

Neutral Citation Number: [2016] ECC Lei 4

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT

LEICESTER DIOCESE

IN THE MATTER of Market Bosworth, St Peter

THE WORSHIPFUL CHANCELLOR BLACKETT-ORD

THE FESTIVAL OF ST MARY MAGDALENE

FRIDAY THE 22ND JULY 2016

JUDGMENT

1. There is before me a faculty petition relating to St Peter's Church, Market Bosworth, a Grade II* church of early fourteenth century and perpendicular style, very thoroughly restored in the nineteenth century and consequently having a Victorian feel.
2. The DAC visited the church on 1 February 2016. There was then a vacancy in the incumbency, as I believe is still the case. The DAC was asked to consider proposals for re-ordering the interior. Seven aspects of this were to be considered. Of them, I need only mention three:

Introduction of Nave Altar

Removal of Rood Screen

Removal/adaption of the Choir Stalls.

These three matters arise because the arrangement at and around the chancel is typical of a Victorian rearrangement. A rood screen veils the view of the chancel and high altar from those sitting in the nave, and this is emphasised by the narrowness of the chancel. In it, the choir pews face inwards, towards one another. The aisle between them was never very wide, but in St Peter's it has been slightly narrowed by pews being moved forward because of radiators inserted behind them against the side walls.

3. Some time before the site visit, a faculty had been granted permitting the pipe organ to be removed from the building for its own restoration. So it was obviously useful for any works that were to be done in the church, to be done whilst the organ was out of the way.
4. The members of the DAC present mildly discouraged further consideration of any of the re-ordering for the time being other than the item called "removal/adaption of the Choir Stalls", for which it encouraged an application for a faculty.
5. Accordingly the present petition defines the proposed works (with perhaps excessive terseness) as "removal and disposal of the choir stalls and associated pew platform".
6. The formal DAC notification given after its meeting on 5 May 2016 describes the works a little more fully:

"Two rows of choir stalls are to be removed as is the softwood pew platform on which they stand. Softwood Pew Platform to be removed and replaced with Ancaster stone paving bedded on hydraulic lime mortar on a limecrete

slab. The stone paving is to incorporate a recess into which ceramic mosaic tiles replicating the perimeter strips of the surrounding floor”.

A proviso to this was

“That any replacement seating for the Chancel must be agreed by the DAC prior to its introduction”.

The opinion of the DAC was that the work

“is not likely to affect the character of the church as a building of special architectural or historic interest”.

The Statement of Needs from the parish explains the background and takes the matter a little further:

“That the pews be stored in a safe place until a proper investigation and proposal can be considered with regard to their preservation and re-use within the church, perhaps in a different, movable format in the chancel, or elsewhere, until the final decision on the finish and seating arrangement within the choir area is reached.

The temporary seating in the form of chairs be used by the choir while the best solution to the use of the pews is sought...If the pews could be adapted or replaced at some time in the future with movable pews, activities supporting the further development of music in the ministry of the church could be undertaken.”

7. Two aspects of the matter cause me concern.

8. First, there are two basic reasons advanced for the removal of the pews. One reason is that (to quote the Statement of Needs) “the pews and the floor beneath them are now showing the signs of deterioration and wear”. The Architect’s report hardly bears this out:

“2.0 Condition of choir stalls

The choir stalls are in generally good condition, although there is evidence of furniture beetle attack in a number of places. There is again limited evidence of beetle attack to the softwood boards of the pew platforms but again at this stage the damage does not appear significant”.

The other reason advanced is because the pews in their present position narrow the access of the aisle to the high altar, and face inwards, so that “the choir effectively sings to itself rather than including the congregation”. But the pews do not at present narrow the aisle as much as the doorway in the chancel arch narrows the aisle. And any attempt to bring the choir singing into the congregational singing is similarly prevented by the chancel arch; but at present there is no proposal to remove the chancel arch.

9. It does seem to me to be premature to be removing the pews before the question of the chancel arch has been decided.
10. Similarly, there is a suggestion of a nave altar. If that is introduced, it will probably cut off the chancel from the nave even more than the chancel arch does at present. In such circumstances, will there be any point in re-ordering the choir? Indeed the question what is to happen to the discarded pews has still not been decided.
11. I feel that the re-ordering of the chancel pews (which may indeed be necessary) is intimately tied up with the question whether there is removal of the chancel arch and/or the introduction of a nave altar, and I am reluctant to consider the pews and their pew platform in isolation.

12. Secondly, a matter which causes me concern is the proposal for the replacement of the pew platform with Ancaster stone paving.
13. At present the visible, uncovered floor of the chancel is good-quality Victorian tiles and mosaic work.
14. My immediate thought is that two large rectangles of Ancaster stone paving inserted into such a floor where the pew platforms used to be, will look odd.
15. But I am not deciding the present question on my opinion of this.
16. Under Schedule 2 Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015, which came into force on 1 January 2016, there is a requirement of consultation with Historic England and the relevant National Amenity Society if the work is likely to affect the “character” of the building “as a building of special architectural or historic interest”. The DAC has given its opinion that the work is not likely to affect the church in that way, but I do not agree. More to the point, I need an expert view on the matters that I have just mentioned.
17. In those circumstances I am not prepared to grant the faculty at this stage. I will adjourn it to enable the PCC to seek consultation with Historic England and the Victorian Society. And I strongly recommend (although I do not absolutely insist upon it) that before anything further is done on the petition as it now stands, the PCC decides what it wants to do about a nave altar, the chancel arch and the seating in the chancel.

18. It will be much easier for a faculty to be granted for all of the works than a part of the works in isolation.
19. I adjourn the petition accordingly.

Mark Blackett-Ord

Chancellor

The Festival of Mary Magdalene
22 July 2016

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Case No.....

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JUDGMENT

Diocesan Registrar