

## SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

### FROM BURY ST EDMUNDS TO UGGLEBARNBY: SUFFOLK BENCHES IN A YORKSHIRE CHURCH

by *Cynthia Brown*

An item of news in the *Bury Free Press* on 16 December 1871 states that James Wormald of Whiting Street had just completed some of the sixteen corbels commissioned for the chancel of UGGLEBARNBY in Yorkshire. They represented

angels clad in drapery, and carrying medallions bearing the emblems of the passion – the cross, the banner [*sic*] and pincers, the spear and sponge, etc. and palm leaves. Their wings extend above their heads, and, as well as other parts of the figure, are elaborately gilt and emblazoned.

The public were invited to view them, together with some partly finished bosses for the same roof. James Wormald (1820–1900) was a master woodcarver. He was born in Poole, Dorset, and worked for Henry Ringham of Ipswich (Brown 1980, 285–86) from about 1850 to 1860. By 1863 he was working on his own in Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds.<sup>1</sup>

It is always of interest to see the work of a Suffolk carver in another county; besides being a reflection of his renown, the work sometimes helps to identify an anonymous carving nearer home. UGGLEBARNBY is a small village three miles south-south-west of Whitby. The church of All Saints, set on a hill, is of Norman foundation and was rebuilt in 1872 to the design of the architect Noel Armfield of Whitby. The interior gives the impression that no expense has been spared. The chancel roof, supported by the carved angels, is decorated with painted panels. The walls throughout are lined with patterned, pressed brick and the windows are filled with stained glass by Ward and Hughes. The oak benches have book boards, carved poppy heads and low traceried doors with iron hinges and handles. The font, pulpit and reading desk are of Caen stone and marble. The reredos, of Caen stone, is a representation of the Last Supper by Matthew Noble of London (1817–1876). The church was rebuilt by public subscription but most of the interior work was provided by the Allan family (*W.T.*, 27 Sept. 1872). The Church Guide notes that although the heavy pews in the nave give the impression of having been made for All Saints, they were brought from a church in Bury St Edmunds.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the church is not named.

The clue lies with 'the Allan family'. In St Mary's church, Bury St Edmunds, a window towards the west end of the south aisle commemorates the marriage of John Allan and Judith Harrison in the church in 1818 ('John Allan In Hac Ecclesia Judith Harrison uxorem Duxit Sept. XVI MDCCCXVIII') and gives the dates of their deaths: John Allan, 29 May 1865 and Judith Allan, 26 August 1866. There are two memorial windows in the west end of the north aisle, one in memory of Miss Elizabeth Harrison who died on 31 May 1866 and the other commemorating Miss Harriot Harrison who died on 21 January the following year. These three windows, by Ward and Hughes,<sup>3</sup> were presented by John Harrison Allan, the eldest son of John and Judith.

John Allan (1790–1865), a London shipowner, was born in Whitby, the son of a carter and carrier. Following an apprenticeship with Chapmans, shipowners in Whitby, he went to London and founded the firm which ultimately became John Allan and Sons. At the time of his death there were seventeen ships which sailed as far as India and South America. They were given the contract to ship railway engines, rolling stock and track to Madras for the South India Railway Company and brought back as ballast about twenty-eight varieties

of hardwood, some of which was used in building a house on the farm known as Hempsyke, which John Allan had bought from a relative in 1850, thus keeping a connection with North Yorkshire. His three sons could not agree on the necessity to convert from sail to steam and the business gradually faded away.

Judith, Elizabeth and Harriot were three of the five daughters of John Harrison, a linen draper (Bailey 1784) with premises in Cook Row (now Abbeygate Street), Bury St Edmunds, from 1870 to 1812.<sup>4</sup> He then moved to Horsemarket<sup>5</sup> (now St Mary's Square), where he died in November 1816, aged 65 (*B.N.P.*, 20 Nov.). The Revd Henry Harrison of Bury St Edmunds died on 13 August 1822. In his will<sup>6</sup> he left bequests to his nieces, '5 of the children of my late brother John Harrison deceased', among whom he named 'Hannah Harrison spinster, Harriot Harrison spinster, Eliza Harrison spinster and Judith, the wife of — Allan of Kent Road, London, merchant'. Henry and John Harrison, who came from Palgrave (Venn 1947), were two of the six children of Charles and Anne Harrison.<sup>7</sup> There are a number of Harrison monuments in St Peter's church, Palgrave.

St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds had two major restorations during the 19th century. In 1844, under the supervision of Lewis Nockalls Cottingham (1787–1847), the magnificent nave roof was restored and the west window, believed to be the largest in any parochial church in the country, was entirely reconstructed (*B.N.P.*, 4 Dec. 1844). In 1866 Sir Arthur W. Blomfield (1829–99) superintended the re-benching of the nave from the west end to the chancel in a most elaborate and costly style (*S.E.F.P.*, 5 Dec. 1867). The organ was an additional expense in both restorations. In 1844 the organ gallery, which was across the west end of the nave, was removed, making a striking improvement in the church, and the organ was re-erected within the third arch of the north aisle. By removing the organ gallery it was possible to increase the seating on the floor of the nave. The new sittings were

open benches in the old style, with book boards, dwarf doors and bench ends with poppy head finials. The hinges, handles, screw heads, etc. are all appropriately moulded. Some of the doors are enriched with tracery. The finials in the nave have been carved by Mr Nash of London. The whole would have been carved in the same manner if funds permitted but all have been so left that if money being provided [*sic*], tracery may be added to the doors and the plain finials replaced by carved ones (*B.N.P.*, 4 Dec. 1844).

In 1866 it was proposed to remove the pews (i.e., box pews) from the nave, to substitute benches and to repair and enlarge the organ (*B.F.P.*, 14 Jul. 1866). After this restoration, the organ could almost be described as a new instrument. The 'north west corner' [*sic*] of the nave having proved inconvenient, it was placed in the north aisle of the chancel (*B.N.P.*, 3 Dec. 1867). Sir Arthur Blomfield had furnished plans for the benching, estimating 'a cost of £1,315 or £1,255 if the present open seats are retained and used in the aisles' (*B.F.P.*, 14 Jul. 1866). The design for the new benches was taken from some specimens of the original benching found when the deal pews were removed.<sup>8</sup> With an extra £80 it was possible to have the very best material. This extra expense was defrayed by 'a gentleman who might be known to some present' (*B.N.P.*, 23 Apr. 1867).

The church was re-opened on 28 November 1867. The cost of the benching was £2,056 1s. 1d., and of the organ, £874 10s. 6d. (*B.N.P.*, 23 Apr. 1867).

Among the benches on the north side of the middle aisle are two in memory of the late Miss Harrison, presented by John Allan esq. [i.e. John Harrison Allan] her heir, on the poppy heads of which are carved the arms of Miss Harrison, her christian name, Mr Allan's name, the arms of the town and the initials of the incumbent and the senior churchwarden, I.R. & I.S. [John Richardson and James Sparke]. For these

bench ends very handsome pieces of gnarled oak have been selected, and the carving, which was entrusted to a London artist, has been executed with great finish (*S.E.F.P.*, 5 Dec. 1867).

Plates XXa and XXb show the inside face of the two family poppy heads. On the one, a ribbon with the names 'Elizabeth, Harriot, Hannah' lies over a large H. On the other, two hearts are entwined with a ribbon threaded through bearing the name 'Judith Allan' with '18' at either end: 1818, the year of her marriage. To obtain timber of such quality for these bench ends John Harrison Allan was reputed to have spent nearly £100 (*S.E.F.P.*, 5 Dec. 1867). Perhaps he was also the 'gentleman' who gave the extra £80 to obtain high quality wood for all the benches?

What, then, of the Ugglebarnby benches? The parishioners of St Mary's furnished the nave with the most elaborate and convenient seating that they could provide. Sir Arthur Blomfield had estimated the cost of the benching with or without using the open seats already in the church. These open seats were the ones placed in the west end of the nave on the removal of the organ gallery, awaiting completion when funds were available. The benches in Ugglebarnby (Pl. XXI) exactly fit the description of these benches (*S.E.F.P.*, 5 Dec. 1867) and would have been completed by James Wormald before being sent to Yorkshire. The Ugglebarnby Church Guide notes that the stone pulpit, reading desk, font and reredos were taken from London to Yorkshire by Allan ships. The benches probably travelled from Ipswich to Whitby by similar transport.

All Saints Church, Ugglebarnby was re-opened on 25 September 1872, 'notwithstanding the tempestuous weather which prevailed during the whole day'. It was impossible to erect a marquee and the public tea was held in the house of three of the parishioners. Hothouse plants were supplied by friends and the church was beautifully decorated, despite the incessant downpour of rain. It was thought that the new structure with its beautiful stained glass windows and musical peal of bells would be one of the attractions of the neighbourhood (*W.T.*, 27 Sept. 1872). This interesting, well-loved church, set amid glorious country, can have altered little since that day in 1872, but it does not always rain!

#### *Acknowledgements*

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#### *Notes*

- 1 St Mary, Bury St Edmunds. poor rates, 1863 (S.R.O.B., N3/3/36).
- 2 See also Whitby Philosophical and Literary Society, Hobmen note book 1, 60.
- 3 St Mary, Bury, minute book, 28 Oct. 1869 (S.R.O.B., FL 545/9044).
- 4 St Mary. poor rates (S.R.O.B., N3/2/3).
- 5 St Mary, rate assessment (N3/2/5).
- 6 S.R.O.B., Case VIII, f. 54.
- 7 Palgrave parish register of baptisms, 1704-69 (S.R.O.I., FB 137/D1/1).
- 8 St Mary, minute book, 28 Oct. 1869 (S.R.O.B., FL 545/9044).

*References*

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*Abbreviations*

- B.F.P.*            *Bury Free Press.*  
*B.N.P.*            *Bury and Norwich Post.*  
*S.E.F.P.*          *Suffolk and Essex Free Press.*  
*S.R.O.B.*        Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch.  
*S.R.O.I.*        Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.  
*W.T.*            *Whitby Times and North Yorkshire Advertiser.*