

Neutral Citation Number: [2018] ECC Wor 2

In the Worcester Consistory Court

**Archdeaconry of Dudley: Parish of Areley Kings: Church of St Bartholomew:
Faculty petition 17-50 relating to conservation of reredos and installation on east wall**

Judgment

Introduction

1. This petition relates to
 - a. the conservation of a reredos¹ that has been in the Church at Areley Kings since it was first produced almost 100 years ago, and
 - b. its re-installation at the east end of the church.
2. The fabric of the church at Areley Kings dates from many periods. The original nave, dating back to the 12th century, was replaced by a large Decorated style nave and north aisle designed by Frederick Preedy in 1885-86. The Norman chancel remains, but the upper parts of the east wall and the east window were rebuilt in brick in 1796.
3. The reredos was originally introduced in 1920, along with timber panelling, an altar rail, and choir stalls, in memory of Mr Zachary Lloyd of Areley Hall, his wife Eleanor, and their elder daughter Sarah, a missionary in India. The panelling is 1.6m high, and covers the east wall of the chancel, coming up to approximately the level of the bottom of the east window, and the adjacent sections of the north and south walls of the chancel.
4. The reredos originally occupied the central place in this ensemble, immediately below the east window. It was made by the Bromsgrove Guild of Artists, and contains three painted panels. The central panel features ears of corn and a vine and grapes, and those to either side feature St Andrew and St Cecilia.

¹ I describe the object in question as a reredos, since that term has been used by everyone else, although I suspect it is more accurately categorised as a retable. I asked for clarification as to that point, but none has been forthcoming. Clearly nothing turns on it.

5. I asked for a valuation of the reredos, but I have not been supplied with one. I suggested that the conservators might be able to assist, but they were unable to do so. The PCC secretary notes that it was originally a gift, and so the parish has no record of the value, and the Rector observed that it is covered by the general insurance of the church; he stated that it is such a unique item that the parish would need to get it "properly valued", which would be at some cost. I consider it to be unsatisfactory that there is no accurate valuation of the item, or even a rough estimate. If the Parish is willing to fund the restoration of the reredos, it should also be able to fund its valuation – if only for insurance purposes. It may well be that, as the Parish seems to consider, it is indeed of little value; but it may not be.
6. The panelling is still in place, but the altar rail and choirstalls were moved – apparently around the turn of the century, during the incumbency of Mr Vessey (the predecessor of the present Rector, from 1994 to 2002). The altar was relocated to the west end of the north aisle.
7. A faculty is now sought by the Parish for the restoration of the reredos, and its re-introduction into the chancel, but located slightly higher up the wall than it was originally. An objection has been lodged by Mrs Dorothy Smith, a PCC member and former sacristan.

The restoration of the reredos

8. The reredos is currently at conservators in Somerset, so I have not seen it myself. However, I have been shown good photographs. And I have inspected the panelling where it was once located, so I can accurately gauge its scale.
9. The reredos is to be restored by Sally Strachey Historic Conservation Ltd. The conservation technique proposed has been considered carefully by the DAC, and found to be entirely satisfactory. But the recommendation of the proposal by the DAC was subject to a proviso that the method of its fixing be approved before it is reintroduced into the church.
10. There is no controversy as to the restoration of the reredos, and I therefore authorise that, without further ado, subject to a condition that a copy of the resulting conservation

report be filed within six months with the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, for inclusion in the historic environment record.

11. But that still leaves the question of where in the church it should be located once it has been restored.

The future location of the reredos

12. It appears that the reredos was first removed around seventy years ago by Mr Francis (Rector from 1947 to 1974), from its original position on the east wall to the north-west corner of the church. I do not know why this was done, although I note that it appears to have taken place shortly after his arrival. It was then moved to a new location, further east, to be used along with a portable altar table as a side chapel for midweek communion. Mr Vessey then moved it again, to the vestry, as part of a larger reordering to make the chancel more user-friendly and modern.
13. By then, the children of Mr Zachary Lloyd, who had initially commissioned the reredos, had died. The following generation of the Lloyd family, who worshipped in the church, commissioned two altar frontals; the wall space under the window was altered to accommodate the new frontals.
14. The main altar table was moved back to its original position by the present Rector when he arrived. At major festivals, the altar table is now moved forward, to allow for a nativity scene or an Easter garden.
15. At first blush, the obvious place to locate the reredos would be where it was originally designed – that is, in the panel immediately under the east window. However, it is unfortunately not quite so straightforward. First, if that were to be done, it would not be possible to use the frontals in the same way. Second, the lower edge of the reredos would come below the level of the top of the altar table, which would look odd. If on the other hand the reredos were to be raised, as is now proposed, that would obscure the bottom of the east window; perhaps more importantly, when the altar table was brought forward, the reredos would look odd so high up the wall.
16. On my inspection, it was agreed by all present – the Rector, Mrs Smith and the Archdeacon – that it was far from clear what was the best solution to this problem; no-

one was able to suggest a satisfactory location for the item. The Rector did not feel strongly about its eventual location; he merely wanted it out of the vestry. Mrs Smith, on the other hand, merely wanted it somewhere other than on the east wall.

Conclusion

17. With some regret, because I know that the Parish has been seeking a resolution of this matter for some while, I have come to the conclusion that I am not prepared to authorise the return of the reredos to the east wall until I am satisfied that there is a scheme for its location that works in detail both when the altar table is up against the east wall and when it is brought forward. I remain to be convinced that such a scheme can indeed be devised.
18. Nor can it be sensibly returned to the west end of the north aisle, where it was for a while, since that area is now dominated by the modern, brightly coloured stain glass window; and the reredos would not be suitable.
19. I note the suggestion of the Archdeacon, made as we walked round the church, that it might be possible to locate the reredos at the western end of the nave, on the north wall above the way through to the north aisle. That might be an idea worth pursuing, although I would need to see evidence that it was supported within the parish, that the DAC thought it was suitable, and that the Lloyd family (if any members are known to be still extant) are in agreement.

CHARLES MYNORS

Chancellor

24 March 2018

**DR CHARLES MYNORS FRTPI FRICS IHBC FICFor (Hon) Barrister
Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcester**

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Letter 3

23 March 2018

Also by email (without supporting papers) to the Deputy Registrar, and Mrs L Matthews; and to the Parish (revmturner@tiscali.co.uk), Mrs Dorothy Smith (dthysusmith@hotmail.com), the Deputy Chancellor, the Diocesan Church Buildings Officer, and the Archdeacon.

Dear Registrar,

**Archdeaconry of Dudley: Parish of Areley Kings: Church of St Bartholomew:
Faculty petition 17-50 relating to conservation of reredos and installation on east wall**

Since my previous letter, I have been able to make another visit to the church, on 7 February 2018, this time accompanied both by the Rector and Mrs Smith, and also by the Archdeacon.

I now attach a judgment in relation to this matter, following my visit to the churchyard on 7 February.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES MYNORS
Chancellor