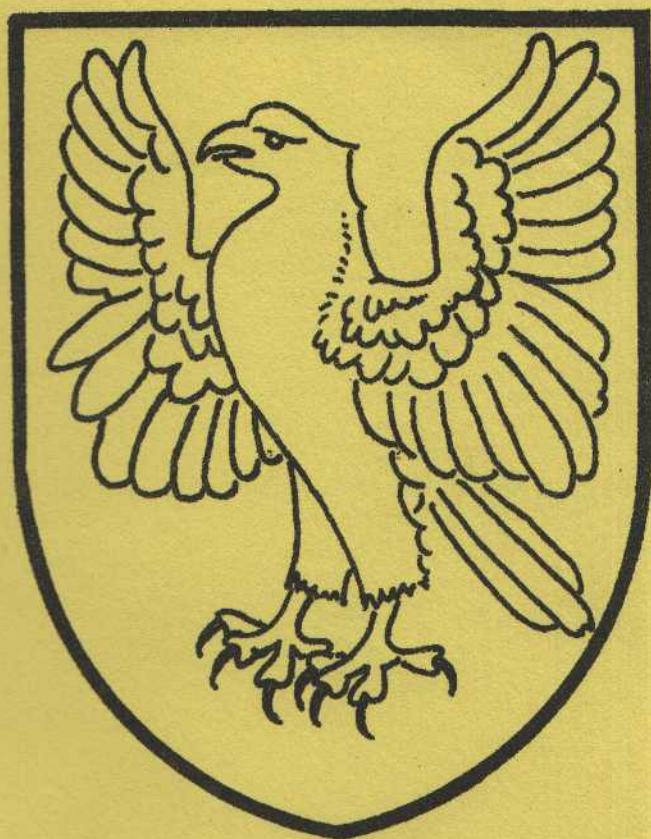


**CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST  
CAMBRIDGE**



**The Stonework and Carvings**

This piece of research by Ted Holt was completed within a year before his death. Although in failing health at the time, he applied himself to the task of finding out about certain features in St. John's Church about which fewer and fewer in the congregation knew much, and of writing the information in booklet form. The meticulous care and detail shown in his research epitomise the character of Ted Holt, and, in that he was dealing with craftsman's art, the task appealed to him all the more, as he himself enjoyed hours of pleasure in craftwork as a hobby.

I have no doubt that, had he lived longer, Ted's research would have been extended to other areas in St. John's Church.

Eileen Wilkinson  
July 1987



# THE STONEWORK AND CARVINGS AT THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, CAMBRIDGE

## INTRODUCTION

Most of the stonework is Bath Stone, one of the oolitic limestones, and probably came from the extensive quarries of this material in Wiltshire.

Nearly all the carvings in the chancel are the work of Mr G. H. Barnsdale and those in the rest of the church, both inside and out, were done by or under the supervision of Mr C. J. Whitaker. Both these men worked for Rattee and Kett and both lived in the parish, as did Mr Kett, and all were regular worshippers here. Mr Whitaker was for some time a Churchwarden.

Many of the carvings were done to illustrate something particular and these, so far as I have found recorded or been able to deduce, have been mentioned individually, and attention has been drawn to the rest with notes as appropriate.

It is interesting to see that the porch windows immediately to the left and right of the entrance door have as many as seven carved items each. The whole church has just over 150.

## EXTERIOR DECORATIONS

The chief glory of the church is the well proportioned west end with its large window and the excellent geometrical tracery. The neat stonework at the apex of the gable adds further interest.

The WEST DOORWAY has an ogee-shaped hood moulding with a finial-like cluster of stonework in which there is the figure of St. John and his eagle at his feet, standing on a corbelstone which is decorated with vine leaves and grapes. When the figure of St. John was

placed in position, it was found to be much lighter in colour than the rest of the work. Some members of the Church Council objected to this, and to placate them, some coffee grounds were steeped in water and when a suitable hue was obtained the figure was brushed with the liquid and everyone was happy with the result.

The left label-stop shows an angel with a shield on which is the Greek letter Alpha and the right label-stop is identical but with the letter Omega.

The two side doors show only leaves, flowers and fruit.

The emblems on the GREAT WEST WINDOW are of the four Evangelists:

Top left label-stop: A winged Ox for St. Luke

Top right label-stop: An Eagle for St. John

Left sill: A winged man for St. Matthew

Right sill: A winged lion for St. Mark.

Window at the WEST END of NORTH AISLE.

Left label-stop: Three fishes arranged to represent the Holy Trinity.

Right label-stop: Pelican on nest feeding her young. This is an emblem used by Corpus Christi College. The second Chairman and the first Secretary of the General Committee set up in 1892 to establish a church in the locality, were both Corpus Christi men.

Window to the LEFT of the MAIN DOOR

Left label-stop: A shield showing the emblems of the Passion -- spear, ladder, reed and sponge.

Right label-stop: A shield with IHS with rays of glory in the background.



The two sill carvings show only leaves, flowers and fruit.

Window to the RIGHT of the MAIN DOOR

The same as the corresponding window on the left, but in reverse order, and similar sill carvings.

Window at the WEST END of the SOUTH AISLE

Left label-stop: Cross Keys for St. Peter. The gift of the living of Cherry Hinton, mainly from which parish that of St. John's was taken, was held by Peterhouse. When the College was offered the the gift of the living of the new parish of St. John it declined the offer and so it went to the Bishop of Ely.

Right label-stop: A Dove holding an Olive Branch, which is the emblem of Peace and the Holy Spirit.

The external label-stops of the AISLE WINDOWS and CLERESTORY WINDOWS are much larger than the ones inside and show carvings which include Acanthus leaves, Pomegranates, Thistles, Lilies, Daffodils, Roses, Hawthorn, Daisies, Grapes and Figs. The two side windows of the chancel are carved in a similar manner. All are worth studying.

The EAST WINDOW of the church has no label-stops due to the use of a continuous hood-mould, but there are, at each end of the sill, blocks of stone which have not yet been carved. There are also two uncarved blocks of stone at the label-stops of the small window above.

## INTERNAL DECORATIONS

On the lintel of the central door between the porch and the church are carved a cross, an anchor, a heart and a

branch of palm and in Gothic lettering "AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY". It is interesting that it is recorded that the carving on this lintel was paid for by the men working on the church extension.

Before studying the internal carvings, compare the tracery of the West window with that of the East window and notice the pleasing differences. e.g. four "spokes" in each roundel instead of three and four cusps at the head of each light instead of two.

#### The GREAT WEST WINDOW.

Left label-stop: Arms of Keble College, Oxford, which was the college of the Revd. J. Patterson Morgan, who was Vicar at the time of the extension.

Right label-stop: Arms of the Diocese of Bangor where the Revd. J. Patterson Morgan attended a Theological college.

Left sill: Arms of the Diocese of Ely

Right sill: Arms of the Archbishopric of Canterbury.

#### Window at the WEST END of the SOUTH AISLE

Left label-stop: The badge of the Perse Boys' School, which, at the time of the church enlargement only had a hostel and playing field in the Parish.

Right label-stop: The Badge of the Cambridge and County High School for Boys (now a Sixth form College).

#### Window at the WEST END of the NORTH AISLE

Left label-stop: The badge of Homerton College

Right label-stop: The monogram of the Morley Memorial School.



(These schools were then the four educational establishments in the parish).

The corbels under the stone shafts in the NAVE.

There are five on each side and starting from the west end they are:

- North side:
1. Fig: the staple diet of Mediterranean countries, known as the "poor man's food". (Also a symbol of prosperity.)
  2. Lily: The symbol of purity and for the Virgin Mary.
  3. Thistle: This is the symbol of earthly sorrow and sin. Genesis 3: 15-17, "Cursed is the ground ..... in sorrow shalt thou eat of it .... thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth."
  4. Thorn: The Hawthorn reminds us of the crown of thorns.
  5. Oak: Because of its solidity and endurance, is the symbol of the strength and the virtue and of the endurance of the Christian against adversity.

- South side:
1. Vine and Grapes: The emblem of Christ from His words "I am the true vine".
  2. Pomegranate: All seeds make one fruit as all Christians make one Church.
  3. Hawthorn: The crown of thorns.
  4. Rose: If red the symbol of Martyrdom and if white a symbol of purity.

5. Sycamore: otherwise called the Egyptian fig tree. This was the tree Zaccheus climbed -- Luke 19.

The corbel stones supporting the roof timbers in the NAVE working from West to East.

North side: King David, St. Agnes, St. Peter, St. Etheldreda.

South side: St. Barbara, St. George, St. Anne, St. James.

Mr Whitaker, not long before he died, gave a talk to St. John's Branch of the C.E.M.S. about the carvings which he had done and mentioned during this the names of the models on which he had based the faces of the various saints. It is a pity that no note was made of this at the time. It is remembered, though, that David was modelled on the face of Mr I. G. Elworthy (the first Secretary of the original Executive committee and for several years a Churchwarden), and one of the other male saints on the face of Mr Edw. Baldock who was vergar for many, many years.

St. Barbara's face was modelled on that of Mr Whitaker's daughter -- a Barbara.

#### Windows in the SIDE AISLES

The small label-stops at these are well worth studying for many have fruit and flowers hidden among the foliage. Look for the acorns on the south side and the daffodil on the north.

Those at the CLERESTORY windows are much the same.

In the VICAR'S VESTRY -- Door to North Aisle -- this was originally an outside door and has two large label-stops showing emblems of the Sacrament. One has wheat and the other grapes.

North aisle arch to WAR MEMORIAL CHAPEL.



The three capitals here show acorns, fruit and leaves, and are quite different from those in the corresponding arch on the south side of the church.

Between here and the chancel arch is a large corbel which acts as a springer for the nave arch. This and the corresponding one on the South side are interesting for their thistles and pomegranates and for being the only carvings by Mr Barnsdale which are outside the chancel.

They are probably the ones mentioned at the AGM of the Church Council on 8th April 1910. He was thanked for some carving he had done as a free-will offering, for no mention was made of them in his estimate.

#### THE CHANCEL ARCH

The detached marble shafts with their corbels and capitals are of little interest except for being a typical piece of Victoriana.

#### Aisle arch to the ORGAN CHAMBER

The three capitals here are of particular interest, for they are done in a style which appears nowhere else in the church. They are carved in almost the "stiff-leaf" manner. Who did them? A pupil of Mr Whitaker, maybe.

It is also noticeable that the carving shows up much whiter than the piers, which are of a light biscuit here as is all the stonework in the first part of the church and the War Memorial Chapel and the Vestries. This is due to the fumes from the gas lighting which was in use until the 1928/9 extension. (This change is most noticeable on the two central piers of the nave, for half of each was incorporated into the temporary west wall of the early church.)

The carvings here must have been done after the church extension.

# CHANCEL CARVINGS

It was said at the beginning of these notes that most of the chancel carvings were done by Mr G. H. Barnsdale. Here is his estimate for the work as recorded in the Parish Magazine for July 1909.

	£	s.	d.
45 ft run of enrichment round the east end	40	10	0
4 label-stops, N and S windows in Chancel	4	0	0
2 corbels to roof principals	4	10	0
2 bases of columns -- chancel arch	24	0	0
2 cluster caps -- chancel arch	7	0	0
2 caps chancel window	4	10	0
3 caps, arches -- N. side of chancel	11	0	0
1 cap, centre pier, Aisle Arch (North)	3	0	0
2 caps side piers, Aisle Arch (North)	3	0	0
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	£ 101	10	0
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Except for the first item which was paid for by general subscription, the items were paid for by individual members of the congregation. Their names are given in the Magazine -- the most interesting of which is for the capital of the central pier on the N. side of the chancel which is given as "by the Vicarage children -- £5".



## NORTH ARCADE

The capitals show roses, vine and grapes and pomegranates.

## SOUTH ARCADE

This does not appear in the estimate as it was built later (1914). The capitals show lilies, pomegranates and hawthorn, quite in keeping with the north side and were done by Mr Whitaker early in 1919.

## SIDE WINDOWS

The label-stops for these show fruit and leaves, as do the two corbels for the roof timbers.

String course in the SANCTUARY.

This is of vine leaves with grapes and wheat ears and Mr Barnsdale didn't quite finish it. It was completed much later (1920) by Mr Whitaker, at a cost of £15.10.0 and it is interesting to note the change in workmanship, which takes place on the east wall about six feet from the corner on the right of the altar.

The work is somewhat coarser and is most noticeable in the size of the grains of wheat.

## VESTRIES and WAR MEMORIAL CHAPEL

There are no carved label-stops inside or outside of any of the windows or doors. A different architect was responsible for this extension from the one responsible for the first part of the building, and he merely put a plain label or hood-mould with returned ends, where necessary.