

CEILING SYMBOLISM

There are four different designs of imagery to be found painted on the church ceilings. The nave and south aisle created in 1864 and two slightly different designs in 1874 are to be found in the choir and sanctuary following the restoration of the chancel.

Most of the decoration would have been done using stencils, rather than painted free hand. The stencils might have been made by the painters from Butterfield's drawings, or Butterfield might have supplied them himself.

The imagery on the ceiling is quite standard in that the individual elements might be found in any church of the period. Of the texts, 'Alleluia' is self-explanatory. The 'IHS' monogram is an abbreviation of the Greek IESOUS from which comes the English spelling Jesus, although various other explanations are also to be found (e.g. 'Jesus Hominem Salvatore').

Both are to be found with a rose, apparently the red rose of Lancaster. The rose (without thorns) is associated with the Virgin Mary. On some of the panels the 'IHS' monogram is surrounded by the stem of a flowering plant with thorns, an obvious reference to the Crown of Thorns.

There are to be found gilded 'IHC' monograms in a sunburst, similar, though not identical to the emblem of the Society of Jesus and can be found, for example, on the arms of Pope Francis.

Clearly then the designs used are of a High Church nature and we can only speculate that the clergy at the time may have been High Churchmen.

What makes this decoration special is that it is a rare Butterfield scheme. And unlike so many schemes of painted decoration it has survived, whereas so many were painted over either because they had fallen out of favour or because they had got so dirty from smoke that it became impossible to appreciate them for what they were.

Document prepared with the help of Dr James Bettley