isolated Premonstratensian Canons out at Cockersands and Cistercian Monks at Furness. Being more urban, however, the evidence for their buildings and associated art has been almost entirely lost in the plunder of the Dissolution.

⁶⁰ "Friaries: Dominican friars, Lancaster" Farrer and Brownbill (eds.) (1908) pp161-162. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38357> Date accessed: 09 April 2009

III. Context in the Construction of Choir stalls in England

The Lancaster stalls can be characterised rather backward in their adoption of the constructive techniques of the stalls of Winchester Cathedral and merely clothing them in Flamboyant dress, which Tracy calls “clumsily *retardataire*”⁶¹. The gables are not 3-dimensional like later canopies but of a flat construction. (fig 12). This characterisation is perhaps rather unfair and this chapter will attempt a re-viewing of their place in stallwork in England and show them as part of a pattern of experimentation and see their construction as suited to their aesthetic goals.

Choir stalls are simply seats that are occupied by the monks or canons of a church during services. They were always placed in the section of the church that at our period would have been behind the choir screen, and not normally accessible to the laity. They, as much in the medieval church, combined their functionality with a role as vessels for ostentatious display through micro-architectural forms and sculptural embellishments. This served to promote the prestige of the church, serve as a visible display of the hierarchy of the monks or canons and perhaps most importantly, make them fitting for their role in the most holy celebration of the Mass.

Tracy’s study of choir stalls puts England at the forefront of innovations in the medium, largely the development of grand canopies upon the superstructures. The canopy had a practical reason, in which it served to protect the tonsures of monks from downdrafts from the open triforia or clerestories⁶².

⁶¹ Tracy (1987) p45

⁶² Bond (1910a) p29

Westminster Abbey's now lost stalls (the current stalls entirely modern) are widely regarded as pioneering the "double-screen" type. Whereas before, the only sort of superstructure was in the form of a back screen rising behind the seats, such as at St. Mary's Hospital, Chichester⁶³, the stalls at Westminster had a column rising from the front of the seats to create an enclosed space over the stalls that would lead to the grand canopies of later stalls. Whether they carried any form of canopies themselves is doubtful, as Tracy remarks that the columns were likely too thin to support any sort of elaborate superstructure⁶⁴.

Winchester Cathedral is our first extant example of the next step being taken in the evolution of the art of choir stalls, by decorating this double screen format with a *rayonnant*-style lofty arcade of pinnacles and gables. To achieve loftiness, they departed from the usual form of one gable per bay to a gable over two bays. However, structural problems shortly after the completion of the stalls necessitated a re-buttressing of the stall uprights.⁶⁵

So the next two sets of stalls, at Chichester (1315) and Wells (1335) Cathedrals, in their adoption of the double-screen, do not attempt to convey the same sense of height. Instead, they return to a "stifling horizontal cornice"⁶⁶ and compensate by incorporating a bowing ogee over the seats. So at this point in the century, choices have to be made on how to accent height without leading to the structural problems of Winchester. Hereford Cathedral's stalls continue to eschew height and increase the use of the bowing ogee arch. Ely Cathedral, part way through the construction of the stalls, decides to surmount a conventional double-screen design with an echelon of

⁶³ Tracy (1987) p2

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p3

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p17

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p34

three-sided canopies⁶⁷. Gloucester combines the bowing ogee with height accented by extending the back screen upwards into a backing of lofty panelling⁶⁸. The Lancaster stalls are then quite within this pattern of experimentation, as they take the Winchester design, and deploy it successfully over single bays. A further advance is made by giving the stalls elaborate openwork tracery in the backs that has since been lost. This must be considered an innovation of the Lancaster stalls, further separating them from copying the Winchester furniture. Although the Lancaster stalls themselves have clearly been taken apart, stored and reassembled, there is no evidence that there were structural problems akin to Winchester. They achieved the purposes of their design as much as any other set of choir stalls, it is just that they did not lead to the Lincoln tabernacled canopies, which would become the blueprint for stalls of the rest of the Middle Ages, for example at St. Mary's Nantwich, Carlisle Cathedral and Manchester Cathedral.

Why then, was the basic Winchester design chosen for Lancaster? In considering the reasons for the changes made to the stalls at Ely, Tracy cites the other decorated work being carried out in the cathedral that time in the Lady Chapel as an influence⁶⁹. The idea of enclosing figures in a sacred niche was becoming a persuasive theme within the cathedral, in both the Lady Chapel and the Octagon; therefore the stalls were changed to incorporate this motif in carpentry rather than stone. Similarly, at Gloucester, there is an interest in panelling on the stalls much in accordance with the "Perpendicular revolution" currently occurring in the south transept⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p34

⁶⁸ Howard and Crossley p150

⁶⁹ Tracy (1987) p38

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p47

The Lancaster stalls then, perhaps were designed with a desire to stress the articulation of the North Country aesthetic, characterised, as Tracy puts it by “the shimmering play of light and shade over flat patterned surfaces”⁷¹. This may be due to the appearance of their now lost original building or some other reason, perhaps to stress regional links. The elaborate, proto-flamboyant openwork of the ogees would be difficult if not impossible to articulate in the bowing ogees that were popular in the perhaps “conservative” stalls of Chichester, Wells and Hereford, and the love of varied foliage suited to deploy on crockets and finials of lofty gables rather than stifling horizontal cornices.

⁷¹ *ibid.* p41

IV. Stylistic context and significance

This chapter seeks to place the Lancaster stalls in the contemporary context of the English Decorated of the 1340s, and consider the influences on the design of the tracery, gable design and foliage. It will then consider their striking similarities to later monuments, and whether in response to have the stalls postdate those, or postulate that they (or associated lost English monuments) were the influence. Finally, the significance of the decorative style to their medieval audience will be considered.

Contemporary Comparisons

Tracery patterns

The two blind panels, now used as flanks to the bishop's throne, most closely resemble window tracery. The right screen reminds one of the general shape of the famous west window of York Minster (fig 13), although the actual manner at which the overall "heart" shape is arrived at is markedly different, the mouchettes of the window generally point downwards, while the panel seems to be assembled in a more arbitrary, less organic manner. The centre of the design, two quatrefoils flanked either side by two mouchettes, is similar to the lower windows of the nave at Beverley Minster. (fig 14)

The top of the left panel, a quatrefoil above four downward mouchettes, as well as being close to the top of the great York window, also resembles the common decorated "sprouting" tracery, as seen at Patrington (fig 15) and Hull, E. Yorks and Durham Cathedral west window, all of the 1340s. These panels then, can be seen as

based upon patterns established in Yorkshire window tracery, elaborated to a level that would not be possible in stone.

The patterns in the ogees under the gables of the canopies however, begin to move much away from comparable patterns in other media. Snettisham, Norfolk west front is cited by Bond as a comparative monument showing that despite the exuberance, it is the English rather than the continental craftsman at work.⁷² It is perhaps one of the few extant windows that show such freedom and fluidity in pattern, as well as being constructed entirely from quatrefoils and mouchettes as all the ogee patterns are.

Some of the ogees, such as S Sanctuary R, N5 and S1 show a similarity to the Lincoln Cathedral Bishop's Eye window in their resemblance to paired leaves. S5 features the "spiralling mouchettes", common to later flamboyant, but seen in the Decorated in Beverley Minster's nave (fig 14).

Many other designs move more towards intricate "webs" of quatrefoils and daggers, perhaps the closest relation in tracery is the Selby Abbey east window (fig 16), and development of Tracy's example of the cusping in the tomb at Welwick, E. Yorks (fig 17)⁷³. These thin mouchettes incorporated into the edges of a design can be seen closer to Lancaster in the surviving decorated tracery c.1300 at St Peter's church in Heysham⁷⁴, which consists of two ogee-headed lights traceried with a quatrefoil and two thin mouchettes (fig 18). This at least provides a regional precedent for flowing decorated and infilling with mouchettes, if a little earlier than the stalls and on a less flamboyant level.

⁷² Bond (1910a) p40

⁷³ Tracy (1987) p42

⁷⁴ Hartwell and Pevsner p333

To these, the few surviving examples of decorated window tracery in the local area can be compared: to add to Tracy's example of the Cartmel Town choir window⁷⁵ which features the in-filling with small mouchettes, the North chapel at Ribchester (fig 19) also has similar exclusively mouchette and quatrefoil tracery.

One of the most impressive of the ogees in its complexity is S Sanctuary L, an asymmetrical spiralling pattern that is more akin to flamboyant tracery at Milan Cathedral in the latter part of the century⁷⁶ than contemporary English work. The lost openwork backs recorded by Gandy also often are reminiscent of this design. Similar circular designs are difficult to find in contemporary English monuments, but the Cistercian abbey in Tilty, Essex, shows perhaps a similar pattern of experimentation. The other lost backs have similarities to Yorkshire based tracteries already discussed, and although Gandy's drawings are not exhaustive depictions of their appearance, he includes some of the cusplings within the lines, showing us they would have likely been very ornate in their appearance.

Gable design

The tall gables of the furniture must be seen as ultimately finding their roots in the ogee and gable form pioneered in England on Hardingstone cross, c.1290s⁷⁷.

That the ogee arches are surmounted by a large, leaf covered finial are perhaps the furniture's biggest departure from the Winchester stalls, which only have a finial on the top of the gable itself. Tracy's example of the Wakefield Chantry chapel⁷⁸ has similar lofty gables, but no finial over the ogee, merely filling the gable in with

⁷⁵ Tracy (1987) p42

⁷⁶ Andrew Martindale *Gothic Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967) pp256-258

⁷⁷ Jean Bony *The English Decorated Style: Gothic Architecture Transformed 1250-1350* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1979) p22

⁷⁸ Tracy (1987) p42

tracery. However, the two flanking gables on the stone pulpitum in Southwell Minster, Notts, are very similar in how they have a statue on top of the ogee. Pevsner gives a date for this of c.1320-40, which would put us close to the date for the stalls. The pulpitum has similarities to both the Percy tomb at Beverley and the Lady Chapel at Ely, and it is evident an East Anglian school was called to do decorative work from Yorkshire to Cambridgeshire⁷⁹. This situation might be similar to the one at Lancaster. The pulpitum is not directly comparable to the stalls in any aspects outside of its gable design, but it does however, provide an interesting parallel to the stalls in its position as somewhat of a geographical oddity.

Foliage

The second quarter of the 14th century generally shows a move towards “seaweedy” foliage, particularly in Yorkshire, as seen in the reredos at Selby Abbey. The Percy Tomb in Beverley Minster has quite lush and naturalistic foliage, but it is of a more bulbous character (fig 20). The Lancaster stalls show a discontinuity in design by having clearly identifiable species of leaf. This frustrates any direct connections of the stalls with work in Yorkshire as the tracery patterns suggested.

We could account for this from their influence from the foliage from the gables and other areas of the Winchester stalls, which has a similar treatment of foliage, “dry, brittle and flat”⁸⁰, as Tracy puts it when considering the Lancaster set. The crocketing of the Winchester stalls, however, is largely of one character, looking more like earlier *rayonnant* abstract crocketing. One of the Lancaster gables, S6, has crocketing similar to this, but the others vary greatly. The Lancaster crockets are of a design

⁷⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner and Priscilla Metcalf *The Cathedrals of England: Midland, Eastern and Northern England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985a) p310

⁸⁰ Tracy (1987) p42

unique to each gable. Even though the oak leaf appears on the gables of both N5 and S4, N4's pattern is clearly very different as it has a vine or branch running all the way up the side. Perhaps the closest match in the balance between decoration and the copying of natural forms can be seen in stone in Ely Cathedral while in wood, the British Museum's citole, a type of medieval guitar, dating c.1280-1330 (fig 21) has in its intricate carving a similar wealth of observed specimens of leaf subjugated to pattern. Its unknown provenance however, does not aid our locating of stylistic influence.

Similarities with monuments post 1350

If we do not limit ourselves to the necessary concerns of examples prior to 1350, we begin to see more comparable designs.

Half a century after the stalls, we see French flamboyant Gothic resembling some of their forms. The gables' tracery, thin openwork and the overall lofty proportions closely resemble continental flamboyant work such as the 15th century portal of the west façade of St. Maclou, Rouen (fig 22).

Locally, in the 16th century church of Cartmel Fell, Cumbria, the surviving rood canopy has the spiralling mouchette design of S5. (fig 23) The Cowmire pew it currently sits in is 16th century and shows the same wealth of sinuous tracery within cusped ogees⁸¹. (fig 24)

⁸¹The Rood canopy is of an uncertain date. It may even be contemporary with the stalls as it originally surmounted a Christ (now in the Kendal museum) that has been dated to the 13th century. Pevsner (1969) pp90-91

The Rood loft at Derwen, Denbigh has similar use of varied tracery on openwork panels, with small heads on the points of the cusping⁸². Colebrook, Devon and the Gondibour screen in Carlisle Cathedral show similar web-like flamboyance, but these are considered within Howard and Crossley as part of the 16th century trend of introducing foreign detail, not as part of an overall trend in English art in which we could place the stalls⁸³. Tracy indeed compares the tracery of the Gondibour screen in its uniqueness to the Lancaster stalls, and the “defiantly independent and innovative” character of north-country craftsmen⁸⁴, but ultimately cites Flemish and French connections for the design⁸⁵.

Since the stalls have been disassembled and stored at some point it is hard to say if they could have had any direct influence on any post-medieval furniture. The screened canopies at Cartmel Priory (fig 25), a gift of George Preston of Holker Hall, c.1618-23⁸⁶, are certainly of a Renaissance character overall, but in their openwork flamboyant web-like patterns, they are reminiscent of the Lancaster stalls. Pevsner sees them as “certainly the inspiration” for the canopies⁸⁷. Particularly the rediscovery of the openwork backs makes a stronger case in Pevsner’s favour.

Reconsidering dating

We should consider whether it is possible to have the stalls post-date the Black Death so they could be influenced by the French flamboyant. Yet Bond saw the mouldings as characteristic of the 1340s⁸⁸ and Tracy, as well as finding a context for the stylistic

⁸² Howard and Crossley (1917) p268

⁸³ *ibid.* pp31-32

⁸⁴ Charles Tracy “The Stylistic Antecedents of the Gondibour Screen at Carlisle Cathedral” McCarthy, Mike and Weston, David (eds.) *Carlisle and Cumbria: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology* (Leeds: British Archaeological Association, 2004) p177

⁸⁵ Tracy (2004) pp192-193

⁸⁶ Pevsner (1969) pp88-89

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p154

⁸⁸ Bond (1910a) p40

elements, sets the stalls firmly in the decade with comparison of the costume of the misericord figures to those of the Luttrell Psalter, and also the long buttoned surcoat of the lady in misericord S5 as being very similar to sculpture on Bishop Burghersh's (d.1340) chantry in Lincoln Cathedral⁸⁹. He makes other connections to the datable Ely furniture, chunky, deeply carved uprights in terms of architecture and the webbed feet of lions on the misericords in terms of sculpture⁹⁰.

The Chetham's account of the stalls, implies an unusual opinion.

“The lower part of [the] stalls is of the time of Edward I, with misereres of inferior workmanship and grotesque carving. The canopies, however, of these stalls are of the most intricate design and elaborate workmanship”⁹¹

The author here may be suggesting a similar situation to the stalls of Cartmel Priory, where the superstructure is not coeval with the seating. The dating however, to the reign of Edward I (r. 1272-1307) does not fit with the costume comparisons and seems rather more an aesthetic reaction to the perceived lack of refinement in the misericords compared to the canopies. And as will be shown in the chapter on the misericords, links can be seen between the misericords and the faces of the cusping of the troublesome tracery through idiosyncrasies in carving styles. The stalls are certainly designed as a unity, and their dating to the 1340s is very difficult to argue otherwise.

⁸⁹ Tracy (1987) p42

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ Roper p685

Conclusions on the influences upon and the effects of the stylistic nature of the stalls

The stylistic nature of the stalls has many links to experiments in window tracery in both Yorkshire and East Anglia. However, the character of the foliage advises against a completely direct link with Yorkshire. It is shown that 14th century Lancashire does show some evidence of experimenting with tracery at Heysham and Cartmel, and that the medium of wood was a way of pushing that experimentation with pattern to extremes not limited by the restraints with the weight of stone. The foliage can be seen as influenced by Winchester, but the idea of continuing the foliage onto the finial and up the crockets an innovation of the Lancaster craftsmen, who seem to have absorbed and built upon many different stylistic currents in conceiving the stalls. This combination of regional styles does not then contradict that the stalls were made either for the Priory or the local area as considered in the provenance chapter, and their links to the 1340s in both stylistic relations and depicted costume are too strong to postdate them to fit in with influence from the continental flamboyant and the rebuilding projects at the Priory.

The issue of influence is a difficult one. That the stalls appear “ahead of their time” is a significant factor, for they seem to predate the continental flamboyant by some time, elements of which are usually not recognised as appearing in French architecture until around 1380. That we could possibly attribute any sort of direct influence from the stalls or perhaps a lost English inspiration for them on the continent is extremely unlikely. Tamir’s survey “The English Origin of the Flamboyant Style” concludes largely that, without entirely arguing for complete interdependence of the two countries, French Gothic evolved more slowly than English and England reached its

“baroque” phase much earlier, which was then superseded by the Perpendicular in the mid-14th century, while France arrived at it later and developed it for longer⁹². Bony feels however it significant that the Duc de Berry, as one of the first promoters of the flamboyant style, was hostage in the English court from 1360 to 1367. Bony sees the English style as imprinting itself on his Grand fireplace of 1385-1388 and ultimately in the new façade of Rouen cathedral⁹³. Yet these can be seen as French expansions, rather than simply direct borrowings, of English Gothic forms.

The Lancaster stalls can be seen then as craftsmen preceding the continental flamboyant in that they built on the curvilinear style in small-scale architecture, as the continent would later parallel in full-scale cathedral facades. The relative ease of carving in wood compared to stone is likely what gives the Lancaster stalls, through freedom in experimentation, such a unique character in their openwork traceries of the gables, ogees and lost backs.

The gradual disappearance of the Decorated Style in the face of the Perpendicular has been attributed to many reasons, the most obvious one being the Black Death of 1349 making the exuberance seem unnecessary or the loss of the talent necessary to create it, or formal discipline being born out of a new sense of mortality or the autocratic influence of Edward III compared to the “inspired and inspiring” Edward I⁹⁴. It has become increasingly popular however, while not entirely discounting the effect of the plague, to treat the perpendicular style as part of Decorated experimentation⁹⁵. To ask if the style represented in the Lancaster stalls represents what could have become

⁹² Max Tamir “The English Origin of the Flamboyant Style” *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* 29 (1946) pp257-268

⁹³ Bony p67

⁹⁴ *ibid.* p61

⁹⁵ Nicola Coldstream *The Decorated Style: Architecture and Ornament 1240-1360* (London: British Museum Press, 1994) pp58-59

common in large-scale English architecture if it was not for the plague is perhaps too speculative due to the myriad factors to consider.

If we discount influence of English work on the continental flamboyant as unlikely, it may be possible to reconsider works such as the screens of the 15th and 16th centuries rather than as an import of foreign detail but, in part at least, inspired by local tradition. Pevsner's assertion that the marvellous Renaissance screening at Cartmel Priory (fig 25) was certainly inspired by the Lancaster stalls may at first appear contentious and fanciful. But we can see by affirming the latter as thoroughly English that they, and some other, later monuments may represent as Pevsner himself put it in the *Englishness of English Art* "the English love of embodying the anti-corporeal in the love of the "flaming line""⁹⁶. Rather than using the venerated German purely in taking a nationalistic view of art history and give England an unrealistically stubborn interdependence in all matters of art, this line of thought could prove interesting for further investigation in certain monuments such as the Cartmel screen and other North Country flamboyance of the late middle ages, and post-Reformation recusant Catholics, building their art on a local as well as a foreign stylistic foundation.

Stylistic Significance to the Medieval Audience

In all our formal analysis of the decoration of the Lancaster stalls, we should not forget to consider the meaning of this decoration to the medievals themselves. To the medieval mind, symbolism was persuasive, nature was a lexicon with which God spoke to man, and every thing could be said to speak of something else⁹⁷. The English Decorated style that the stalls represent has been argued to be a "setting for imagery",

⁹⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner *The Englishness of English Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956) pp132-134

⁹⁷ Umberto Eco *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (London: Radius, 1988) p130

imbued with meaning and significance⁹⁸. The architectural forms of the arch and gable were used as language common with metal reliquaries to enclose a space as sacred⁹⁹. The closest comparative gables we have named in the study, at Southwell and Rouen, both had statues on top of their finials, whereas the Lancaster stalls emblazon theirs with specimens of foliage. For the medieval mind the self-revelation of God was evident in the world itself¹⁰⁰, and the gables of the stalls enshrine a representation of this within a sacred space. This Aristotelian, hylomorphic view of nature expressed in the stalls can also be combined with a Platonic one. The similarity of one of the ogees to the Bishop's eye at Lincoln has been noted, and the creation of natural forms in this window through sacred geometry has been suggested as a synthesis of Aristotelean and Platonic thought¹⁰¹.

The four senses in which sacred scripture could be read, the literal (historical), allegorical, tropological (moral) and anagogical (upward reaching), also became valid for Nature and things¹⁰². As said by Nicholas of Lyre in the 13th century: "The literal sense tells us of events, the allegorical teaches our faith, the moral tells us what to do, the anagogical shows us where we are going"¹⁰³. We can interpret the stalls in this manner to uncover perhaps a little of their significance to their audience.

In the literal sense, they are merely seats. But read allegorically they represent, even in the absence of their occupants, the latter's hierarchy and role in celebrating the ritual of the Mass. The moral aspect is well represented on the misericords, as will be shown in their chapter. Finally, the lofty forms of the pinnacles and gables are in a

⁹⁸ Coldstream (1994) p48

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p37

¹⁰⁰ H. Flanders Dunbar *Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961) p18

¹⁰¹ Nigel Hiscock *The Symbol at Your Door: Number and Geometry in Religious Architecture of the Greek and Latin Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007) pp321-322

¹⁰² Umberto Eco *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p59

¹⁰³ Quoted in Eco (1988) p137

language of architectural forms that would bring to mind the Heavenly Jerusalem at the end of all things.

V. Misericords and other figurative carving

Misericord, or “mercy-seat”, is the name given to the carving on the underside of the fold-up seats of choir stalls that are said to have supported old or infirm occupants during the longer stand-up portions of worship. This chapter will show that the Lancaster misericords can be seen as forming an overall programme in providing moral messages through imagery of fantastic creatures and of daily life.

Overall the misericords, with their heavy, deeply undercut figures, are characteristic of the early 14th century. Unlike later sets, they are carved to be viewed face on, rather than from a standing position. They are similar to the sets at Ely and Chichester Cathedrals in these respects, if not of the same quality of carving.

Analysis of overall meaning

Previous analyses

Besides Remnant’s extensive cataloguing of the misericords of England and Wales¹⁰⁴ and Crossley’s frankly bizarre remark that “two or three of the baberies illustrate incidents in the life of Reynard the Fox”¹⁰⁵, the Lancaster misericords have received little attention until Dickinson’s review of their historical and aesthetic significance in his *Misericords of North-West England*¹⁰⁶. In the chapter on Lancaster he groups the misericords into three, fantastic grotesques, animals of the bestiary and moral

¹⁰⁴ G.L. Remnant *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)

¹⁰⁵ Crossley (1919) p11

¹⁰⁶ John Dickinson *Misericords of North West England: Their Nature and Significance* (Lancaster: Centre for North West Regional Studies in the University of Lancaster, 2008)

exempla¹⁰⁷. I however, would divide the misericords slightly differently, particularly since the grotesques all seem to be mixes of human and animal, rather than purely animals such as the Elephant and Pelican common on other sets of misericords. The misericords could be viewed in their entirety as moral, both providing positive and negative tropes.

Moral messages – How not to act

N6 is identified by Dickinson as a scene of temptation, with the left figure convincingly identified as a siren¹⁰⁸. It is here in the guise of a bird, but the siren's iconography also crosses over into that of the mermaid, likely due to medieval zoologists associating the sirens in Homer with the marine setting¹⁰⁹. This lets us draw a comparison of the round attribute of the Lancaster siren to the mirrors carried by many misericord mermaids, such as Chichester S24¹¹⁰ (c.1330) or Carlisle S22 (early 15th century), the latter of which still retains her bird-like claws. The mirror is a symbol of vanity, while the other figure's feet resemble a rabbit's, a common symbol of lust in the middle ages. The two roundels mock the central incident, and the one on the right repeats the attribute of the mirror, to hammer home the theme of sinful lust.

If the siren scene represents female temptation of a male, S5 may reverse the sexes, as close examination of the fragmentary legs suggests a furry biped, and therefore a wildman. The wildman or wodehouse was a derivation of the classical satyr and

¹⁰⁷ Dickinson pp13-14

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* p17

¹⁰⁹ Francis Bond *Wood Carvings in English Churches I. – Misericords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910b) p10

¹¹⁰ Remnant p163

common on misericords as a personification of nature¹¹¹. The two oak leaves that frame the two characters may serve to set the scene in the wildness of the woodland, further supporting the theme. At Whalley N7 (1480) we see a woman paired with a wildman, although this seems to represent a taming of the wildman rather than a corruption of the woman¹¹². A use as a corruptive sexual force may be unique on a misericord but paralleled in other media. On folio 62v of the Taymouth Hours (1325-35) of the British Library the bas-de-page shows a wildman carrying off a resistant young damsel. (fig 26) Grossinger identifies the left roundel as a “fallen angel” masturbating and that the right figure is not an athlete as Remnant suggests¹¹³ but more along the lines of the “bottom fondler” in Tewksbury’s misericords.¹¹⁴ These likely serve to frame the scene as one of sexual depravity.

S7 may also fit into this series. The figure next to the king has been mutilated beyond identification, but if Grossinger is correct in attributing a “dagger-like penis” to the blemaya in the roundel¹¹⁵, it may again have represented a sexual temptation. A pair of blemayae can be found flanking a man identified by Remnant as Lechery on Norwich S23¹¹⁶, reinforcing their connotations as a negative sexual force. That the other roundel also contains a monster would lead us to assume what is going on in this scene is something to be condemned, but alas the damage to the right hand figure is too great to understand the ultimate message of the carving.

¹¹¹ Bond (1910b) p16

¹¹² Christa Grossinger *The World Upside Down: English Misericords* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1997) p146

¹¹³ Remnant p84

¹¹⁴ Grossinger pp110-112

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p111

¹¹⁶ Remnant p112

N1's man supporting the seat is a common trope in misericords, with similar portrayals at Winchester S2 and N2 (c.1305)¹¹⁷ and Chichester N3 (c.1330s)¹¹⁸.

Almost a parody of the classical caryatid or Atlas, this misericord may have a moral function. An English Dominican preacher, John Bromyard, likened a corbel to slothful clergy who complain of great trials¹¹⁹, and this grumpy misericord could have served as an example of how not to deal with our day-to-day labours.

Daily Life – how to act

S1's "Monastic School" is one of the most interesting yet difficult to identify of the scenes, and has little precedent in other misericords. Reading is a pronounced theme in the carving, as there are at least three books present. The central figure also seems to be raising his hand in the common classical gesture of rhetoric. One can consider the misericord under the theme of the link between medieval reading and literacy as Camille has illustrated¹²⁰. It may well be linking the prior's oral performance; perhaps a sermon, and the act of reading aloud as something to be imitated in private, as the two monks with their open books show.

An interesting feature of the scene is the architectural canopy, which may have resembled something like that in the Judgement of Solomon in Worcester Cathedral N5 (late 14th century)¹²¹. This canopy may have been merely imitative of church architecture in which a scriptural reading would have taken place, or perhaps it is more of a sacred niche enclosing a scene of reading from the scriptures, such as an Old Testament prophet or a representation of one of the Evangelists such as the

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p58

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* p161

¹¹⁹ Veronica Seukles *Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p183

¹²⁰ Michael Camille "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual implications of medieval literacy and illiteracy" *Art History* 8:1 (1985) pp26-49

¹²¹ Remnant p178

representation of St John at Worcester S11¹²². Historical narratives or persons on misericords often tend to be enclosed within architectural forms, such as the Worcester Solomon, the Miracle of St. Werbergh at Chester N6 (1390)¹²³ and the right supporter of Ely NU16 (c.1340) which has been interpreted as St. Withburga¹²⁴. The structure in all of these can be seen as going beyond just providing a sense of place but also for sanctifying sacred narrative and historical miracle. The Worcester St. John is not enclosed within a sanctifying niche, but does however sit on a seat with the architectural form of a cusped ogee.

The Baptism of N5 also likely shows a scene of daily life to be imitated. The head under the font however, has unfortunately defied attempts at locating parallels in medieval art.

These two scenes of Baptism and Reading may simply represent the day-to-day running of the stalls' church. The Luttrell Psalter is well known for its scenes of daily life and the day-to-day running of the Luttrell estate (or at least, how Geoffrey Luttrell would want to see his estate and possessions portrayed¹²⁵) and these two scenes may be along those lines. That they have uniquely integrated supporters also lends to this separate character from the other misericords.

The five grotesques can be seen also as fitting into the didactic morality of the misericords, being as they are arguably all (N7 and S7 possible exceptions),

¹²² Bond (1910b) p150

Identified by Remnant as a woman personification, *Dialectia*. Remnant p180

¹²³ Remnant p25

¹²⁴ Grossinger p32

¹²⁵ Michael Camille *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Ltd, 1992) p118

combinations of the human and the bestial – *semihomines* – neither good nor evil. The only one pair of non-foliate supporters lends to this view. In N2, the fully human girl, presumably pure and chaste, is contrasted with fully monstrous wyvern. The two human-faced lions that sit in-between the two show the dual state in a manner that has been described as the “product of a society who use the physical to represent the spiritual”¹²⁶. All of the fantastic *semihomines* of the misericords then would serve as reminders to the occupants of the constant spiritual struggle within each man.

The man’s head of N4 poses a possible exception. He is not the usual expected grimacing grotesque we see on many other misericords and the upper parts of the Lancaster stalls, but nonetheless, in his highly stylised appearance typical of “ordinary” heads on misericords¹²⁷. Dickinson sees him as a possible portrait of the donor of the stalls¹²⁸, however this is an extremely dubious proposal. Perhaps the closest parallel would be Prior William’s initials on the Cartmel stalls, which were installed under his priorship¹²⁹, but no portrait of a stall donor on a misericord is known. Perhaps the portrait of Archbishop Chichele in his hometown of Higham Ferrers, where he founded a Chantry College¹³⁰, is the closest a misericord comes in commemorating an individual linked to the stalls. It should also be noted that the term “portrait” is a dubious one to apply to any face in medieval art. It may well be that he is a *representation* of some person of importance, owing to his prominence among the many other faces carved onto the stalls, but a true likeness is unlikely.

¹²⁶ Conrad Rudolph *Violence and Daily Life: Reading, art and polemics in the Citeaux Moralia in Job* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) p58

¹²⁷ Grossinger p135

¹²⁸ Dickinson p10

¹²⁹ Remnant pp79-81

¹³⁰ *ibid.* p122

Since all the misericords are reset on to modern seats we should not assume that their current positions are original. However, Gandy shows them in a slightly different order that may be authentic and show us some parallels that confirm some thoughts. In his time, the “moral scenes” of the King and the Siren would face each other. The scenes of the Baptism and Monastic School (If we assume the latter as one characterised as “mutilated” and not drawn) are located on the return stalls. That these scenes of more sacred affairs may have been installed here on what has been shown is likely the Prior’s seat is much as how in later stalls such as those at Beverley or Manchester the more important returned seats featured subjects such as the Pelican in her Piety in contrast to the bawdy moral fables of the laterals.

We can see how the Lancaster misericords are not merely decorative but show an overall tendency towards moral reminders. The supporters are occasionally purely decorative but sometimes act as framing elements that affect the reading of the scene within.

Other figurative carving

The carved elbows of the stalls largely feature human heads or foliage. Each of the ogees over the seats is cusped with little heads, flowers or leaves. The bases of the pinnacles have little portrait heads, animals and monsters (fig 1). The higher pinnacles can broadly be seen as having the most grotesque monsters (fig 2).

Whether we can go as far as Bond and suggest that they “immortalise the features of the Lancaster men of 1340”¹³¹ is once again dubious, again we should see them as

¹³¹ Bond (1910b) p44

stylised faces where the emphasis is on the humourous intent rather than portraiture¹³². However, the elbow carvings do tend more towards the representational than the humourous, as they are all largely passive in their expression, compared to the upper carvings, which are alive with facial contortions. The only exceptions to human heads and foliage in the elbows are an ubiquitous green man, which likely shows an interest in delight in design rather than any residual pagan connotations¹³³ and the curious figure on the north stalls (fig 27). The drawing in the Gandy sketchbook of this carving in 1807 shows it quite unambiguously as a Virgin and Child (fig 28). Whether this is indicative of its then better condition or a fanciful interpretation is moved towards the latter by close examination, which shows the “Child” to have unambiguously bestial feet. However, Gandy shows no such fancy when we compare his other drawings to extant carvings, in fact his misericord sketches are all very cursory. It may well be however, that both interpretations are correct, and it is a Virgin and Child with one or both of the figures represented as an ape. In this sense it could be compared to a human Nun suckling an ape in the margins of a 14th century Lancelot Romance in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, (fig 29) which Camille interprets the monstrous offspring as a sign of the Nun’s all-too-human sin, rather than the sinless Christ reflecting the immaculate Mary¹³⁴. Apes are often used as mimics in medieval art, such as the Funeral of the Virgin acted out by monkeys in the Pilgrimage Window at York Minster. Here it may have been the intent of this seemingly blasphemous image to show, through the apes’ tendency of mimicry, contemplation of the divine and aspiration to that state.¹³⁵ If this truly did have the appearance of a Virgin and Child but with ape-like limbs as seen now, it

¹³² Grossinger p135

¹³³ *ibid.* p157

¹³⁴ Camille (1992) p30

¹³⁵ Paul Hardwick “The Monkey’s Funeral in the Pilgrimage Window, York Minster” *Art History* 23:2 (2000) pp296-297

would provide an exemplar to the viewer of how we should “ape” the model of the divine the Virgin and Child symbolised.

Style of Carving

The misericords do not suggest more than one carver at work, although this is difficult to confirm as there are no identical subjects to compare, but hair, fur, beards etc. seem to be handled in the same manner throughout. The carver does seem to have a certain idiosyncrasy of getting the eyes different levels and different sizes, and they are always finished with deeply cut pupils. This is visible on some of the other carving of the stalls (fig 30). The style of hair falling in curls from a centre parting as in N4 is also seen in the upper carvings as well as throughout the misericords. One of the female heads in the cusping is a bust with shoulders, similar to an elbow carving, and the misericord supporter on N2.

It has been noted the faces on the elbows and ogee cusps tend to be more naturalistic than the stylised approach of the misericords. The “Prior’s” face and the king above it on the right hand side of the south return stalls are however, towards the latter. The king has a foliate crown similar to the misericord king of S6, and both heads are rather blocky and stylised. That this carving likely has some meaning above purely decorative in setting apart the Prior’s stall likely shows the misericord hand was the most favoured carver, even if his skill in capturing likeness is lacking in modern eyes compared to some of the other faces.

The foliage of the gables seems to be of another order when compared to that of the misericord supporters and was probably an entirely separate set of carvers. For instance, the extremely decorative appearance of the supporters of N7 is quite apart from the naturalistic foliage of the canopies. To know the exact divisions of talent,

and whether there was crossover between foliage, figurative carving, decorative carving (traceries) and large-scale construction (the seating itself) is likely impossible. Aspects of the figurative carving of the other regions of the stalls however can be seen as linked to the misericords quite convincingly, which do appear to be all of one hand.

VI. Conclusions

This study of the Lancaster stalls has been successful in a number of aspects, yet predictably it has not resolved every issue with the stalls it set out to solve. Chosen as a remarkable monument with comparatively little scholarly attention; they were a topic that ultimately proved fruitful.

Most successfully, the study has uncovered evidence of portions of the stalls that have not been known for likely at least 150 years, which serve to make them even more unique in the context of English stallwork. That their original appearance could be ascertained from first-hand observations was perhaps limited from the author's knowledge of carpentry techniques, but even in Gandy's time it may have been nearly as difficult. If Gandy's sketchbook were known when the stalls were restored, one would assume the evidence would have been used to reconstruct the backs as they were. Whether this sort of restoration is correct for monuments, even when we have sufficient evidence, is a matter for debate

The issue of their provenance, as the author suspected from the start, was very unlikely to be resolved within this study, although it has been shown that the Priory itself is the most likely source, but only due to the lack of convincing evidence for any other origin, and is by no means conclusive.

The stalls have been placed within a pattern of decorated experimentation in the Northwest, despite the admittedly limited evidence by drawing on various currents from the 1340s in England. Their flamboyant style has been attributed to their

freedom in the medium of wood, and likely not any continental influence. That they could represent an influence for North Country flamboyant around 1500 and in recusant Catholic works such as the canopies of Cartmel priory is a matter for further research. The author's lack of first-hand knowledge of East Anglian and also continental monuments admittedly may have hindered some stylistic comparisons in this study; as to draw comparisons in foliage carving is difficult from photography.

The analysis of the misericords has found some new evidence as to their original appearance and meaning, but not as successful as analysis of later sets, where they can be compared to prints. This study hoped to find some parallels with illuminated manuscripts, but research into this was frustrated by the lack of available facsimiles, although some comparisons have been made to show that there is perhaps a continuity in the language of illumination and carving. Some aspects of the misericords, such as the head under the font, unfortunately defied explanation.

This study I hope has shown the significance within medieval art of the Lancaster stalls and also the innovation characteristic of the late Decorated period itself, and suggests further research outside the scope of this undergraduate dissertation. At the very least, that it has shown that the backs, currently occupied by modern tapestries, were filled with flowing openwork as sumptuous as the ogees arches, and the stalls, in their original painted form and deployment, would have been among the finest statements in Gothic woodwork in the country.

List of illustrations:

- Fig 1: Lancaster stalls: Detail of human and animal stops. Photo: Author.
- Fig 2: Lancaster stalls: Detail of grotesques from base of upper pinnacle. Photo: Author.
- Fig 3: Lancaster stalls: Detail of terminal gable from east end of south returns. Photo: Author.
- Fig 4: Gandy Sketchbook 11L: Sketch of plan of the stalls, “supposed” and “as they now stand”. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum, London.
- Fig 5: Gandy Sketchbook 14L: Sketch of elevation of back of the stalls. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum, London.
- Fig 6: Gandy Sketchbook detail of 11R: Detail of measured front elevation of canopies. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum, London.
- Fig 7: Gandy Sketchbook detail of 15L: Detail of the further two openwork backs. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum, London.
- Fig 8: Photograph of stalls likely c.1906. From Roper, frontispiece.
- Fig 9: Interior of Lancaster Priory in the 1840s. After a lithograph by F.S. and R.K. Thomas. Lancaster City Museum.
- Fig 10: Goddard: Front and side elevation of stalls. Source: Paley and Austin (eds.) p9
- Fig 11: Lancaster stalls: Head carving of elbow of south return stalls. Photo: Author.
- Fig 12: Lancaster stalls: Reverse of canopies of north return stalls. Photo: Author.
- Fig 13: York Minster, N. Yorks. west window. Photo: Author.
- Fig 14: Beverley Minster, E. Yorks. Nave windows. Photo: Author.
- Fig 15: Patrington church, E. Yorks. West window. Photo: Author.
- Fig 16: Selby Abbey, W. Yorks. East window. Photo: Author.
- Fig 17: Welwick church, E. York. Tomb. Photo: Author.
- Fig 18: Heysham church, Lancs. Window in south choir. Photo, author.
- Fig 19: Ribchester church, Lancs. East window of north chapel. Photo: Author.
- Fig 20: Beverley Minster, E. Yorks. Detail of Percy Tomb. Photo: Author.
- Fig 21: Citole, British Museum, London. Photo: Author.
- Fig 22: Saint Maclou, Rouen, West façade. From Nicola Coldstream *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p53 Photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.
- Fig 23: Cartmel Fell Church, Cumbria. Rood canopy. Photo: Author.
- Fig 24: Cartmel Fell Church, Cumbria. Detail of Cowmire Pew. Photo: Author.
- Fig 25: Cartmel Priory, Cumbria. Detail of choir stall superstructure.
- Fig 26: Taymouth Hours, British Library. Detail of f62v. From Camille (1992) p109
- Fig 27: Lancaster Stalls: Detail of elbow carving on North laterals. Photo: Author.
- Fig 28: Gandy Sketchbook, detail of 10L. Detail of rendering of Fig 27. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum, London.
- Fig 29: Lancelot Romance, John Rylands Library, Manchester, detail of f212r. Nun suckling ape. From Camille (1992) p30
- Fig 30: Lancaster stalls: Detail of head on capital from north returns.

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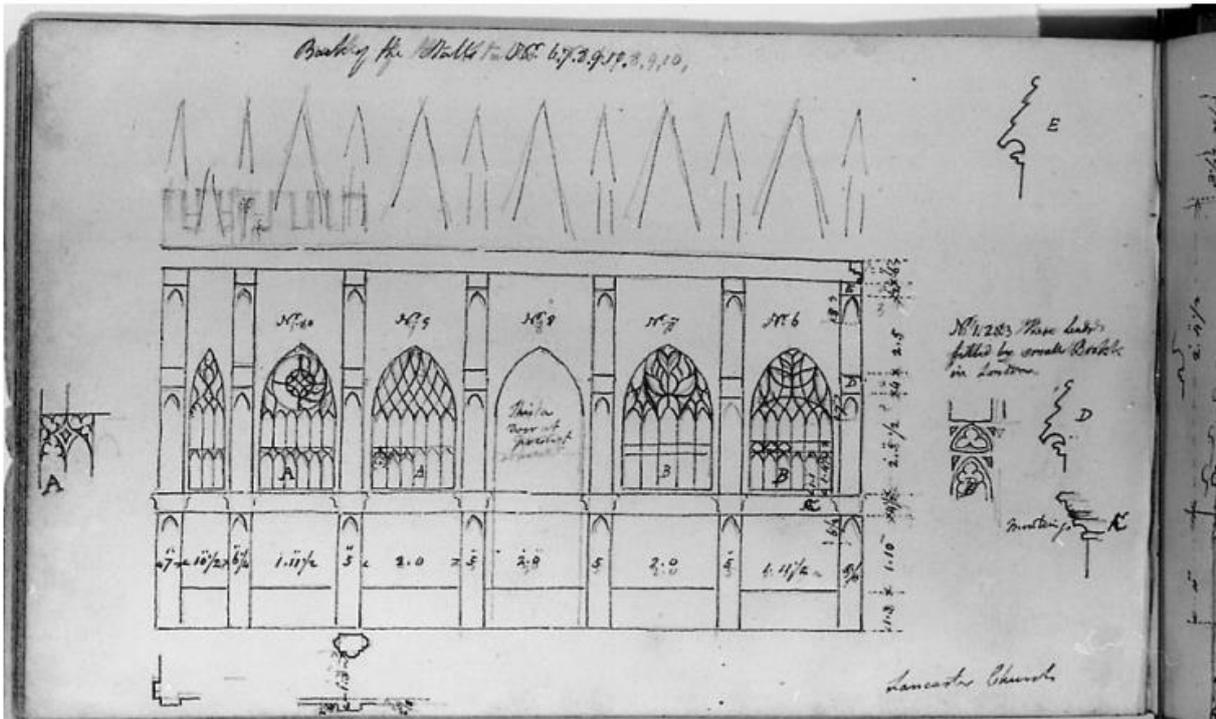


Fig 5: Gandy sketchbook: elevation of the back of what is now the south lateral, with detail of lost openwork in backs, and details of cusping within.

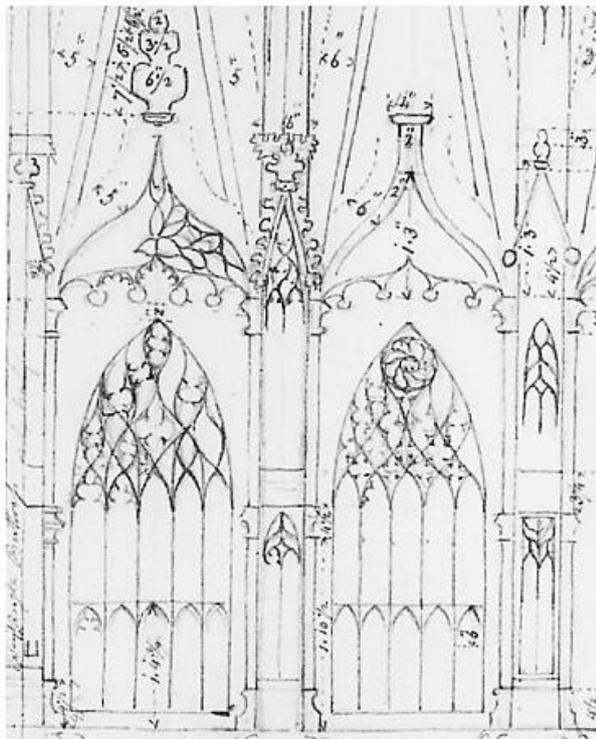


Fig 6 (left): Gandy sketchbook: Detail of measured front elevation, showing openwork backs.

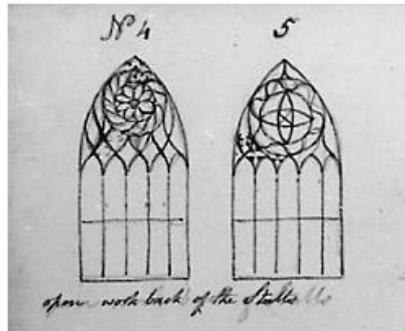


Fig 7 (above): Gandy sketchbook: The other two backs known to Gandy.

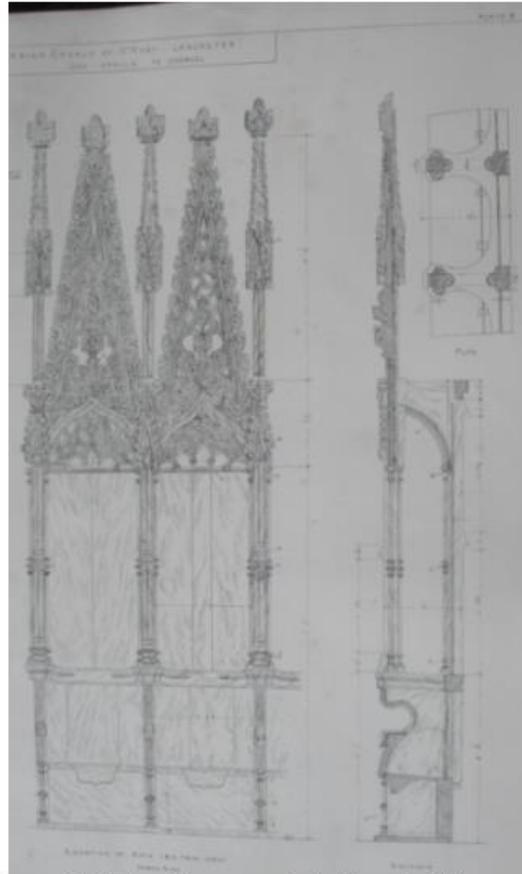
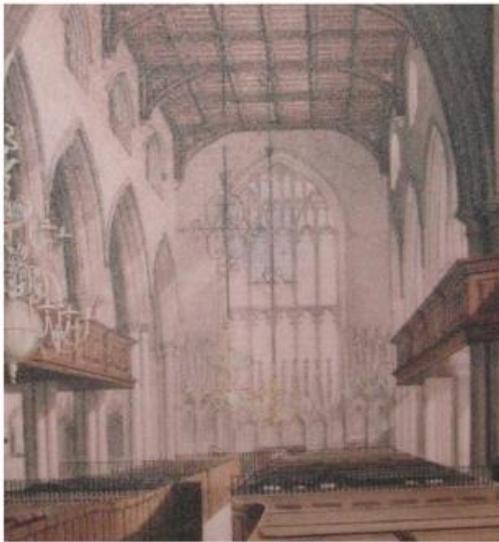


Fig 8 (upper left): The stalls as a reredos in the early 20th century
 Fig 9 (left): The stalls as a reredos in the 1840s
 Fig 10 (above): The stalls as sketched by Goddard in the 1870s, largely in their current form.



Fig 11: Lancaster stalls: Head carving on elbow of south returns



Fig 12: Lancaster stalls: Reverse of canopies showing flat construction.



Fig 13: York Minster, west window.

Fig 14 (left): Beverley Minster, nave windows.

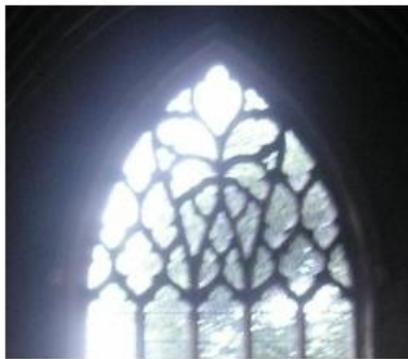
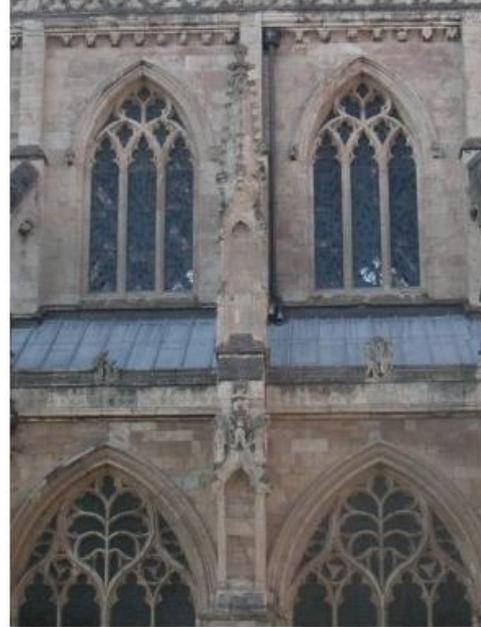


Fig 15: Patrington church, west window.

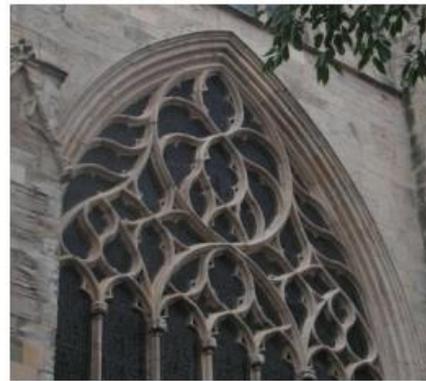


Fig 16: Selby Abbey, east window.



Fig 17: Welwick church, tomb.



Fig 18: Heysham church, original decorated window in choir.



Fig 19: Ribchester church, east window of north chapel



Fig 20: Beverley Minster, detail of Percy tomb showing character of foliage.



Fig 21: Citole, British Museum. Detail showing character of foliage.

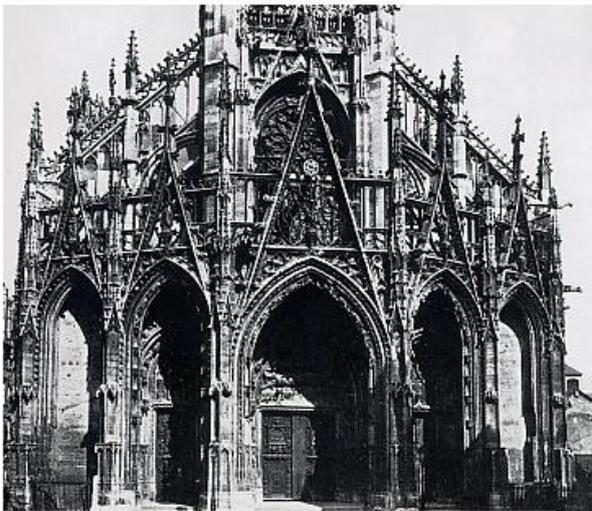


Fig 22: Saint Maclou, Rouen. Openwork gables of west facade



Fig 23: Cartmel fell church, rood canopy.



Fig 24: Cartmel Fell Church, Detail of Cowmire pew



Fig 25 (left): Cartmel Priory, detail of stall superstructure.



Fig 26: Taymouth Hours, British Library. Detail of Wildman abducting damsel.



Fig 27: Lancaster stalls: Detail of elbow carving on north laterals.



Fig 28: Gandy Sketchbook: Detail of his rendering of Fig 27.



Fig 29: Lancelot Romance, John Rylands Library. Detail of Nun suckling ape.



Fig 30: Lancaster stalls: Capital from north returns showing similar idiosyncracies to misericord carving.

Appendix I – Canopies

This appendix is intended to show the wealth of tracery and foliage design within the Lancaster canopies, and to be referenced during the stylistic comparisons. It also shows that the canopies have been removed and do not surmount their original seating.

All photography of the stalls is by the author. The canopy drawings come from the numbered drawings in 7L, 16R and 17R of the Gandy sketchbook, while the ogee tracteries from 15L and 15R. No. 1's canopy and tracery is included in the measured front elevation of 11R.

Reproduction of images from Gandy Sketchbook by permission of Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

N1



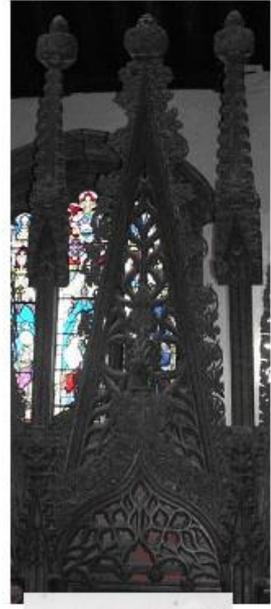
N2



N3



N4



13



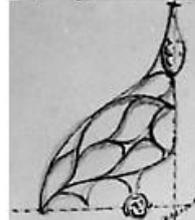
12



5



15



N5



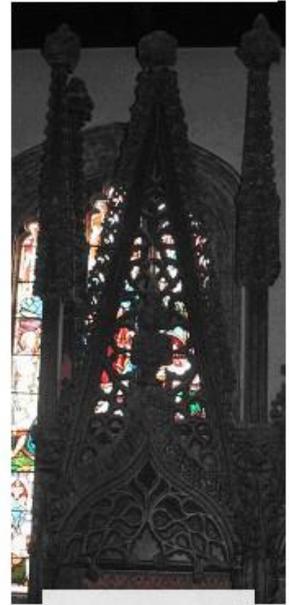
N6



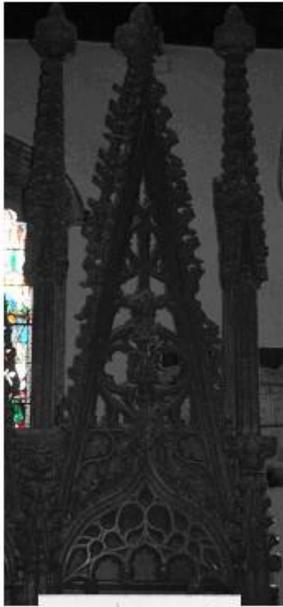
N7



S1



S2



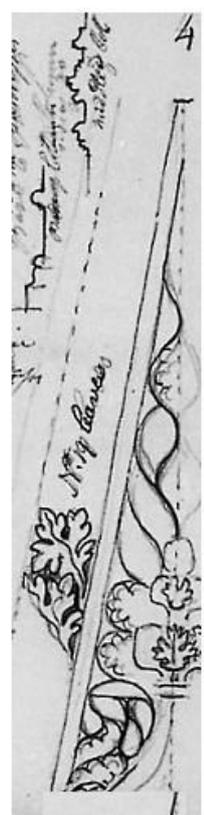
S3



S4



S5



S6



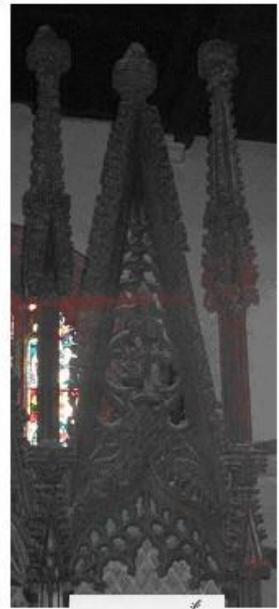
S7



S Sanc. L

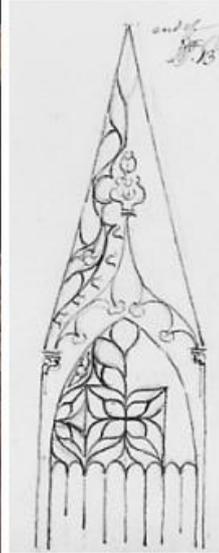


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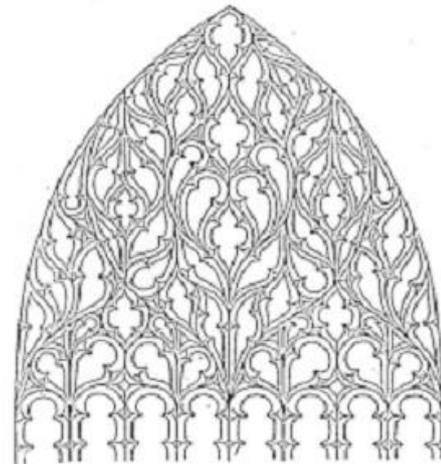
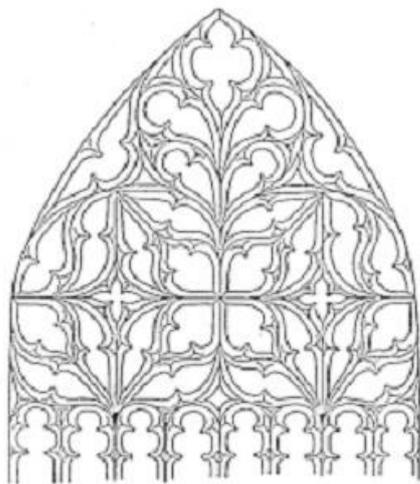
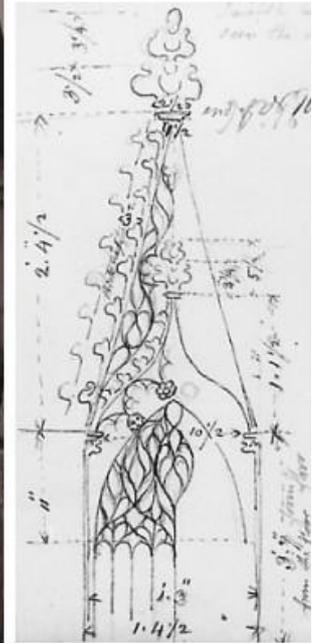


Blind Tracery panels in North Sanctuary

Left



Right



Tracery illustrations from Crossley (1919)

Appendix II: Misericords

This appendix provides images of all the misericords, with a brief description. All photography is by the author. Detail of the Gandy sketchbook 17L courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.

N1 – Man Supporter



A man, hands on knees, supports the seat above him.

N2 – Pair of lions



Two lions that recede backwards in space diagonally facing the viewer, rather than the usual side-on view of other beasts.

The supporters are worn but clearly identifiable as young girl in wimple and round-necked button gown and wyvern rampant¹³⁶.

¹³⁶ Remnant p83

N3 – Quadraped



Composite monster with human head, its hands and dress of the upper half contrasts with its bestial tail, legs and hair behind.

N4 – Man's head



Man with centre parting, beard and moustache and simplistic three-buttoned tunic.

N5 – Baptism scene



Two figures, male and female, kneel under another figure that appears to be anointing them. On the left is the likely font, but with the curious presence of a human head underneath. The figure being anointed is reminiscent of the man's bust in N4, with centre parting ending in a curl and a moustache. The supporters are integrated into the scene, on the left two nuns in habits kneel, while on the right, two women and a man stand.

N6 – Siren



On the left is a composite of human (one assumes female) and bird, which Remnant claims holds a shield¹³⁷, but is more likely to be a mirror. The right hand figure in a headdress has what could be described as rabbit's feet and holds a dagger. Supporters show two humanoid figures who hold their bodies to fit within the awkward space.

¹³⁷ Remnant p83

The right hand one holds a circular object identical to the human/bird monster's, and what may be a rake.

N7 – Grotesque leopard



Remnant describes as “lion or leopard courant right”¹³⁸. It has a particularly grotesque visage, with its tongue sticking out. Supporters leaves, yet curiously towards decorative rather than naturalistic, reminiscent of fan vaults.

S1 – Monastic school



There are two central figures, a child attendant aiding a larger figure to read from a lectern. They stand under what was once likely a full architectural canopy. The supporters are two monks who appear integral to the scene, both appear to be carrying books.

¹³⁸ Remnant p84

S2 Bird/human grotesque



This is a human head on the body of a bird. It wears a caftan¹³⁹ and has long hair and a moustache. The supporters appear similar to N4.

S3 and S4

Missing.

S5 Noblewoman's temptation



Likely we would have had two central figures. The lady, in wimple and eight-buttoned gown, appears to resist figure to left, and holds her left hand up to her face. Both figures appear to be flanked by oversized oak leaves. Roundels show angel and woman. On a close examination, it is clear that the lady has naked breasts, and apparent that the angel is intended to be nude and touching his genitals.

¹³⁹ Remnant p84

It is difficult to consider the central scene due to the extent of the damage to the left hand figure, all of whom remains is the lower body and a single foot. However, close examination of the surviving legs show carved hatching that suggests fur, which would lead us to assume the missing figure was a bestial biped. A small fragment of carving across the lady's right leg could suggest a staff carried by the left hand figure. The lady's face and right arm have been lost, but the roundels surprisingly survive despite their subject matter.

S6 King



A king, crouching in the manner of the man holding the seat of N1, with long beard and hair wearing a foliate crown, is approached on the right by a figure in incongruous in scale. The supporters feature, on the left, a head with legs, identified by Dickinson as a *blemyae*¹⁴⁰, and which Grossinger attributes to having “a dagger-like penis between its legs”¹⁴¹. On the right, Remnant describes a “two legged creature, with human lower limbs and lion’s mane and tail”, although it also appears to have wings.

All four faces have been removed, and the right hand figure’s arms have been lost.

¹⁴⁰ Dickinson p15

¹⁴¹ Grossinger p111

S7 – Lions with single head



Two lions face each other, and although the face itself has been damaged, we can see from the mane and pair of ears they had a single head.

Lost Misericord



In the Gandy sketchbook all the extant misericords are depicted except the Monastic school (likely considered “so mutilated as to not be seen”), but also a further one. It appears to be foliate, or perhaps a bird’s nest. However, Gandy’s drawing of it is too small and lacking in detail to subject it to analysis.

Appendix III – The J.M. Gandy sketchbook

This sketchbook was in private hands prior to its acquisition by Sir John Soane's museum in London in 2001. It shows sketches of various locations in the Lancaster area in 1806. The front cover is enscribed "Roslin/Melrose/Church Lancaster/Storrs", referring to the locations: Roslin Chapel, Melrose abbey, St. Mary's Lancaster (the Priory) and Storrs Hall. Although he uses the designation "Church of Lancaster", all he draws from the Priory are the stalls. Throughout Gandy has written his notes in pencil then gone over them in pen, which accounts for the "ghosting" of text that does not make it particularly easy to decipher.

This appendix is by no means intended to be an exhaustive description of the sketchbook or even of the pages relevant to this study, but as a brief description of the evidence to encourage further investigative work on the stalls outside the scope of this dissertation.

The pages are numbered as the museum advised, each number represents a two page spread, and L and R the left or right page.

1 L: Lancaster Castle

1 R: Storrs Hall

2 L: Landscape

2 R: Landscape

3 L: Roslin castle

3 R: Landscape

4 L: Storrs Hall

4 R: Storrs Hall

5 L: Roslin Chapel

5 R: Storrs Hall

6 L: Storrs Hall

6R: Storrs Hall

7 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Drawing of canopies, numbered 1-5, with detail of crocketing, and openwork tracery within the gables. Various moulding panels of aspects of the gables and pinnacles.

8 R: Storrs Hall

9 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Buttress tracery patterns, labelled top, mid, lower, numbered 3 to 5. Moulding profile of buttresses. Four more specimens of tracery numbered 1 to 4, 2 labelled "supposed ends". Tracery of pinnacles. Moulding profiled labelled "moulding to the open work of the canopies", "all the buttresses have this moulding".

9 R: Storrs Hall

10 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Elbow carvings numbered 1 to 12. Misericords numbered 1 to 10, No. 3 blank, No. 8 labelled "broken off". Leaf carving marked "inside of base of No. 10"

10 R: Storrs Hall

11 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Two plans of the stalls, one with stalls with returns in place, between arcades of choir, and one labelled "Plan of the stalls as they now stand in the church. The numbers refer to the parts sketched in the different drawings".

11 R: **Church of Lancaster:** Fully measured front elevation of stalls, numbered 1-3. Detail of lost openwork backs to No. 1 and 2. No. 3 labelled "This now a door therefore the back is lost". Tracery of ogee of canopy 1 shown.

12 L: Storrs Hall

12 R: Storrs Hall

13 L: Storrs Hall

13 R: Storrs Hall

14 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Measured drawing of back elevation of stalls, labelled "Back of the stalls No. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10". Lost open work backs shown for all but 8, which is labelled "This is a door at present". Text "No. 1, 2 & 3 These heads(?) filled by small book in London". Detail of the cusping of the lights of the tracery of the openwork backs, labelled A and B is shown in detail and assigned to Nos 10 and 9 and 7 and 6 respectively. Three mouldings labelled C, D, E.

14 R: **Church of Lancaster:** Fully measured drawing of the two surviving blind tracery panels. Text "The end of the stalls outside at bottom against seats. Inside as much as seen the pattern".

15 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Two openwork backs, No. 4 and No. 5, labelled "open work back of the stalls". Sketches of ogee tracery labelled No 2. to 8 with some detail of cusp heads and foliage. Text: "All the arches have a different shape as if drawn by [?]"

15 R: **Church of Lancaster:** Ogee tracteries numbered 9 to 16. Buttress tracteries labelled 6 to 10.

16 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Buttress tracteries numbered 11 to 16 and labelled "top" "mid" and "bot", some out of sequence and corrected. Diagram of the side of the buttresses.

16 R: **Church of Lancaster:** Canopies numbered 6 to 10. 7 labelled "This upper part to another pattern evidently belongs to some other canopy". Label near bottom of canopies "Not open under this line".

17 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Elbow carvings numbered 13 to 20. Two broken off, No. 13 and No. 20 not extant in modern stalls. Misericords numbered 11 to 16. No. 13 labelled "very much broken". No. 15 and No. 16 labelled "These two so mutilated as so not to be seen". No.12 not extant in modern stalls.

17 R: **Church of Lancaster:** Canopies numbered 11 to 16. No. 14 and No. 15 numbered out of sequence. Nos. 14, 15, 16 crocketing not illustrated, labelled "same as.." Nos. 12, 13, 11 respectively.

18 L: **Church of Lancaster:** Three sets of tracery patterns.

First two sections of tracery, labelled "fragments in a door to the vestry adjoining". "These two supposed to belong to the buttresses at the back of the stalls".

Second diagram of tracery labelled:

"This piece separated from the rest not perforated supposed to be part of the fronts of seats of desks to stalls. [?] more work of various patterns nailed to the back of Nos 1 + 2" Parts of these likely survive as attached to the west end of the returns.

Third diagram of tracery labelled:

"9ft of this nailed to the back of No. 4 + 5 of various patterns in the heads of this general form"

Moulding profile labelled: "A plan of the mouldings".

All the subsequent 22 pages of the sketchbook are of the Lancaster Guildhall.