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# THE FIRST GEORGIAN RESTORATION OF BEVERLEY MINSTER

Ivan Hall

After the century and a half of neglect that followed the Reformation, by the beginning of the 18th century Beverley Minster was in danger of serious structural failure. It was a neglect compounded by a miscalculation of the church's earlier, 13th-century designers. The latter apparently tried to dispense with as many flying buttresses as possible, and seemed to place more than usual reliance upon structural ironwork in order to secure the indisputable elegance of their fabric. Certainly, there were major changes of design, especially at the junction of the choir and lesser transepts,<sup>1</sup> and at a quite early stage flying buttresses were added to support the 13th-century high vaults of all but the great north transept. This lack of uniformity in structural balance subsequently affected both the central tower and the northern end of the great transept. The former was stiffened by the insertion of a vault above the main crossing arches, a change that meant that the tower was no longer a "lantern", but the latter problem seemed intractable. The transept front and the vaulting and arches immediately within it thus continued their outward movement effectively unchecked, until by the early 1700s the apex of the great gable is said to have overhung the street by about 3'6" (1m 7cm).

In the summer of 1717 matters rapidly got worse, and collapse seemed imminent. This would have brought down much if not all of the north transept and probably the already cracked and weakened central tower, as the stonemason Thomas Thackeray reported on June 17, 1717: "these three weeks or a month a great deal of Plaster and Mortar fell down over the North Door on the inside, by which one can now see betwixt the Great North Wall with the Stone Rooffe in the Middle Isle, so that the Roof has no support from the Wall but hangs as it were by itself – and what is worse . . . the wall above the Battlement on the same East side, which should support the main Roof – is in two several places flown from the Battlement at least three or four inches – and there are also many other cracks in the Arches and Walls and several that have been filled up with Mortar some years ago which are now wider than ever. Therefore we fear if some care be not immediately taken that the North Isle will fall which may occasion the Ruine of the whole Minster."<sup>2</sup>

Since the Reformation, and in particular since 1573, the financial responsibility for the upkeep of the fabric had been with the Corporation of Beverley. The latter, however, rarely hesitated to "borrow" money from the Minster Old Fund and before 1706 the parlous state of the fabric was becoming of sufficient concern to call for a public subscription. Just in case the corporation was also tempted to divert the money thus raised, the Archbishop of York eventually demanded that the contractors' vouchers be kept, and the outgoing payments recorded in an account book. The totals spent had duly to be audited, and the book kept available for the archbishop's inspection. These vouchers have not been traced, but the account book survives.<sup>3</sup> It is the chief source of our knowledge of the progress of the scheme. Most entries record only the payments to the men and women concerned. Only exceptionally was the particular task they had performed or an extra cost they had incurred noted alongside:

The great questions were: would it be cheaper to repair or rebuild the transept and crossing, and how would the money be raised to pursue either option? The usual con-

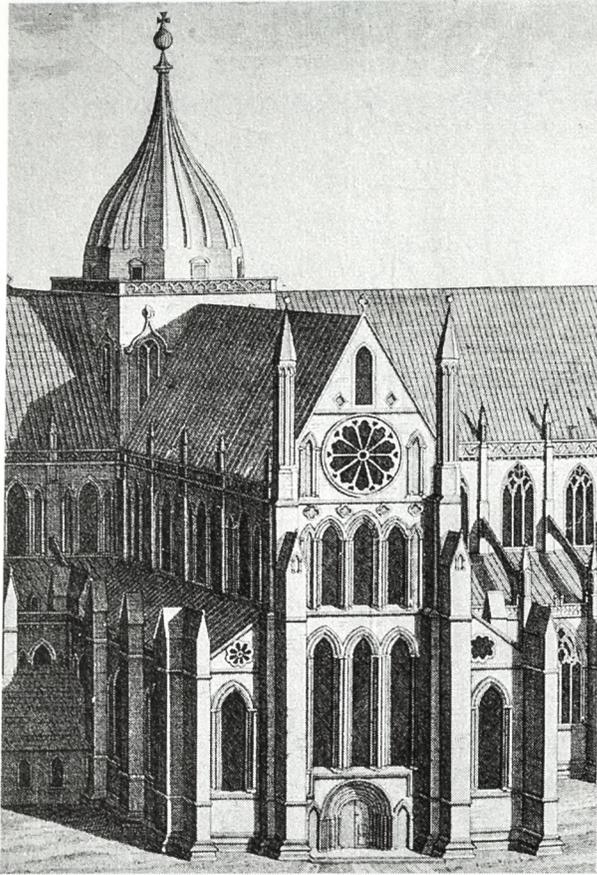


Fig. 1. Detail of the north transept and Hawksmoor's new central tower and lead covered cupola.

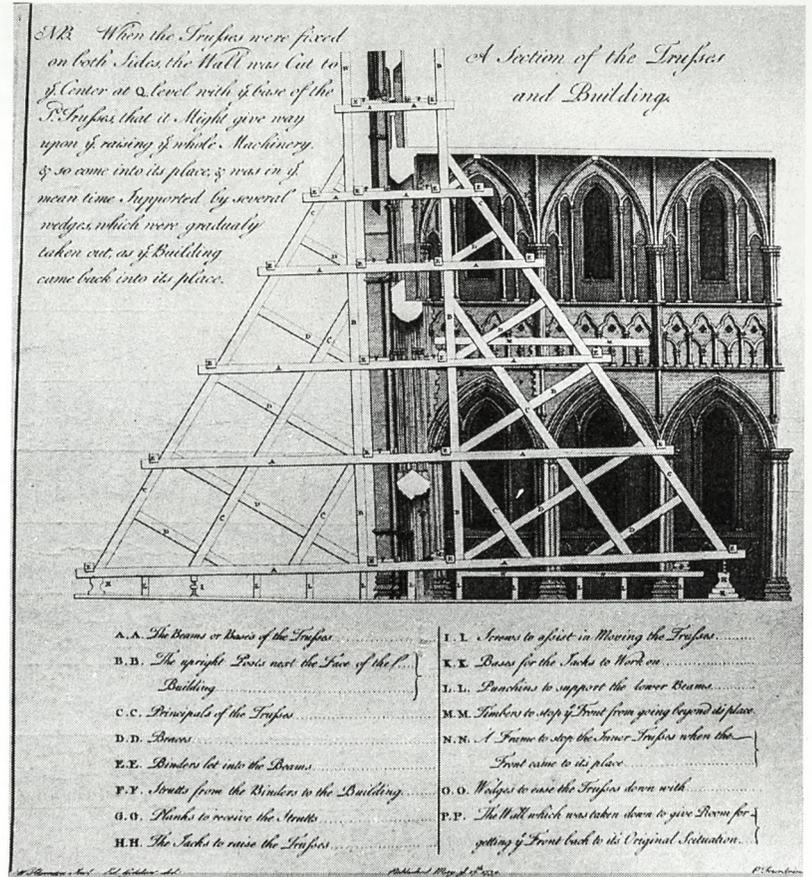


Fig. 2. Engraving of the giant trusses used to force the north transept gable wall back to the perpendicular, designed by William Thornton, engraved 1739.

temporary answer was to collect money by means of a “brief”, that is a formal collection authorised by a private Act of Parliament. Such an act was obtained in 1713, and the moneys raised were invested in interest-bearing stock, the interest being allowed to accumulate until there was sufficient to start the programme. The trustees, like many others, were tempted by the high rates of interest offered by the South Sea Company. The public subscription was greatly augmented by the gift of £4,000 by Sir Michael Warton in 1724, the moneys raised forming the basis for the Minster New Fund.

Fortunately, the borough’s Members of Parliament, Sir Charles Hotham and Mr John Moyser, were both interested in architecture, (as was Moyser’s son, Colonel James Moyser (1693–1753)), as well as being aware of the need to keep in with their constituents. It was almost certainly they who initially sought the advice of Nicholas Hawksmoor an architect who could without hesitation work in the Gothic as well as the Classical manner.<sup>5</sup> Hawksmoor was, however, honest enough to recognise that his knowledge of structure was insufficient to allow him to take full charge of the reparation of Beverley Minster. The commission was therefore to be shared with William Thornton (1675–1721) of York.

Nothing is stated in the account book about what, if anything was designed by either Moyser. George Oliver stated in 1829, that “the nave was completely fitted up with new pews, a pulpit and galleries . . . and all the plans of Mr Moyser, both for ornament and utility, were carried into full effect”.<sup>6</sup> However, if the reparations as such are credited to Thornton, the credit for the new central tower and its dome, the huge new Corinthian reredos, the Doric nave galleries and possibly the altar rails should go to Hawksmoor.<sup>7</sup> Whether Hawksmoor, Moyser or Thornton designed the towering new pulpit, new font cover and new inner sides of the many doors is less certain, but, if nothing else, the Thornton firm certainly carved them. The London man was perhaps more sensitive to the Gothic while lacking Thornton’s breath-

taking ingenuity that alone saved the centre of the Minster from certain collapse. If fashionable change has encouraged the removal of Hawksmoor's embellishments, once so prominent, much of the work of his collaborator still presents pleasurable discoveries.

William Thornton was one of a significant group of architects firmly linked to one of the building trades – in this case, joinery. He was also a carver of distinction and a man unafraid to devise and execute the boldest of decisions. His firm included his wife, their son Robert (d.1724) and their younger son William, as well as their able assistant, John Howgill. When the elder William died, it was his wife who kept the firm going and it was to her that many payments were made.<sup>8</sup> It is evident from the volume of work undertaken by the firm that several others were employed whose names are not yet known. In Beverley they were responsible for the internal decoration of the Hotham town house.<sup>9</sup> They carried out major work at Beningborough Hall and Wentworth Castle and their carving style can also be seen at Gilling Castle, Bramham Park, Boynton Hall and a room formerly at Whitley Beaumont (all in Yorkshire).<sup>10</sup> Their role as carver/architect still needs further study, but Beningborough can reasonably be given to William Thornton – documentary evidence coming from an annotation discovered by Dr Eileen Harris.<sup>11</sup> Their sources included the engraved designs of Jean Berain, Domenico de Rossi, and Carlo Borromini. In particular, the latter's half-Gothic half-Classical moulding profiles suited the Thorntons' taste. Indeed, motifs at Beverley Minster can be paralleled at Beningborough (which is a Classical house) – but there turned upside down.<sup>12</sup>

A comparison with the woodwork in Hawksmoor's other church commissions shows that the Thorntons were more exuberantly imaginative than their London counterparts, and thus more likely to have provided the detailed designs, though Hawksmoor presumably held a watching brief. It was Mr (William) Etty, a York architect whom Hawksmoor trusted, who measured off and valued the carpenter's work for the new dome in 1724. The precise allocation of power between Hawksmoor and Thornton seems unrecorded, (except for Thornton's control of work on the north transept), as is the extent of their subsequent inevitable collaboration. None of Hawksmoor's drawings seem to have survived, while Thornton's device for rectifying the great gable is known only from the posthumous engravings published in 1739.

Once sufficient money seemed likely to have been raised for both restoration and refurbishment,<sup>13</sup> a sequence of very different decisions would have to be taken. Should the new work be new in style – i.e. Baroque – should it be a convincing replica of medieval work, or should it combine the two as an amalgam of the old and the new such as would reveal its date while harmonising with the past? In the event all three approaches were adopted. The restoration of the 13th-century north transept was meticulously careful, as was the reproduction of 14th-century masonry when the west end of the south nave aisle was reconstructed. At the other extreme, the new Corinthian reredos was uncompromisingly Baroque, as were the new altar rails, pulpit and nave galleries. The contrast in styles proved to be great, and criticism steadily mounted until their removal was sought and partly achieved during the 1820s.<sup>14</sup> The hybrid elements lasted much longer, though they probably would not have remained if the Minster's revenues had not been severely depleted during the Great Agricultural Depression of the 1870s, when their removal was admitted to be a matter of taste rather than necessity. Hence we can still see the carved doors, the “new” bench ends and the many carved heads that were added by the Thorntons to the choir stalls in the later 1720s. The only “Classical” fitting still in situ is the font cover, and even this has a Gothic massing that together with its Classical detail fits the “Classical” Norman font better than any Victorian-neo Norman one might have done.

Though the restoration scheme was initiated in 1706 and revived in 1713, it did not begin in earnest till 1717. Thereafter it gathered momentum until 1731, by which time the

Minster had been transformed as well as rescued.

The intended restoration was heralded by a series of engravings. Two are inscribed "Survey'd by N. Hawksmoor". Neither accurately represented the building. The well-known view of the west front was part of the appeal for funds and is dated February 1716 (old style).<sup>15</sup> The other, dated 1717, is dedicated to William Dawes, Archbishop of York, and shows the Minster from the north. The Percy chapel of about 1490 is omitted from the north-eastern-most corner, as is the medieval central tower and the shallow double gable between the western towers. The third tier of the lesser transept windows are inaccurately shown as are those below the rose window of the great transepts, and those between the north porch and the west tower. The last are apparently 'Decorated', matching those east of the porch. It is no surprise, therefore, to note that the sole remaining medieval figure on the eastern tower buttress is also omitted.

The rival print is neither signed nor dated. There was, however, a large payment to William Thornton including for "drawing – Several draughts towards perfecting the Perspectives".<sup>16</sup> This engraving clearly shows all the items noted above, and, within the limits of size, shows them accurately, including the shallow double gable between the towers. As the latter feature is also shown in King's engraving of the 1650s the later commentators' view that its omission from the Hawksmoor engraving indicates this to be an addition made during Hawksmoor's restoration cannot be right.

It is evident from the foregoing that restoration of the structure was followed by refurbishment of the interior, a signal that a greater than expected sum of money had been raised, though once the initial delight had passed, critics were to find increasing fault with various aspects of the Baroque restoration. John Carr of York, for example, was invited to redesign the central tower in 1758 and Timothy Lightoler altered the pulpitum and added a new organ case from 1765.

Arthur Young, writing of his visit to Beverley of about 1770, noted: "The Minster, for *Gothic* architecture, is a very light and beautiful building, and kept in good repair; but its *modern* decorators appear to have had ideas of neither beauty nor propriety; for, with true taste, they have given the venerable pile just such an entrance as you would imagine for a cake-house; a *new-fashioned* iron rail, and a gate *handsomely* adorned with gilding, and a modern stone wall with two urns of white stone, which, with a few reliefs cut on them, would do tolerably well for the decoration of a shrubbery. But these gentlemen, not content with this stroke of genuine propriety, have carried their *Grecian* ideas into the very choir of a *Gothic* cathedral. At the entrance, under the organ, they have raised some half a dozen (if I recollect right) Ionic pillars and pilasters, and built an altarpiece in the stile of I know not what. It is an *imperium in imperio*, the *bird of Jove* certainly flutters her lofty wings to command the attention of the spectator, and call it off from the barbarism of *Goths* and *Vandals* to six curious fluted *Corinthian* pillars, raised *merely* to support the pedestal whereon appears the king of birds. You will not quickly meet with a more capital piece of absurdity; and yet (if you could suppose a use for it) this altar-piece, as high as the cornice of the pillars, has something light and well proportioned in it, but rendered, heavy and unpleasing by the eagle's pedestal."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, though still within the Georgian period, a concerted move was made to take out the more overtly Classical interior fittings such as the offending altarpiece and the onion dome of the central tower, whose removal was among the many sweeping changes undertaken during Fowler, Rickman and Hutchinson's restoration of the 1820s.<sup>18</sup> Much of their work was no longer lasting, for it was removed in the successive further restorations of the later 19th and 20th centuries. Fortunately, each wave of restoration and counter-restoration has left something of its predecessor's work, and this, coupled with a considerable body of documentation, allows us to understand the chief elements of each major phase.

This much is certain, the Georgian citizens of Beverley took the greatest pride in their principal church and in the approaches to it.<sup>19</sup>

## THE GREAT RESTORATION

On June 20, 1717, on the occasion of the master mason, Thomas Thackeray revisiting the site, he observed that the condition of the transept was dangerously worse than on his previous visit of "Since Christmas was a twelvemonth", when he had viewed the Minster in order to make an estimate of the cost of repairs would come to.<sup>20</sup> Presumably the latter's first estimate was the basis of Hawksmoor's public appeal for £3,500. A month later (July 29, 1717) it was hoped that the money in Mr Graburn's and Mr James Mihill's hands "will near finish the Arches necessary for repairing the Minster, or for Saving of it, Should this part fall". A year later on August 24, 1718, William Thornton was paid the first half of his 20gn fee for his alternative scheme. In the interim some arches had been walled up, presumably according to Thackeray's scheme, before work recommenced in May 1718 under Thornton's. The arcades would have to be infilled in both schemes simply to prevent a progressive internal collapse should the transept gable fall, but does the term "near finish the Arches" mean that the first scheme was to apply external flying buttresses to the transept front, or merely to infill the arcading within? The words can scarcely apply to the huge wooden trusses of Thornton's proposals. The very success of the latter's scheme would tempt many to take credit for it, hence the issue of the two engravings in 1739, naming Thornton as its originator.

Thornton's daring scheme to rectify the gable wall involved first the removal, at both high and aisle level, of the three transept vaults and roofs. This was followed by the walling up of both tower and aisle arches which took two seasons. In the first, the brick foundations were built between the pillars.<sup>21</sup> Then there was the removal of the masonry of the northernmost bays, from the vaulting ridge down to the arch spring level. In September 1718 Edward Milner and his son spent  $4\frac{1}{2}$  days each levelling rubbish for 11s 6d. Finally, the base of the gable wall "was cut to ye Center – that it Might give way upon ye raising of ye Whole Machinery and so come into its place and was in ye mean time supported by several wedges which were gradually taken out, as ye Building came back into place".<sup>22</sup>

The five huge inner and outer pairs of triangular trusses were aligned parallel with the wall they supported, that is their outer angles were lower than their internal counterparts. Thus as the trusses were put in motion, the external jacks and "screws" would push upward and their internal counterparts would be brought downward so that the bottom beam of each truss would rest upon "a frame to stop the Inner Trusses when the Front came to its place". To prevent too rapid a descent, a series of wedges had progressively to be extracted. The main scaffolds were completed by August 1718,<sup>23</sup> and the roof stripped of its lead and dismantled. To protect the newly exposed wall tops against frost they were thatched in the winter of 1718.

With the start of the new building season in 1719, further demolition and consolidation could take place so as to free the great gable prior to its rectification. The work of rectification commenced in the week August 31 – September 5, 1719, when Thornton was paid for his men "helping at the screws" and night watchmen had to be employed to ensure that vandals did not wreak havoc during the interval.<sup>24</sup> The arches, triforium and clerestory were then reconstructed, partly with new stone, the vaults wholly rebuilt in laminated timber, lath and plaster, and the roofs renewed.

The temporary walling up of the transept and crossing arches was retained to allow the demolition and rebuilding of the central tower. The latter's medieval form has been dis-



Fig. 3. Remains of one bay of the Doric nave galleries, designed by Hawksmoor, early 1720s. Now at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire.

puted. The sole record is King's engraving of 1656. Its imperfect draughtsmanship shows a square tower emerging above roof level, and those corners are continued upward to the full height. The discontinuity of the string course above the windows has given rise to the idea that the tower was octagonal. This is not in the writer's view sufficient evidence in favour of an octagonal superstructure.

Externally the most obvious change was to be the new central tower – a brick structure faced with stone – and its lead covered wooden cupola. The motif was a favourite with Hawksmoor. He had experimented with similar designs for St Mary, Warwick, and Westminster Abbey and, on a smaller scale, on the screen wall at All Souls, Oxford. The last named and Beverley were executed, the others not. The Hawksmoor tower was built in 1721 and the dome was completed by July 1722, when Allanson the plumbing contractor received his final payment. George Best did not, however, “strike the centres in the Doom” until October 1723, which suggests a certain caution over this still flawed part of the building.<sup>25</sup>

The general restoration of the masonry was undertaken partly for good housekeeping, partly for aesthetic effect. In 1718 the new king, George I, donated £100 and had consented to the stripping of masonry for three years, from the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey, York.<sup>26</sup> Such stones were then transported along the rivers Ouse, Humber and Hull, and thence by the canalised Beverley Beck toward the Minster. These “imported” stones were retooled, typically by shallow overall grooving except for the edges, where an outer banding of the surface was similarly tooled at right angles to the perimeter. Such stones can clearly be traced near the base of the north transept gable wall.

The reworking of the nave aisle wall where it abutted the south-west tower raised a more complicated problem. This was where the former church of St Martin had once joined the Minster. St Martin's was to the Minster as St Olave or St Michael-le-Belfry were to St Mary's Abbey or York Minster, or St Margaret to Westminster Abbey. At Beverley, St Martin's parish was within the borough's boundary and its civic jurisdiction, while the Minster parish lay beyond and outside it. There seemed little point in maintaining two conjoined churches in Beverley. St Martin's was therefore destroyed just after the Reformation leaving a scarred south-western corner of the Minster, with fragments of St Martin's embedded in that wall. According to Daniel King's engraving neither aisle windows nor flying buttresses, nor any door with appropriate enrichment then existed at that end of the aisle. These three westernmost bays would have been in the same Perpendicular style as their counterparts in the north aisle, had circumstances permitted, and this much is indicated by the surviving blind window tracery above the south aisle nave door. Similar tracery presumably existed in the inner side of the two blind windows to its west. The trustees decision to open up these two blind windows raised the question whether there should be internal unity, in which both aisles would have matching perpendicular windows, or external uniformity, in which the prevailing Decorated style would be extended throughout the full length of the south nave aisle. The Georgian desire for external homogeneity evidently took precedence, no doubt because internally one cannot readily see both aisle walls at once, whereas any external discontinuity is immediately apparent. The blind window over the south door thus has its original perpendicular tracery intact within, while the external tracery was to be recut to the 14th-century pattern adjacent, a tracery pattern repeated within the two openings further west. The new flying buttresses of 1722 were also copies of the their predecessors, but the carved figures of the aisle parapet could either be taken for Hercules or Samson and so forth – a characteristic display of Baroque ambivalence between the Pagan and the Biblical.

Internally, beneath these new “Decorated” windows, the masons reconstructed the blind wall arcading to match that east of the south nave door. The spacing of the new columns was as regular as that in the medieval bays directly opposite on the north aisle wall

was self-consciously irregular. The Georgian capitals virtually copy their 14th-century models to the east, but the label stops do not. One of the heads is of a Saracen, another a partly draped Classical female bust, yet again indicators that the Georgian masons – probably the Issott family<sup>27</sup> were not out simply to fake but rather to be in keeping with both the old and new styles.

Given the care taken elsewhere, the loss of the ogee arched tomb canopy that dominated the tomb chapel of the 4th Earl of Northumberland who had been murdered in 1489, is unexpected.

This chapel, added to the north side of the Lady Chapel, was the last important medieval addition to the Minster fabric. Fortunately, the interior had been recorded by the Rev Jackson during his visit in the 1660s.<sup>28</sup> The canopy spanned the width of the west wall of the chapel, its shallow ogival arch was cusped beneath, and had a deep and heavy cornice above. The whole was richly carved in a latest Gothic style. The decorations included the Earl's heraldic emblems – a crescent moon and two buckles conjoined. Among the minor charges recorded in the Minster account book was one for a letter to be sent to the Duke of Somerset in 1718. Perhaps the Duke was being asked for help toward the restoration of his ancestor's tomb canopy. In the event, and at an unknown date, the canopy was dismantled and the adjacent stonework was made good. The canopy's stones were then retooled to provide one good face and, thus treated, were reused for repairing the general walling of the exterior. Two of the stones were recently rediscovered during repairs to the south side of the Minster and the author was fortunately able to identify both the heraldry and its link through the Jackson drawing, to the Northumberland tomb. (In much the same way the Minster 13th-century builders had reused earlier carved work of the late 12th century in situations where its origin would not attract too much attention.)

## EMBELLISHMENTS

Roche Abbey stone was brought in for the new pulpitum, carved by John Pate who was also responsible for the wholly Classical carving of Holy Trinity, Leeds.<sup>29</sup> The Order, noted by Arthur Young as Ionic, is an unarchaeological version of the "Classical" capitals of the late 1170s–1180s. It compares with those in the Trinity Chapel at Canterbury Cathedral, where Hawksmoor had worked in about 1704. Some of the minor carved detail is convincing enough to be mistaken for true medieval work. As there is seemingly nothing recorded as to what was there previous to Hawksmoor's design, it might be suggested that he encased the previous structure, rather than destroyed it. The whole was, however, completely demolished to make way for Sir G. G. Scott's wooden pulpitum – the remnants of Hawksmoor's screen being sold off to various buyers, mostly at Healing near Grimsby, and at Louth where much of the carved work survives.<sup>30</sup>

The west face consisted of a tall semi-circular headed opening bearing life-size seated figures – that on the north side played a lyre, its southern counterpart a trumpet, while the Gothic pedestal between them supported a finial of winged cherub heads. The much narrower lateral bays were flanked by half-hexagons on whose angles Hawksmoor set the tall "Ionic" columns noted by Young. The groups of capitals supported cusped arches bearing carved finials, like those on the buttresses on the west front. Inset between the columns were tall pedestals that, for a century, supported Collins's cast lead figures of St John of Beverley and King Athelstan. These are dated 1781. Above the impost moulding, and framing the central arch there were deep boldly canopied niches, flanked by tall carved pinnacles. The

new wrought iron choir gates, whose design was approved by if not directly attributable to Hawksmoor, were half the height of the “Ionic” columns, and were for once reset by the Victorian restorers within the Minster, in the north choir aisle. The original design of the east face of the pulpitum is less easy to determine, in part because it was overlaid by the lower half of Lightoler’s organ case, and its flanks were masked by the piers of the eastward facing choir stalls.

Hawksmoor’s tall semi-circular headed arch motif was repeated by Lightoler<sup>31</sup> but it was enclosed within a giant ogee arch, richly carved and cusped. This latter arch terminated in a huge finial that in turn supported the central group of show pipes. These, and the similar but smaller group of show pipes to the left and right of the organ case, end in triple groups of small arches and tall finials. Lightoler, like Hawksmoor earlier, derived his decorated treat-



Fig. 4. Renewed arcading at the west end of the south aisle of the nave, probably late 1720s. The statue and base on the left is that of St John of Beverley, Collins, 1781. The font cover on the right is by the Thorntons.

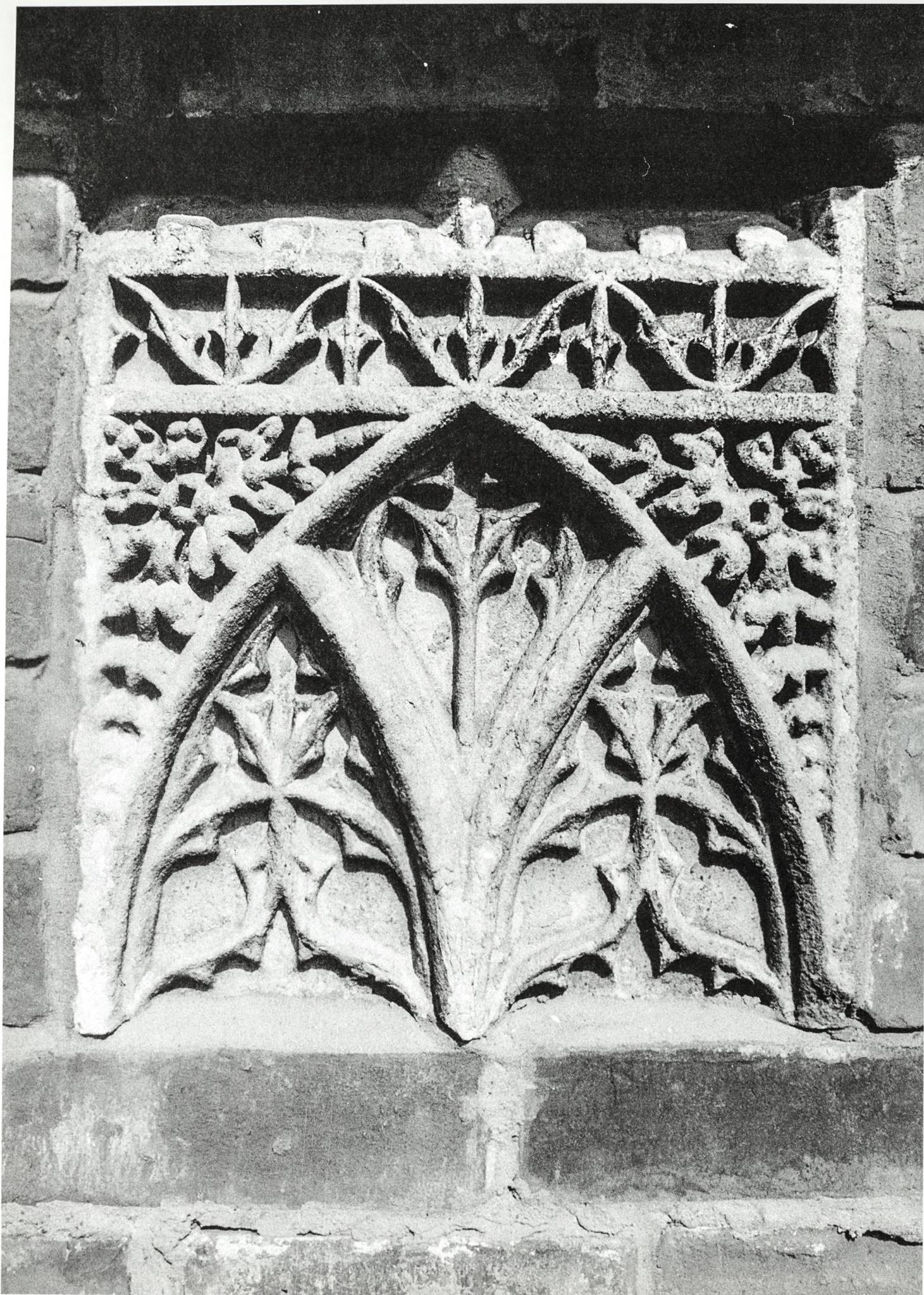


Fig. 5. Detail of the former pulpitum, carved by John Pate, *c.* 1720. Now at Healing, Lincolnshire.

ment from genuinely medieval work, this time the south-western Perpendicular doorway of the west front.<sup>32</sup>

Timothy Lightoler (fl.1742–1779) is an interesting if shadowy figure. He is said to have been a carver. Like many of his contemporaries, he not only worked in several styles – he positively delighted in mixing them, adding Gothic touches onto otherwise wholly “Classical” buildings as at St Mary’s Church and Platt Hall near Manchester. Lightoler was particularly adept in his handling of the “Jacobethan” manner as can be seen in his unexecuted drawings for Burton Constable, where, as at Platt, he had superseded John Carr.

At Burton Constable, Lightoler worked with William Collins (1721–93), the sculptor and plaster modeller, Edmund Foster, of Hull, the carver, and Thomas Atkinson of York, the sculptor-architect. Collins, a pupil of Sir Henry Cheere, had hitherto worked with Lightoler at St Mary’s, Warwick, and Magdalene College, Cambridge, upon the Gothic altarpieces there. As well as his work for the Beverley organ case, he presumably supplied the life size cast lead figures of St John of Beverley and King Athelstan (now flanking the south nave door) in 1781. Oliver, in his history of Beverley, however, says that “Collins” was a native of the Driffeld area, some 14 or so miles north of Beverley. The relevant Minster vouchers for the time do not seem to have survived. The statues were painted and sanded to simulate real stone.

Most of the detail of the pulpitum stonework is derived from that found elsewhere in the Minster, and this would suggest that it was the carver, rather than Hawksmoor, who had selected the motifs, for Hawksmoor does not seem regularly to have visited Beverley, and his typical drawings for other commissions do not display small scale carved detail. Nonetheless, even the Georgian critics, let alone their many 19th-century successors, deemed the composition of the pulpitum unsatisfactory, perhaps because of the overtly Classical semi-circular arch and its attendant figures.

The new ironwork of the Minster included new altar rails and the two adjacent parclose screens, the pair of choir gates inset into the pulpitum, and the external gates opposite the north porch. It is known that most if not all this ironwork came from London, and that Hawksmoor was directly involved in its supply. One such transaction involved a Mr Goff.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Goff was a leading London ironsmith and worked with Hawksmoor at St George’s, Bloomsbury. The Beverley payment was for unspecified items. Given that the pulpitum was then under construction it is possible that the choir gates could be by Goff. These were the smaller but very fine gates moved about 1880 into the north choir aisle where they remain. They so closely resemble the designs for the entrance screen gates for All Souls College, Oxford, that either both sets were designed and executed by Goff, or both were from designs by Hawksmoor. Mr Howard Colvin has catalogued and partly illustrated these designs, now in Worcester College, Oxford, but he does not suggest a particular authorship.<sup>34</sup> The best ironsmiths were of course excellent draughtsmen, but the authorship of their apparently few surviving drawings is largely unstudied.

As Mr G. P. Brown has shown, the Minster altar rails virtually duplicate those still extant in Hawksmoor’s St Mary’s Woolnoth, and the latter are almost certainly the work of John Robins.<sup>35</sup> Mr Brown also discovered that at the auction of the Minster fittings of 1825, the altar rails were bought by Mr Henry Ellison, the builder of St Mary’s Manor, Beverley. The rails were reused to serve as the balustrade of the landing – the remainder of the staircase ironwork being made to match.

The two parclose screens are of much simpler design, and were bought by Mr William Beverley for Norwood House, where they were set between massive brick gate piers as ornaments to the landscape garden.<sup>36</sup>

The Minster was almost entirely refloored in stone or marble in the 1720s. The nave was done in stone but with a few black marble squares laid diamond-wise and widely spaced.

Below the crossing, a geometrical pattern was introduced using a far higher proportion of the same marble, but the climax was the repaving of the choir. Here the whole area between the stalls was treated as a mosaic of black, white, grey and variegated marbles – imported through John Moyser.<sup>37</sup> The components were sawn by George Burfitt, sometimes helped by his wife, and by many others.<sup>38</sup> It was put down in overlapping hexagons which when viewed from eye level appear as a mounting sequence of cubes in perspective. The type is derived from Antique Graeco-Roman mosaics. Each hexagon is composed of three pieces of contrasting marble, each equal in area. The flooring in front of the parclose screens has a different geometrical basis, as has the far larger one in the retrochoir of Lady Chapel.<sup>39</sup>

For the modern visitor there also remains the contrast between the medieval woodwork and that of the Georgian period. In particular, it is notable how strongly the Thornton's house style is maintained throughout the Minster. It can readily be distinguished from both the medieval work and the finely detailed highly polished work of the Elwells (who worked under Sir Gilbert Scott<sup>40</sup>). Instead of the usual bland self-satisfied looking cherub heads and realistic flowers of the Gibbons school, the Thornton's happily followed the medieval carvers in their irreverence, contrasting – in their carvings of heads for the choir stall canopies<sup>41</sup> – the Virgin and Child, St John of Beverley or the cleric (here in Geneva bands), with the secular heads of King Athelstan and King George, a coroneted lord, an attorney and a youth rushing in with the scales of justice. Much more numerous, in the choir and elsewhere there are old and young socially less distinguished heads, whispering, rubbing noses, kissing, cursing and so forth. Such realism in its turn is contrasted with flower garlands that represent floral types rather than botanical specimens. When finished, the sheer quantity of Baroque carved work at Beverley was exceeded only by that at St Paul's Cathedral.

The nave galleries were ingeniously designed so as not to touch any of the medieval stonework of the piers or walls. Each gallery front was supported by a pair of fluted Doric columns whose carved capitals were crowned by a full entablature.<sup>42</sup> The Doric columns were repeated in miniature for the gallery staircase balusters. (Following the 1825 sale these were partly reused in the (old) Vicarage and in the Guildhall, both sets recently dispersed. A third group survives in the former Dispensary in Register Square.) Each gallery front had five triglyphs, each crowned by a "block of bells", whose guttae were fully exposed, while the metopes bore either crossed palm branches or a winged cherub head. Gent, in his *History of Ripon* claimed that the Order resembled that "of St Alban's at Rome". There is no such church there, but a fragment of a Doric Order similar to that at Beverley was found at Albano near Rome, and this has been published by Joachim von Sandrart, and in John Evelyn's translation of Freart's *Parallel* where it is shown on page 21, shortly before Hawksmoor's time. Hawksmoor was to reuse a modification of this Gallery design for his monumental marble doorcase in the Long Gallery at Blenheim.

The galleries were demolished and dispersed in the sale of 1825, but fortunately their appearance was recorded by Thomas Duncum<sup>43</sup> and as a result one can trace three surviving (and also one now destroyed) sets of columns. The most complete is that at Barton-on-Humber where the whole carved entablature is retained. The two others are at No 10 Newbegin – where there are both front and rear pairs of columns, and at the public gallery at Beverley Guildhall. Gent also noted the "neatly contrived seats". The sets of oak benches are still extant at the Minster. The main contractors for the seats and galleries were George Best and Thomas Robinson, to whom final payments were made in 1725.

Though the pulpit was a monumental structure, it was, nonetheless, mounted on rollers, first of wood (1724) and then in 1726, of brass, so that the Perpetual Curate could be manoeuvred conveniently close to the most important member of that Sunday's congregation.<sup>44</sup> The concave-sided plinth supported three richly carved Baroque trusses, but from the

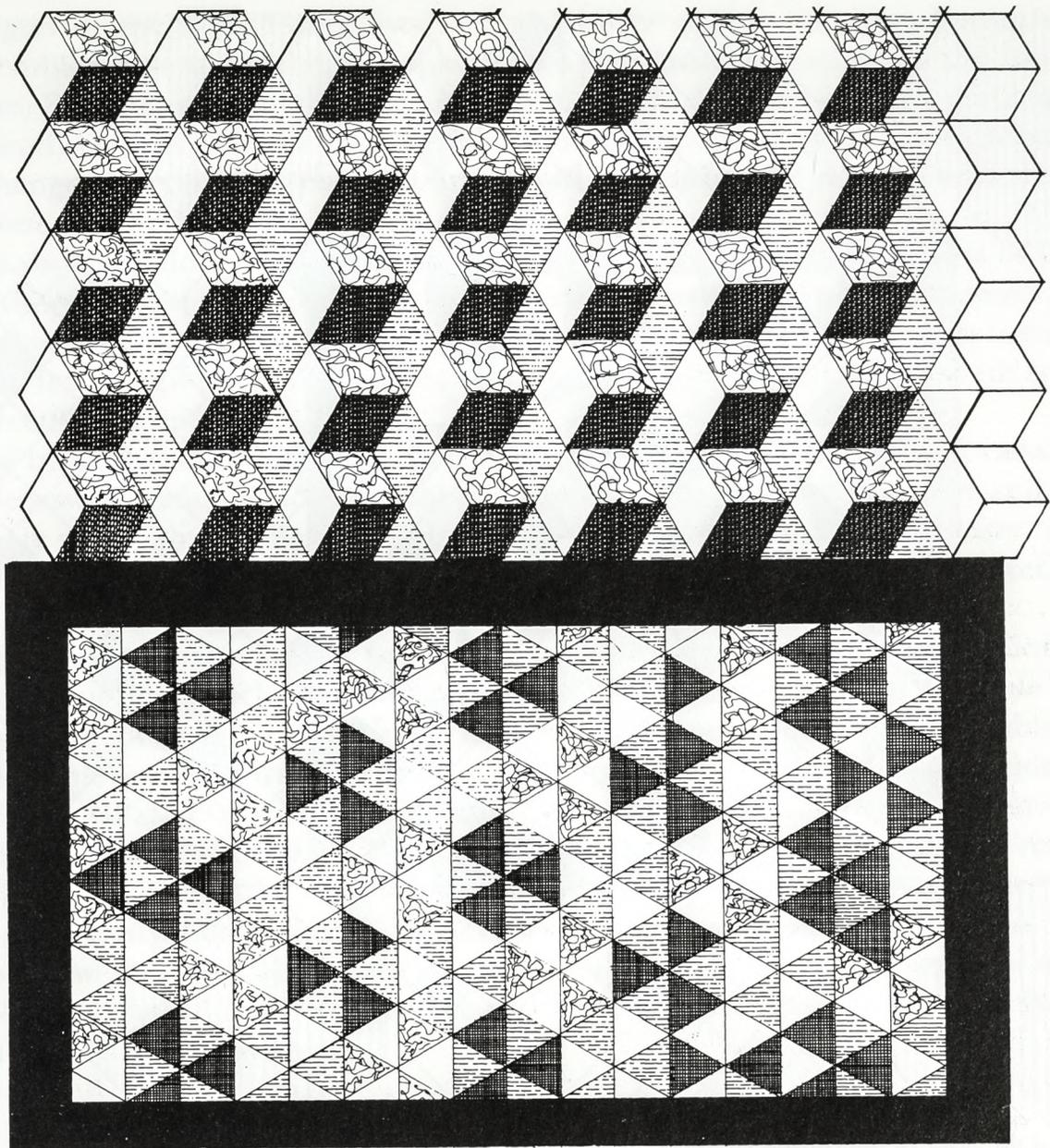


Fig. 6. Detail of the marble flooring of the chapel.

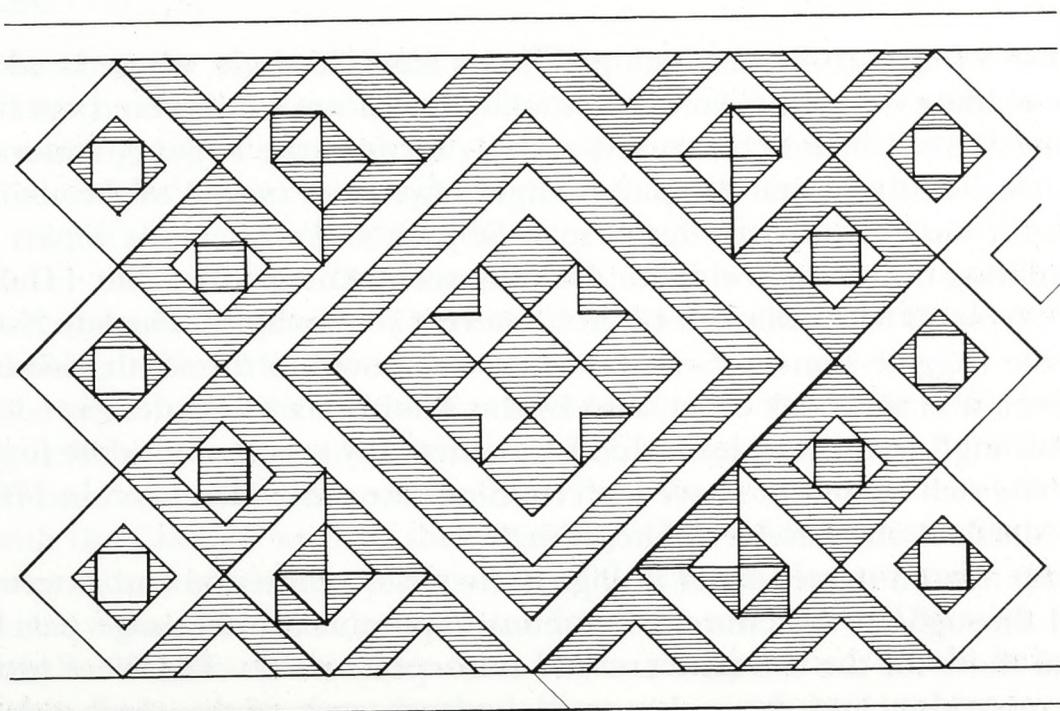


Fig. 7. The floor of the Lady Chapel.

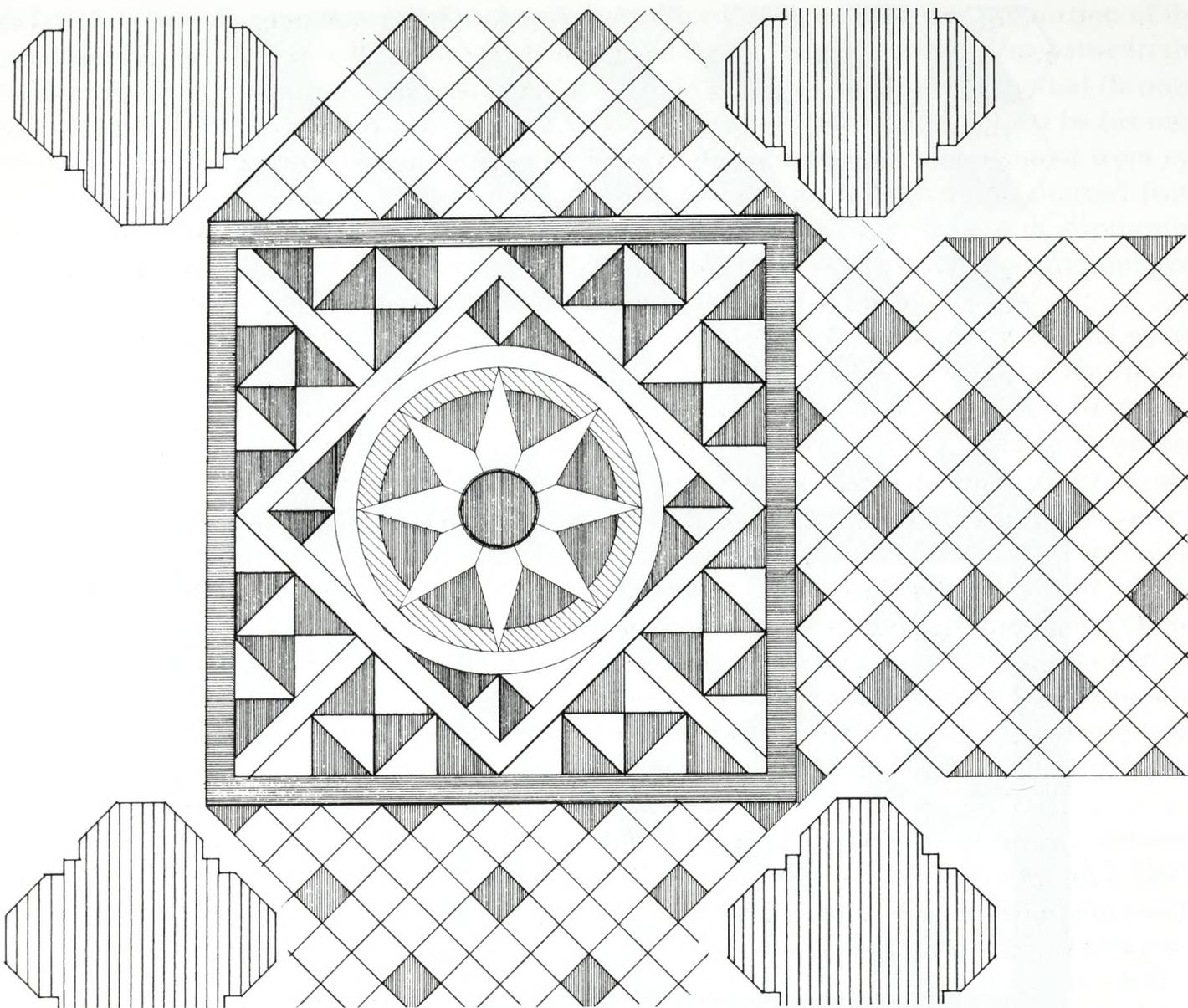


Fig. 8. Detail of the floor of the central crossing.

centremost rose a huge scroll, on which perched a life-sized eagle, whose head and wings in turn hold the reading desk. The circular sounding board was cantilevered out from a pair of Corinthian piers linked by a richly carved arch. It survived the Regency restoration but not the Victorian one. It is said that the pulpit might have been moved to the stables at Nostell Priory because it was intended to install in it St John's, Wakefield, as a part of J. Micklethwaite's reordering of the chancel there. Nothing seems known of its fate. (The 1660s pulpit was sold in 1726 for £3 3s to Kilnwick Church where it yet remains). The late Norman font of Frosterly marble (Aggate stone as Gent called it) was moved to the south aisle from the west end. It was given a massive oak cover, also by the Thorntons.<sup>45</sup> The designer had noted the simple "gadrooning" on the font itself, and sympathetically repeated it as the first major band of the cover. The rich iron work above the crowning vase was added later, in 1762, and is the work of John Marshall, the Beverley whitesmith.<sup>46</sup>

The least altered sequences of fittings is the series of internal and external doors that can be found throughout the church. The most important are the huge pair for the main west door, and those for the two nave and two transept doorways. There are two more somewhat smaller ones inset into the arches at the western ends of the choir aisles, and much smaller and plainer ones to each of the staircase turrets. Gent noted that the west doors had

“large Effigies of the Four Evangelists . . . with their proper Emblems beneath”.<sup>47</sup> These Christian emblems were, however, supplemented by Classical allusions to the four seasons, Flora, Ceres, Bacchus and a night-capped head of an elderly man bearing a flaming torch. At a higher level, two male heads engage in a verbal duel, and higher still, male and female heads exchange surreptitious kisses. All this carved work is framed within a paraphrase of the tracery of one of the south nave aisle windows.

The six lesser doors display yet more of the Thorntons’ skills as carvers of festoons of fruits and flowers, some emerging from animal masks others from plumed human heads of a theatrical character. Again the underlying tracery is of medieval character, but before the age of Rickman, few designers distinguished between the curvilinear style of the 14th century and the more rectilinear one of the 15th.

One is, nevertheless, struck by how often the Georgian designers and carvers studied their predecessors’ detail, which they then paraphrased to suit their own day and purpose.<sup>48</sup> Gilbert Scott noted that while the 18th-century worked was not in good taste, it was well executed, and that at a time of financial stringency, he could not urge the Minister’s Trustees to destroy it.

The medieval stained glass presented quite different problems. It was not only scattered throughout the church, its leading was in bad condition. One must presume that a serious programme of restoration would, in the 1720s have been a remarkable, perhaps impossible, achievement, given the scale of the problem. It was therefore decided that Mr Joseph Burton, a glazier of York, should restore the glass, once rubbings had been taken of all the glass thought capable of re-use.<sup>49</sup> This was carefully dismantled, cleaned and reassembled, before being placed, unit by unit, in the lower half of the great east window.<sup>50</sup> This thus became a museum window of 13th- and 14th-century glass, easily recognisable through its colouration as well as its subject matter.<sup>51</sup> What could not be fitted into that east window was presumably discarded. Burton charged the trustees £21 10s for 205 days work at Beverley and for his journeys to and from York.

## CONCLUSION

The immediate outcome to the Hawksmoor/Thornton campaign was the salvation of the Minster as an entity, and with the minimum loss of external fabric. The chief sacrifice was the 13th-century vaulting, whose inadequately buttressed and unreconstructed walls could not bear its original weight. A later age might have taken down the north wall and vaults of the transept and rebuilt them, having added the necessary flying buttresses to the east and west walls. Instead, the elder William Thornton devised a lightweight vaulted ceiling, built up of ribs of laminated wood and plaster. There were of course a few medieval precedents, most notably the vaulting at York Minster.

Once the structural crisis had been resolved, there proved to be sufficient money for a throughgoing refurbishment, partly Gothic, partly Classical, and it was here that the various craftsmen demonstrated their design skills. First, they observed the medieval details and then fused them with the Classical work of their own day. Only a few of the craftsmen came from outside Beverley, the rest, made up of nearly 400 freemen, journeymen, apprentices and labourers – men, women and children – came from the town itself. The work of restoration lasted for virtually 20 years so that men who began as apprentices would be masters themselves by the time the restoration was finished. Moreover, given the numbers involved and the building materials they consumed, there must have been a positive and considerable eco-

conomic gain to the town's tradesmen, for many of whom the restoration was a generous bonus. If, sadly, much of their decorative work has since been dispersed or destroyed, sufficient remains to rebut for once, the general charge that the citizens of Georgian England seriously neglected their medieval heritage.

## **Appendix I**

### **A chronology**

July 1717: Work commences for the restoration of the great north gable.

August–September 1719: The great gable is levered back into position.

1721: Old lantern tower demolished and new brick tower and cupola built over two years.

1722: Plastering of the new vaults in the north transept starts.

1722: First payments for the new pews and galleries in the nave.

1723–24: Work on the Corinthian altar piece.

1723–25: Restoration of medieval glass.

1729: Payments for laying down marble for the new inlaid choir floor. New stone pulpitum nearing completion and Thornton's carvings of heads being put in place under the canopies of the medieval choir stalls.

1731: First major restoration largely finished, though reglazing continued, typically a simple pattern of diamond shaped quarries.

1765–1769: Provision of new organ and organ gallery designed by T. Lightoler.

1823: William Fowler, Thomas Rickman and Henry Hutchinson undertake to purge the interior of wholly Classical fittings and to demolish the dome on the centre tower.

## **Appendix II**

It is not possible here to analyse the activities of over 400 craftsmen whose names occur in the special Minster Account book. The following are typical of the trades selected. Many were apprentices or labourers, the latter including women and children. No doubt to minimise overcharging, individuals were generally paid as such, and sometimes their allegiances to the principal contractors were noted, as were – but less often – the tasks to which they had been allotted.

### **Joiners and carpenters**

George Best was a major contractor for carpentry and joinery and had at least 12 men working for him at the Minster. Best was paid 1s 8d per day, a younger man 1s 6d and an apprentice from 7d to 1s per day. Best seems to have had an informal partnership with Thomas Robinson who was one of a large family of craftsmen.

### **Bricklayers**

Thomas Ellinor was a leading Beverley builder and bricklayer at the Minster, who at his death was owner of a slave. Rates of pay were the same as for carpenters and joiners – 1s 8d per day with 10d per day for labourers and apprentices.

### **Master masons**

The Rushworths and the Issotts were both Beverley dynasties, whereas the specialist carver John Pate was from outside. John Rushworth was paid 2s per day and could hire a horse when travelling beyond Beverley on Minster business. Robert and William Rushworth were similarly paid as were John and Thomas Issott. The sawing of stone and marble was paid by the "foot" – probably a cut one foot in length and 1" in depth. Stone sawing was paid at 1¼ or 1½d per foot. Marble either at 8d per foot for the less dense marbles or 1s a foot for the denser kinds. Men, women and children all became stone sawyers.

## NOTES

1. Charles Hiatt, *Beverley Minster*, London, 1898, 98–100.
2. Humberside County Record Office, BC 14/1. Minster Account Book 14/1. The description was made at Thackeray's second inspection prior to estimates. The first had been made in December 1715.
3. See Minster Account Book as for note 2. Unless otherwise stated the information concerning costs incurred in restoration by the craftsmen involved are taken from this remarkable record.
4. Hawksmoor's tasks are not clearly defined in the Minster account book. In 1718 £3 13s was given to his servants. On October 24 1723 £22 19s was paid for a "present to Mr Hawksmoor" and £21 for ironwork. On January 24 1729, £20 0s 7d was spent on "a present of plate to Mr Hawksmoor".
5. Hawksmoor's western towers of Westminster Abbey designed in 1734 (and his indebtedness to Beverley Minster) show an admixture of styles, as does the crypt of his mausoleum at Castle Howard (1729–36) and the Library at All Souls College, Oxford (1716–35).
6. G. Oliver *The History and Antiquities of the town of Beverley*, Beverley, 1829, 310.
7. The rails are closely similar to those at St Mary Woolnoth (which subsequently have been mutilated). It was contemporary practice to invite "offers" for minor details from craftsmen whose designs would have to be approved by the architects. John Robins is the likely ironsmith. See G. P. Brown, *Lost treasures of Beverley Minster*, 1980, 4.
8. In all between 1713 and 1726 the Thorntons – William, his widow, sons Robert and William and John Howgill – received payments totalling £1,215 17s 9d between 1718 and 1731. The accounts only rarely refer to specific items of carving.
9. Designed by Colen Campbell c.1716 and internally finished by the Thorntons. The house was demolished about 1766 and the Thorntonian carved work sold off and dispersed.
10. The room at Whitley Beaumont was built c.1704. Offered for sale by Messrs. Robersons, it is illustrated in M. Jourdain, *English Interiors in Smaller Houses 1660–1830*, 1923, pls. 16–21. The richly carved Doric order is similar to that at Beverley.
11. Discovered by Dr Eileen Harris in a copy of the *Builder's Dictionary* 1734, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.
12. Compare the doors in the choir aisles and the overdoor in the north wall of the drawing room at Beningborough. Elsewhere in that house are heads in the same characteristic Thorntonian style as in the Minster.
13. Hawksmoor had suggested a sum of £3,500 as being required, whereas the sum raised between 1713 and 1726 inclusive totalled £6,277 10s 1½d. (See Minutes of the Minster Brief 1713–1726, Humberside County Record Office.)
14. Gerald Cobb, in *English Cathedrals, the forgotten centuries*, notes those at Canterbury, Bath and Bristol removed in 1826, 1833, and 1839 respectively.
15. This first "appeal print" must have been a response to Mr Thackeray, the stonemason's first inspection of about December 1715.
16. Minster Account Book. 1718 Aug 24 "Order'd that Twenty Guineas be paid to Mr Moyser, Ten Guineas of which he is now to give to Mr Thornton for making computations of the Charge of repairing the Minster, for drawing Several Draughts towards perfecting the Perspectives, for contriving the Method of taking down the Roofe, Stone Arches, and Walls of the North Isle so far as is necessary to be taken down, for directing the Scaffolding & Centering, and buying wood for that purpose, Also for his Assistance in Supervising measuring and directing the whole work, till 'tis got up again, and then that Mr Moyser pay him the Remaining Ten Guineas in full for all his Trouble except for his making the Draughts of the Percy's Tombs."
17. A. Young. *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, London, 1771, 2nd ed. I (reprint A. M. Kelly, New York) 148–149.
18. The Fowlers made an initial survey of the minster in 1823, prior to the matter being debated by the corporation in June 1824. (see K. A. MacMahon, *Beverley Corporation Minute Books 1701–1835*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series CXXII, 1958, 130–131.
19. Lime trees were bought to ornament the churchyard in 1726. In 1763, prior to the visit of the Archbishop of York, the marble floor was especially polished and all paths were swept.
20. See page 1?
21. The work started with Thomas Ellinor and his men "at the foundations for the Arches", in July 1717 and continued for nine weeks and started again May 1718 e.g. "Edward Robinson and William Thornton to go to Hull to order scaffolding timber, to buy bricks for walling up arches," "Edward Robinson – to stripping and repair of Roof of the South Cross-End, and to prepare timber for floor

frame & other uses in walling up N. Isle . . . ”

22. The quotation concerning the pivot point is taken from the engraving: “W. Thornton invt Ed. Geldart. del. A section of the Trusses and Building” published May 17, 1739 (Beverley Minster). This engraving and its companion, “. . . A view of the north Front of the Great Cross Isle of Beverley Minster” show the “machine” in detail and describe its working.
23. Minster Account Book. August 10, 1718 “Whereas the Scaffolds now being finished there will be occasion for no more Carpenters than such as are to work at the Roof”.
24. Minster Account Book BC IV 14/1 For the period August 31–September 5 Thornton was paid 12s “for his men helping at the Screws”, while Richard Meadley and John Readhead were paid for “1 Night Watching the Screws 00.01.06 each.” In the period September 7–12 Thornton was paid for borrowing 15 pairs of screws “for the use of the Minster” – 17s 6d for which there is a further payment of 1s in October and a Mr Thompson is paid for 3s 6d for Bees Wax, September 4–19 – presumably for lubrication of the screws.
25. When the cupola was demolished it is likely that a few of its curved timbers were used to infill the space where the cupola had been.
26. DDBC 144/10. 1717. At the petition of Sir Charles Hotham and Sir Michael Warton, George I granted license to them for three years to “Carry away what Stone they pleased from the monastery of St Mary’s York towards repairing the Church of St John of Beverley then in Great Ruin and Decay.”
27. There are substantial and consistent payments to the mason Thomas Issott in the Minster Account Book, between 1719 and 1729, the largest being in November 1729 when he was paid £140 2s 9½d.
28. Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS. York. Top. C14 258V.
29. Minster Account Book. March 5, 1727. “Pd Mr Pate for a Plan of the Screen”. August 17, 1728. “John Mayer – for sharpening 6 dozen of tools for Mr Pate £00.01.00.”
30. Despite more than a century of exposure to weather the carving remains in good condition. It includes elements not shown in photographs of the eastern and western faces. The most comprehensive collection is now at The Avenue, Healing, near Grimsby.
31. Humberside County Record Office. DDBC 3 Minster vouchers. “april ye 4 1765, To Mr Lightoler – to making a design for the new intended organ £10.0.0 . . . Coming over and making a survey of the Minster, making a report, attending the Bishop of York in London etc. – £7.7.0.”
32. Some of this carved woodwork was re-used over the doorway into the south choir aisle and in the south aisle itself.
33. On December 31, 1729, Mr Hawksmoor received £35 “of wch to pay Mr Goff & other of his disbursements”. Goff was also paid in 1725 through John Moyser – £6 11s.
34. H. M. Colvin, *Catalogue of Architectural Drawings of the 18th and 19th Centuries in the Library of Worcester College Oxford* Oxford, 1964, 55, nos. 410–415, pl. 85.
35. See Note 7.
36. Of the two gates the one near Manor Road has suffered prolonged neglect, despite the fact that Norwood House is statutorily listed Grade I. The gates are illustrated I. & E. Hall *Historic Beverley*, 1973, 88.
37. Minster vouchers DDBC/3/108. September 21, 1727 “to John Moyser Esq. the Sum of One Hundred Thirty Four pounds Eighteen Shillings Seven Pence Half Penny being due for the Marble for paving the Minster Quire”. It had been shipped from Leghorn.
38. E.g. For March 28, 1728 the payments to Burfitt list the cost of the various cutts of marble:

“27 Cross Cutts diamonds”	2s 3d
“14 ditto Long Cutts”	1s 9d
“6 ditto Black”	9d
39. Thomas Ellinor’s “labourer” G. Burfett – and sometimes also his wife – are paid for cutting the marble or stone shapes.
40. Scott at first questioned the Elwells competence but later relented, and from 1875 onward they worked on the woodwork of the choir and new pulpitum.
41. December 23, 1729, “By my son to Mrs Thornton . . . in pt for the Heads in the Quire . . . 09.00.00”. Illustrated *Historic Beverley*, 21.
42. Duncum’s drawing in the Beverley Borough Library. Champney Rd, shows all six bays. More recent investigation on the “new” site in the Guildhall has shown that the columns are made up of thin strips of oak within which is a much broader balk of the same material.
43. *Idem*.
44. Moveable pulpits occurred in other churches – Sacred Trinity, Salford and St Cuthbert, Carlisle for example. On October 28, 1726, John Bedell was paid £12 “for the pulpett wheels in full”.

45. On September 9, 1726, £2 11s was paid to Mrs Thornton as part payment "for the font cover", but the cost of transport was £1.
46. Minster vouchers "Aug 14 1762 To John Marshall – A piece of ornament for ye font top with 23 feet of strong chain" – £6. Marshall had worked extensively for William Constable of Burton Constable, including provision of scientific instruments.
47. Such enrichments echo continental types such as the west doors of the Hauptkirche at Wolfenbittel (dated 1645) near Brunswick.
48. For example the ends of the cusps have tiny flowers or tufts of acanthus.
49. The task of taking the "curks" or rubbings was undertaken by Richard Weatherill and John Procter of Beverly and the elder William Burton, for whom special "press papers" were bought on July 1723 and February 1724. The patterns were then stuck on the pasteboards, presumably so that Joseph Burton (or York) could reassemble the fragments in their proper positions.
50. Minster vouchers DDBC 3/105/44, February 27, 1723 "To William Burton Senr & John Procter . . . for Working of 147 ffoot 10 ins of Old Glass at 7 FFarthings p ffoot £01.01.06 ffor 2 Days Each Taking down Old Glass and putting Glass in piles 00.08.06."
51. G. P. Brown, *A Te deum of Light*, Beverley, 1973.