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Presentation to Guides, 17 December 2024

THE CANONS' STALLS IN St HUGH'S QUIRE

Since becoming involved as a volunteer in the cathedral, and particularly since training to becoming a guide in 2016, I have had an interest and fascination with the canons' stalls and canopies or pinnacles above the stalls in St Hugh's Quire. I endeavour to mention our splendid stalls and although there is so much to talk about during our limited time during a tour, I personally think it worthwhile to mention them.

In order to explain the Canons' stalls, I thought I should first start with the explaining about the prebends.

Prebends

The arrangement that each canon should have a prebend goes back to the foundation of the Cathedral by Remigius in the 11th century.

William the Conqueror endowed the cathedral with manors at Welton and Sleaford and land at Kirton, Caistor and Wellingore in order to establish the first prebends at Lincoln Cathedral

Gerald of Wales and John of Schalby state that Remigius appointed 21 canons. This was doubled to 42 by Bishop Robert Bloet who succeeded Remigius. This was further increased by the third and fourth bishops, Alexander and Chesney, to 44.

Canons' endowments were provided by income derived from lands, manors and churches, or from customary payments in money. Such an endowment was known as a prebend (*praebenda* – provider – income or estate) hence the holder was a prebendary.

On the tablet in each stall are the place names of the villages and towns which refer to cash payments made to the canons.

There were three exceptions. *Centrum Solidorum* was worth 100 shillings (today £5 - s24); and *Decem Librarum*, literally 10 pounds (n22). Both were paid from the tithe farm of the City of Lincoln. The third was *Sexaginta Solidorum*, 60 shillings today £3. Sadly we do not know the details of where this payment was from. (n04).

The full title of a canon of Lincoln is: "Canon of Lincoln and prebendary of xxxxxx". He is not an honorary canon. It was this possession of a prebend that gave a canon a place in the cathedral body and that alone qualified him for a seat and a voice in the chapter.

Before the Reformation the number of prebends had grown to 58. The properties of two of them, Banbury and Cropredy, became part of the endowment of the See of Oxford in 1589. The prebends of Thame, Sutton cum Buckingham and Leighton Manor appear to have been reduced in importance to lay ownership after the Reformation, leaving 53 prebends.

At Lincoln, Remigius allocated a stall to each archdeacon, although they were not full members of the cathedral body, unless they also held a prebend.

Canons and Vicars Choral

In the middle ages clergy who held high offices of state were often rewarded by being appointed prebends in several cathedrals. This led to a distinction between residentiary canons who were part of the staff of the Cathedral and non-residentiary canons.

Lincoln Cathedral canons were secular canons, that is they followed a rule as monks would, but lived in either in a house in minster yard or elsewhere close to the cathedral, rather than together as monks did.

Non residentiary canons were required to provide deputies to represent them in choir services. These deputies were called vicars choral. The word 'vicar' comes from the Latin 'vicarius' meaning a substitute' or proxy. These canons paid one-seventh of the income from their prebend to the common fund of the Cathedral to provide the Vicars Chorals' incomes.

Vicars Choral were divided into two classes, senior vicars being in priests orders and junior vicars or poor clerks in minor orders. The senior Vicars Choral served as chantry Priests at the many altars in the cathedral, all of which had chantries attached to them.

Poor clerks ranked below a vicar, but above a chorister and served in the chantry chapels until chantries were finally dissolved in 1547.

The Prebendaries' Portions of the Psalter

As you know every canon was allocated a portion of the psalter in order that the whole psalter was recited daily "*if nothing hinders*". That remains the ideal, but in practice it can rarely have happened¹.

Eventually the plan of the allocation of the psalms to the holders of prebends was fully developed, but not without inconsistencies. The dislocation of both psalms and stalls, by the removal of tablets, took place for various reasons, one was the gradual reduction of the number of archdeacons.

Remigius is reputed to have instituted eight archdeacons from 1090, but as other dioceses were formed out of the vast diocese of Lincoln, a number of archdeaconries were transferred.

King Henry VIII also upset the old arrangement (amongst other things!). In 11542 the archdeaconry of Northampton was transferred to the new see of Peterborough and Oxford archdeaconry to the diocese of Oxford.

The Archdeaconry of Buckingham, together with the prebends of Leighton Manor, Sutton cum Buckingham, Cropredy, Banbury and Thame became part of the new diocese of

¹ As of January 2025 there were ten vacant stalls, leaving 22 psalms plus ten verses of psalm 119 unsaid - Editor.

Oxford. The tablets of these five were taken away and their psalms forgotten and left unassigned for over four hundred years.

Much later in 1837 the archdeaconry of Leicester was transferred to Peterborough, Bedford and Huntingdon to Ely. Leicester would not become a diocese in its own right until 1927.

Reordering the Psalter

Canon Wickenden stated in 1881 that thirteen psalms are unappropriated, the perfect psalter is now never said and was a matter of some regret. Wickenden asked “can they be soldered up again?”

It was not until 1977 that a scheme for their correction was brought before the General Chapter and accepted, that all the seven misplaced tablets and the thirteen unassigned psalms were restored and replaced and integrated again into the sequence of recitation by the canons in due order.

The whole psalter is once again apportioned according to the usage dating from about the 1200. so, Canon Wickenden will be pleased that *“the soldering has been done.”*

As to the income, by the Cathedrals Measure of 1840 endowments were handed over to the Ecclesiastical Commission for the augmentation of poor livings and the provision of new *“cures of souls”*. Therefore, the monetary and material value of the prebends (some very wealthy in the past) no longer belongs to the canons of Lincoln.

The Canon’s Stalls

The stalls date from 1365, from the time of John of Welbourne who became Treasurer at Lincoln in 1350. He was instrumental in supervising the installation of the new stalls. However, some records state that he paid for the stalls, but was this just the fact that he managed the finances of the cathedral, rather than that he paid out of his own pocket?

The construction of the Lincoln stalls marks a turning point in the history of medieval woodwork. Earlier stalls which have survived elsewhere are constructed on the principle of masonry with canopies cut out of solid blocks as though made of stone, however at Lincoln carpenters achieved the full mastery of their craft, the soaring lightness could only have been achieved by men who fully understood the scope of mortised and tenoned wood construction – they are magnificent.

The whole set of stalls at Lincoln and those at Chester Cathedral, which were constructed ten years after those at Lincoln and probably by the same team, were undertaken by skilled men who were experts in their field and it is considered that the King’s chief carpenters William and Hugh Herland influenced the canopied and choir stalls at Lincoln and Chester.

The stalls are built on a two-tiered platform of wooden joists and timbering which rest upon a stone base. The base is pierced with holes, treated ornamentally, but primarily for ventilation, however it is also possible that the hollow spaces beneath were intended

to improve and enhance the acoustics. Incidentally those apertures are now frequently used as access points for cables and other connectivity within St Hugh's Quire.

The beauty of gothic architecture lies in its subtle use of contrasts. Some of the detail of the stalls is difficult to study because of the dim lighting and the dark colour of the wood.

The latter is not due to age, but to the mistaken opinion of the Victorian restorers, who saw in the pale beauty of natural oak only the "the colour of rotten wood!" and subsequently treated the stalls with oil. This they believed had the "advantage" of obscuring the difference between the glorious original work and some of the clever copies made a various time by the restorers in the late seventeen and eighteen hundreds. Rightly or wrongly, it does give a unity to St Hugh's quire, but I would have loved to have seen the original honeyed oak stalls and pinnacles above.

In the late seventeen and eighteen hundreds some of the original stalls were replaced by box pews which were considered rather ugly, and these were replaced by the open-ended pews in the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries.

Above the canons stalls are the wooden pinnacles or turrets. These are of exceptional quality and were started slightly later in date, circa 1370.

The figures of saints were inserted into the pinnacles in the 1850s, they are placed in date order of the Anglican saint, clockwise down the south side to the west, across the west end then eastwards on the north side.

In 1874 five additional stalls were built on the north side between the pulpit and Carlton cum Dalby. They were built to replace the box like structure known as the "Dean's Den", below the original location of the organ which was relocated to the pulpitum in 1702. The organ was enhanced by Lincoln architect Edward Willson in 1828.

The entrance to the den was through the door in the north choir aisle opposite the treasury. The box was for the use of families and guests of the residentiary canons. Judges on circuit, also were able to use this box, as they were considered to be guests of the Dean.

You will be aware that there has recently been a rearrangement of these five stalls in order to give the newly created Canon Missioner a dedicated stall.

The stalls are named: *Missionarius* (Canon Missioner), *Clericus Fabricae* (Clerk of the Fabric, that is the Head of the Works Department), *Clericus Capitula* (Head Clerk or CEO), and *Locumtenens Regis* (The Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire).

Above the stalls are statues:

Missionarius, King Henry V

Clericus capitula, King Edward I

Clericus Fabricae, King Charles I

Locumtenens Regis, Queen Victoria.

There is a strict order of precedence in the allocation of the stalls. the Bishop's Throne (Cathedra) at the east end of the stalls on the south side of the Quire.

The Dean sits on the south side of the western entrance to the quire so the south side is called *Decani*. The Precentor (or previously the Chanter) sits on the north side of the west entrance to the Quire and this north side is known as *Cantoris*.

The Chancellor has the easternmost of the stalls on the south side, adjacent to the Bishop throne, and until the Reformation opposite him on the north side sat the Treasurer. These two stalls marked the eastern end of the medieval stalls.

There are two tiers of stalls, the upper for the canons and the section of the lower stalls for the lay vicars or choirmen.

The Bishops' Throne or Cathedra

The original now in the chapter house. We believe there was a second Cathedra designed by Sir Christopher Wren, but what happened to that?

Michael Honeywood, Dean after the restoration in 1660, was putting the Cathedral back together after the ravages of the Commonwealth. As he commissioned Wren to build the library, did he also commission Wren to create a Bishops Throne?

The current bishops throne dates from 1788. James Essex the Cathedral architect was commissioned by the Dean, James York, and Chapter to design and construct a new chair / throne for the Bishop. Thomas Lumby and his son William were master carpenters and architects working in Lincoln, they had been highly recommended by Essex and undertook this work, but this throne was of a much simpler design than we see today.

In 1894 it was decided that the Bishops' throne needed to be improved (and Gothicised), the "*entablature*" around the throne left, right and above was enhanced by the creation around the throne of enclosures containing a carving of Christ with a lamb, together with Angels around him and a figure of the Virgin Mary to the left (west).

A desk in front of the throne and two flanking desks were also added at this time for the use of the Bishop and Vicar General and Registrar Episcopi.

The bishops' desk incorporates carvings of the four Latin Fathers:

St Gerome - a book – and shield depicting a lion.

St Ambrose - a scourge - with shield depicting a beehive.

St Augustine - a sacred heart - with shield depicting a heart.

St Gregory - a triple mitre of Rome - with shield depicting a dove.

The PULPIT

I cannot undertake a talk about St Hugh's quire without including the pulpit. By the middle 1800s Gothic revival was all the rage and when a new pulpit was suggested, the go to architect was Sir George Gilbert Scott, the founder of the famous family of architects - the Gilbert Scott's.

The pulpit was made by Ruddles of Peterborough who were enjoying a high reputation by restoring and replacing much of the woodwork in Westminster Abbey in the 1860s.

The pulpit is in memory of the Archdeacon of Stow and suffragan Bishop of Nottingham the Rev'd Edward Trollope. The pulpit was sponsored by notable people of the time, including Alfred Lord Tennyson, the novelist Anthony Trollope (a second cousin) and the Cathedral Chancellor Francis Charles Massingberd. It was sited immediately to the east of the row of new stalls – and makes the stall of the monarch's representative the worst seat in the house!

DGO – 17 December 2024