

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF YORK

PARISH OF BEVERLEY, ST MARY

CHURCH OF ST MARY, BEVERLEY

**IN THE MATTER OF A PETITION TO CARRY OUT STONEMWORK REPAIRS TO THE SOUTH
NAVE CLERESTORY**

Neutral Citation Number: [2021] ECC Yor 2

Unopposed Petition

**The Reverend Rebecca Lumley
David Warren
Beverley Lawrence**

Petitioners

JUDGMENT

The Petition

1. I have before me a petition to carry out stonework repairs to the South Nave Clerestory at St Mary Beverley, being the replacement of 1 missing carved grotesque and 8 label stops in accordance with the 'Stonework Repairs Phase 2 South Nave Clerestory Carving Proposal' by Carden and Godfrey, Architects, dated November 2020, and associated Drawing No. 7073/4/501
2. The petitioners are the Reverend Rebecca Lumley, vicar, and David Warren and Beverley Lawrence, the two churchwardens.
3. The petition is unopposed but it seemed to me that there were a number of features of what is proposed that make it appropriate for me to set out the reasons why I am granting the petition.
4. St Marys was founded in 1120. Pevsner says "That St Mary at Beverley is one of the most beautiful parish churches of England is universal knowledge." Originally a daughter church of Beverley Minster, it took on independent status in the 16th century. It was the town church and as such enjoyed the support and bequests of the merchant community. The Statement of Significance describes how it was "extended over 400 years in 15 separate instalments. The result is a unique parish church in which

the whole panorama of Gothic building styles can be seen and studied under one roof.” Paragraph 2.59 of the Statement says this:

“The church building with its fixed contents is of **exceptional** significance as a major medieval church with a complex architectural, archaeological and art historical development and history, recognised in its Grade I listing. St. Mary’s has stood as a beacon of continuous Christian mission for over 800 years, framing the town and together with the Minster placing worship at the very centre of Beverley’s life. It is for this reason that the church can boast profound spiritual and communal significance. Due to its sheer scale and the quality of its craftsmanship, the building itself has **exceptional** architectural significance, reflecting the prosperity of the medieval town, the ambition of its patrons and its desire to remain at the periphery of its mother church. St. Michael’s chapel illustrates that desire, channelling an increasingly idiosyncratic fashion of Gothic design to produce one of the most significant pieces of architecture in the church. The architectural arrangement of St. Mary’s, also, reveals a constant evolution of religious practices, and therefore provides considerably significant evidence of the medieval liturgy. St. Mary’s stands witness to the history of the town of Beverley, and provides unique evidence of its past and development. It is owing to this that St. Mary’s has considerable evidential and considerable historic environmental significance for contributing not only to our understanding of the church in its local context, but also the town.”

5. For the purposes of this judgment, in relation to any detail about the fabric, it is only necessary for me to refer to the exterior stonework of the nave. The nave was extensively rebuilt following the collapse of the original tower in 1520. The clerestories on the north and south sides of the nave were completed by the mid-1550s. The clerestory is very high and contains seven three lighted windows interspersed by the remains of six pinnacles.
6. Over recent years there have been extensive stonework repairs carried out and these have included the need to replace a number of carved elements which have eroded beyond the point of recognition.
7. This is the second petition in relation to such work. On 16th December 2018 I authorised the issue of a faculty in relation to a similar proposal relating to the North Nave Clerestory. On that occasion the proposal related to replacement of missing carved grotesques under the pinnacles and severely eroded label stops. The design for the replacement carvings were developed in conjunction with art and sculpture students from East Riding College. They explored themes from modern folklore and Christian literature. They eventually settled on several animal characters from the novels of C S Lewis as being appropriate characters. A licence was obtained from the CS Lewis Society for the proposal. Widespread consultation took place and there was universal approval for the proposals. The final design of the carvings was developed by Sculptor Kibby Schaefer and carved by various carvers from the workshop of Matthias Garn & Partner. The statement of need said:

“The PCC has thought carefully about the themes of these carvings and has chosen them for their contemporary resonance, missional opportunity and theological connections ... CS Lewis was inspired by Christian theology and his books address the themes of good overcoming evil, self-sacrifice, redemption and a Christian view of creation. These stories function in our society in much the same way as the mediaeval stories of unicorns, mermaids and dragons did in the mediaeval church and each of these is represented in the roof bosses ... we believe that the Narnia themed

carvings on the nave north clerestory will draw visitors and especially children to the building, increasing its sustainability and leading to possibilities for mission and outreach.”

8. When consulted, Historic England (HE), responded by saying “We are very keen to fully support the proposal which in our view will enhance the communal heritage value and significance of the Grade I listed building.”
9. Clearly, the proposal was entirely appropriate. In those circumstances I dealt with it by simply endorsing my consent on the online faculty system.
10. The current proposal for the south side has adopted a different theme, namely that of pioneering women. The rationale behind that is that the south side of the church in a number of ways expresses the building’s feminine aspect – it is the home to St Catherine’s Chapel, it features the stained glass windows (by JC Bewsey) of St Ethelburga, St Hilda and St Mary. As the proposal puts it:
 - “The contribution of women to humanity isn’t always properly recognised in the telling of history, and throughout history women’s voices have been silenced. We take seriously the Church’s role in battling inequality and injustice. And so we hope that this project will help highlight the remarkable achievements of these women, and provide hope and inspiration for future generations.
 - The Public Monuments and Sculpture Association notes that only around one fifth of statues of people in the UK are of women – and that of these, almost half are fictional characters. We wanted to more fully and fairly represent the contribution of real women to society, particularly in ways or fields traditionally overlooked.
 - Our criteria for the choice of women to be depicted were:
 - 1) that some must have local connections – to foster pride and aspiration in the local community (and we’re pleased to include Hull in this, strengthening connections between our town and its neighbouring city);
 - 2) that there should be a weighting towards maths, the sciences, and engineering – countering the traditional, and still prevalent, perception of these as ‘male’ arenas; and
 - 3) that there must be BAME representation within the group – acknowledging and fighting the double prejudice that BAME women have historically faced.

11. The women whom it is hoped will be represented will be placed in chronological order from east to west are as follows:

Label Stops:

Window S14 RIGHT (LS6.2) - **Mary Wollstonecraft** (27 April 1759 - 10 Sept 1797) *Writer and philosopher, advocate for women’s rights, widely regarded as one of the first feminists. Author of ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’. Lived in Beverley as a child.*

Window S14 LEFT (LS6.1) - **Mary Seacole** (23 Nov 1805 - 14 May 1881) *Pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War. In her lifetime her reputation rivalled Florence Nightingale’s. In 2004 she was voted the greatest black Briton.*

Window S16 RIGHT (LS4.2) - **Ada Lovelace** (10 Dec 1815 - 27 Nov 1852) *Mathematician and writer, considered the first computer programmer for writing an algorithm for a computing machine in the mid-1800s.*

Window S16 LEFT (LS4.1) - **Marie Curie** (7 Nov 1867 - 4 July 1934) *Physicist and chemist who conducted pioneering research on radioactivity. Discovered radium and polonium, hugely contributing to finding cancer treatments.*

Window S17 RIGHT (LS3.2) - **Hilda Lyon** (31 May 1896 - 2 Dec 1946) *Aeronautical engineer, designed airships. First female recipient of the Royal Aeronautical Society's R38 Memorial Prize. Her work is still used for stability software and submarine design. Attended Beverley High School.*

Window S17 LEFT (LS3.1) - **Amy Johnson** (1 July 1903 - 5 Jan 1941) *Pioneering aviator. The first woman to fly solo from London to Australia. Set many long-distance records during the 1930s. Born in Hull.*

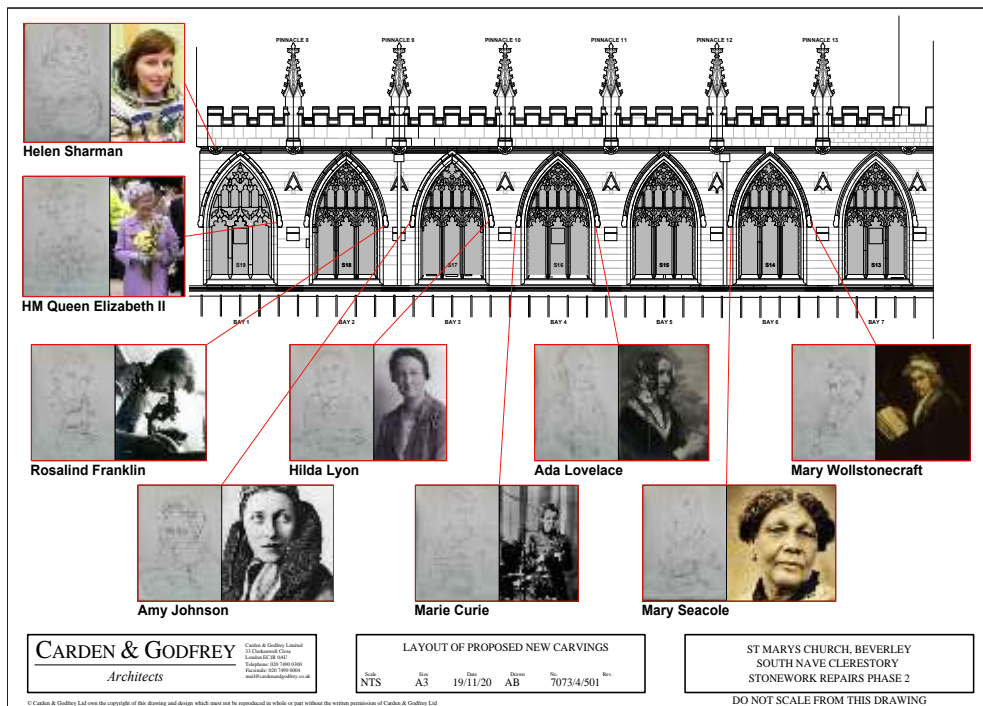
Window S18 RIGHT (LS2.2) - **Rosalind Franklin** (25 July 1920 - 16 April 1958) *Chemist and x-ray crystallographer, crucial contributor to the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA.*

Window S19 RIGHT (LS1.2) - **Queen Elizabeth II** (b. 21 April 1926) *Longest-reigning Monarch in British history.*

Large Carving:

String Course (GR01) - **Helen Sharman** (b. 30 May 1963) *Britain's first astronaut, visiting the Soviet modular space station Mir in May 1991.*

12. The architects have provided a drawing showing the proposed layout.



13. Again careful thought has been given to the theological and missional rationale for using these persons as the subject of carvings. That is expressed in this way in section 5 of the document entitled “Carving Proposal”:

5.1 The PCC has thought carefully about the themes of these carvings and has chosen them for their contemporary resonance, missional opportunity and theological connections.

5.2 We have chosen these women because of their contribution to science, technology and compassion – for the work they have done which has either inspired or enhanced the lives of others. In so far as each has promoted knowledge and understanding, or justice and mercy, they have contributed to the building of a society where men and women are becoming more equal and more in line with the Christian understanding of the Kingdom of God; ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ (Gal 3.28)

5.3 Wherever we see the development of human society working to bring about the common good, we want to celebrate it and acknowledge that each person is made in the image of God, with the capacity to do great works which enhance the lives of others. Indeed, when Jesus’ disciples encouraged Jesus to stop others doing good because it was not in his name he said, “Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you.” (Luke 9.49)

5.4 We want these carvings to inspire girls and women, to remind them that even though society and indeed the church may have overlooked the achievements of women, God does not, and we celebrate all that is good.

14. Again, the parish has carried out a consultation as required. The CBC's response was very short: “The Council is content to defer further consideration of these proposals to the DAC”. HE were more fulsome in their response. Kerry Babington responded as follows:

“We understand that only the existing carved elements which no longer have any remaining definition or clues to their original form are being replaced as part of this project. There is one new large, high level carving and eight label stops needed in total. Historic England supports the proposal on heritage grounds. We consider that the new additions to the Grade I listed building will enhance its aesthetic, historic and communal heritage values by drawing visitors to engage with the building. They also have the potential to enhance the sustainability of the church and its outreach mission, again by adding to the many stories attached to the building and the strong tradition of artistic carvings inside and outside this beautiful church.”

She also said

“We welcome the three main criteria for selection: local connection, a weighting towards maths, the sciences, and engineering and also to include BAME representation within the group”.

15. The simple question that is posed for me is whether the petitioners have made out the case for their proposal. There is no suggestion that any heritage damage will be done by the taking away of something that was there. And the only heritage body to comment has said that this will “enhance the aesthetic, historic and communal heritage values” of the building. So this is not a case that engages the *Duffield* questions at all.

16. There is no clear authority about what is and what is not appropriate in the way of decoration of a church either externally or internally. Over the centuries as churches were built there was an awareness of those designing and building them that the building itself would speak. It spoke by its very presence of the fact that this was where Christian people gathered to worship God. The design of the building reflected the different things that were done in and around it. Cathedrals contained the bishop's seat. All churches provided for the sacraments of baptism and the celebration of the eucharist. Most made some provision for the provision of music, perhaps with a choir or with a musicians' gallery or organ, perhaps in a loft. And they provided spaces for various communal gatherings for both spiritual and secular purposes to take place.
17. In addition to providing spaces and furniture for the various rites and ceremonies, there would invariably be some degree of decoration. Being made in the image of God, it is innate within us to decorate what we make. The decoration of churches spoke whether through stone or glass or painted images. The messages were often about the story of the salvation of humankind through Jesus Christ. Thus the cross predominated, but themes of the final judgment were also very common. Other biblical stories were often told, particularly in coloured glass. Another common theme was the memorialising of contemporary people or those who had recently died, especially those who were benefactors of the church. So we find in many churches both inside and out a rich panoply of decoration linked either to the gospel itself or to the stories of those who followed Christ and contributed to the building up of his church.
18. The role of the chancellor often engages with these issues when considering designs for new windows or the introduction of a new painting into a church. Often but not always these may be being introduced in memory of someone, particularly if they have donated money to pay for it. The questions that are then considered are whether any message is clear and whether what is proposed is consistent with the Christian gospel in its widest ambit.
19. So how should I approach this particular proposal? We do not know what the original grotesques and label stops that are in need of replacement were originally modelled on as they are now so eroded. They may have been people or they may have been animals. We also do not know of any theme that may have linked them. In my judgment there is therefore a real *carte blanche* with an opportunity to create something that is appropriate to this point in time for this church, this worshipping community and the community in which that is all set. That would continue the tradition of this church over the centuries so well attested to in the Statement of Significance that "due to its sheer scale and the quality of its craftsmanship, the building itself has exceptional architectural significance, reflecting the prosperity of the medieval town, the ambition of its patrons." That ambition continues today and the wider horizons of the current officeholders will now be reflected in its celebration of the achievements not of local merchants but of 'pioneering women'.
20. For the reasons set out above in the details of the proposals each of these women has played a significant role in relation to the advancement of science or human

knowledge and in the case of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the worldwide impact of her reign as Monarch is beyond questioning. In my judgement it is entirely appropriate to celebrate these lives for their human achievement, living out the God given injunction to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). HE identified what for them were three significant criteria determining the choice of characters, namely: “local connection, a weighting towards maths, the sciences, and engineering and also to include BAME representation.” I endorse that approval of those choices.

21. The consents of Her Majesty the Queen and of Helen Sharman will be required for their being represented in this way. I understand that Helen Sharman has given her consent but that a response is awaited in relation to Her Majesty the Queen. If that consent is not forthcoming then I understand that another person will be nominated. If that were to happen then the matter should be referred back to me for approval.
22. Public Notice has been given and I am told that no objections have been received.
23. In all these circumstances I am entirely satisfied that the petitioners have made out the case for their proposal and I therefore direct that a Faculty shall pass the seal until further order. I will allow 12 months for completion of the proposal.

HH Canon Peter Collier QC
Diocesan Chancellor

27th April 2021