

ANIMALS AT CHURCH.

BY YORK HOPEWELL.



SOW AND LITTER OF PIGS CARVED IN BRAUNTON CHURCH, DEVON.

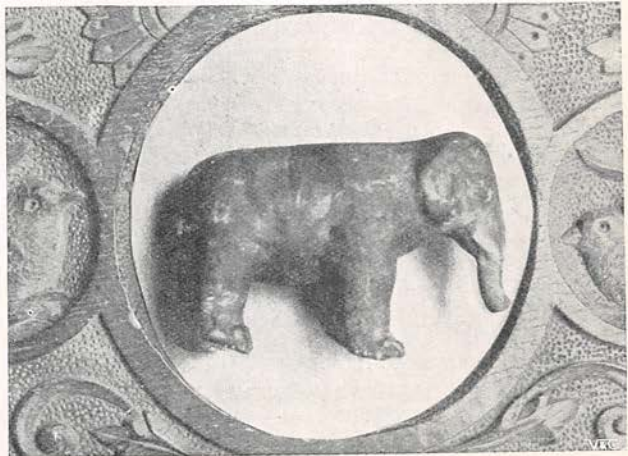
FEW people have any idea of the number of curious carvings and sculptures of animal life that are to be found in various cathedrals and churches throughout our Islands; and these are often discovered in the most unusual and unexpected places—odd corners of small churches that usually escape the notice of nine-tenths of the visitors who enter the buildings. Many of them, of course, bear some relation of heraldry to the originators they have so long survived; but many, also, are either frankly decorative or else memorials of some dead prototype.

Probably, were all the churches that have carvings of animals in them gone through systematically, we should find, apart from the merely heraldic animal designs, that the favourite creature to be portrayed in such places and circumstances is the dog. There are several examples of "man's friend" being commemorated in our ecclesiastical edifices. A photograph of one of these is given here, though it is to be regretted that the vandalism of a bygone age has resulted in the head of the dog being broken off. The animal was carved somewhat like a spaniel of to-day, and lies at the feet of the wife of Sir Brian FitzAllen, Earl of Arundale. His tomb, where this sculpture is to be found, is in Bedale Church, in North Yorkshire. At his own feet is a lion, but this is not clearly seen in the photograph,

which was taken from the other side, to show what is left of the spaniel at the feet of his lady. This fine monument has been much defaced, and all the shapeliness of the figure has been rubbed off. The quaint carving of the claws and the shagginess of the dog's coat, however, are still plainly discernible. The lion here is clearly one of the crest of the "Howard" family, to which the Arundel earldom belongs.

Deerhurst has a fine specimen of a dog-carving in its church. It is on the tomb of Lady Cassey, and, as usual, the animal is placed at her feet. This instance is remarkable from the fact that the name of the favourite is carved below it, a most unusual circumstance. The dog, "Terri," had evidently been a particular pet of his mistress, and his affection and hers have been commemorated in this manner. There are one or two places in the North of England besides those mentioned, where a dog has an effigy, and there is also the one at Ingham Church, in Norfolk, where under the dog is placed its name, "Jack," though the sculptor spelt the word in his own way, according to the fashion of his day.

A capital example of the carving of a dog in a church is that at St. Mary's, Warwick. Here, on a marble slab, near the entrance to



AN ELEPHANT ON A MISERERE IN EXETER CATHEDRAL.



OX'S HEAD AT HORNCHURCH, ESSEX.

the Beauchamp Chapel, is the tomb of the Earl and Countess of Warwick, both of whom died at the very beginning of the fifteenth century. The Earl's feet rest on a bear, and the lady's on a dog which bears a collar of bells round its neck. The bear here carved at the Earl's feet is almost unique; there are few carvings of bears in English churches.

If there is any animal that can challenge the dog for supremacy as an adorer of churches, that one is the lion. Why the lion should have been such a popular subject, outside heraldic considerations, for church decoration can only be explained from the prominence the Scriptures always give to him as a model of strength, power, and sovereignty. It was not easy to choose which of the lion-carvings to illustrate here, but we have decided upon the one in Ripon Cathedral. This well known brass shows a fine example of the king of beasts and is the subject of an old story. It is said that a certain gentleman of the neighbourhood was some centuries ago travelling in far lands, when one day, in a wood, he was suddenly confronted by a fierce lion. He at once fell down on his knees and began to pray, and the lion, after one or two supercilious glances, turned round and left without molesting him.

On his return to his home he had this brass put up in the cathedral as a memorial of his escape. On the brass he can be clearly seen at the right end, praying, surrounded by trees, whilst the figure of the lion stands out well against the background of trees. Lately this brass in the old minster at Ripon has shown signs of wear, and the lines are not now so clear as they were some years ago.

There are several other instances of lions in churches up and down the land. One we have mentioned above at Bedale Church, and there are heads of this animal to be found amongst the carvings on more than one bishop's throne, including that in Exeter Cathedral. This throne, by the way, is one of the most interesting of all such articles of church furniture in England. The extraordinary heads of creatures carved on it were done probably about the beginning of the fourteenth century. Besides such examples, well known and comparatively common, as the dog and lion, it has the rarer ones of the pig and the cow, and the still more rare ones of the sheep and the monkey! I shall give another case soon where a full-sized figure of a monkey adorns a tombstone in an English church, but I must confess that this throne at Exeter is almost the only instance with which I am acquainted where a sheep is carved in an

GOOSE IN BISHAM CHURCH.

Photo by Tarrant, Oxford.

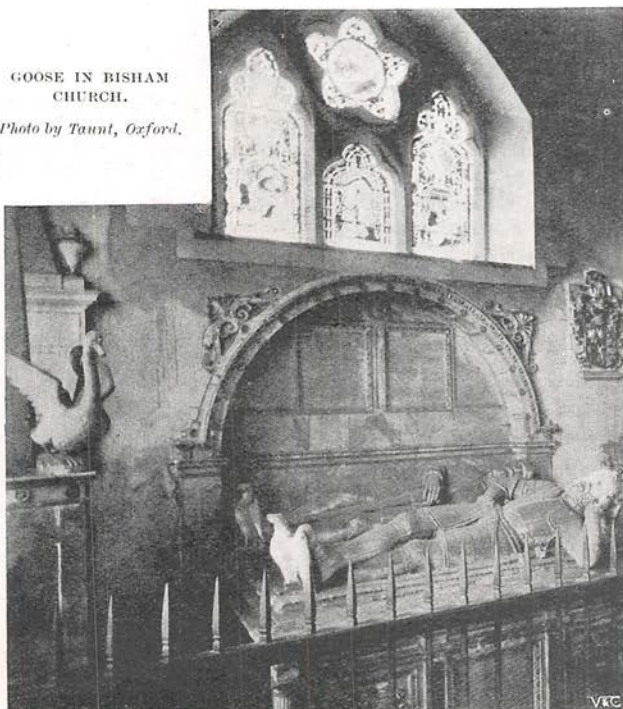




Photo by]

[Saunderson, Richmond.

HEADLESS SPANIEL AT THE FOOT OF THE COUNTESS OF ARUNDALE IN BEDALE CHURCH.

English church—that is, as apart from the many cases of the “Lamb,” as symbolical of the Saviour.

There is, however, the figure of the lamb at the foot of the tomb of an Earl and Countess of Warwick who lie buried in the choir at St. Mary's, Warwick. Here, again, the Earl's feet rest on a bear—which animal used to be the badge of the ancient Nevilles, Earls of Warwick—and the feet of the Countess rest upon this effigy of the lamb.

Speaking of the pig, no more curious instance of that animal being used in decorating any church can be given than the one at Braunton, near Ilfracombe, in Devonshire. It appears that in days gone by the Braunton people resolved to build a church, and began the edifice on the hill overlooking the village. But their building fell to the ground without apparent cause, and a second effort resulted likewise, also a third. Then one night the chief builder heard a voice, as

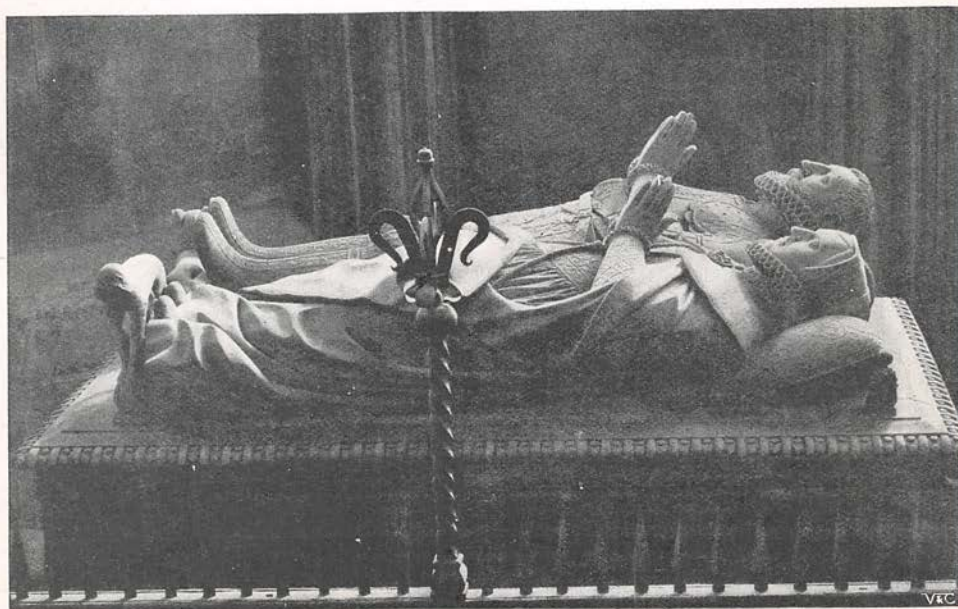


Photo by]

[Russell & Sons.

MONKEY AT THE FOOT OF A COUNTESS OF LINCOLN IN ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR.



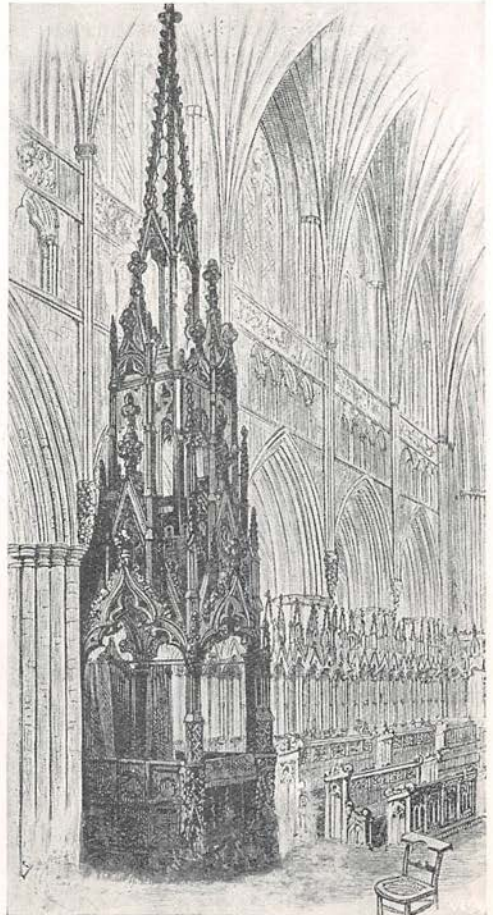
PELICANS IN ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH, YARMOUTH.

from heaven, and it told him, he said, to seek for the spot where a sow was feeding her litter of six pigs, and to build the church there. This was done by the good folks of Braunton, and the church was built where the famous sow was found, and finished without further interruption.

To keep in memory this extraordinary miracle there was carved upon the interior roof of the church the figures of the old sow and her litter, with a fitting inscription placed under it. The roof was re-slatted in 1887, but great care was taken that the celebrated carving should not be injured, and there it is to-day for the visitor's inspection. The church itself has a strange name, being dedicated to St. Brannock.

Most of the animals we have mentioned and shall mention may be found in more than one church in the country. But the one we are now to speak of is at least unique in that no other counterpart of it is known to exist in any British church. It is the carving of the elephant on a *miserere* in Exeter Cathedral. Some authorities go so far as to question whether the animal is intended for an elephant, but there can be little doubt on that score, though it is to-

day much defaced and in a most awkward position for telling what it actually looked like when first carved. The picture here given of it is hardly a true one in the fullest sense, as the artist had the utmost difficulty in trying to obtain even the barest photograph of it, owing to the extremely inaccessible situation it shares with the *miserere* on which it is carved, and also owing to the fact that it is almost impossible to throw the light on it. He had therefore to get the best picture he could, and to work from that afterwards. As to the date of this carving, and why such a comparatively unknown animal, as an elephant was in such distant days to our forefathers, should be sculptured here, nothing is known, except for one or two items which show us, judging from the style of the work and the appearance of age, etc., that we must go back centuries to get at its origin.



BISHOP'S THRONE AT EXETER CATHEDRAL, ADORNED WITH HEADS OF SHEEP, COW, PIG, AND MONKEY.

We spoke just now of the head of a monkey being carved on a bishop's throne. There is one church in England which has a full-grown monkey wrought on a tomb, and that church is no less a place than St. George's Chapel, at Windsor. If the visitor to this famous spot can get permission to look round the Lincoln Chapel, he will find therein the tomb of the Earl of Lincoln, who was for thirty years the Lord High Admiral of England in the reign of Good Queen Bess. He was a great favourite of hers, as he had been of her father and her brother, both of whom he served faithfully. He died in 1584, and this monument was erected to his memory by his Countess, who was herself afterwards buried here. The recumbent figures show the Earl and his lady, and whilst

his feet are resting on the effigy of a greyhound, hers are pressed against the figure of a monkey, which is standing upright. All these sculptures are in an excellent state of preservation, and the chief difficulty we had with the photograph arose from the bad light of the chapel, which only allowed of the picture being taken from one point. The figure of the greyhound at the Earl's feet could not be shown for this very reason, or it would have proved interesting, being perhaps the best of all dogs sculptured in our churches, for clearness of outline and capital preservation.

It is surmised, though little is known

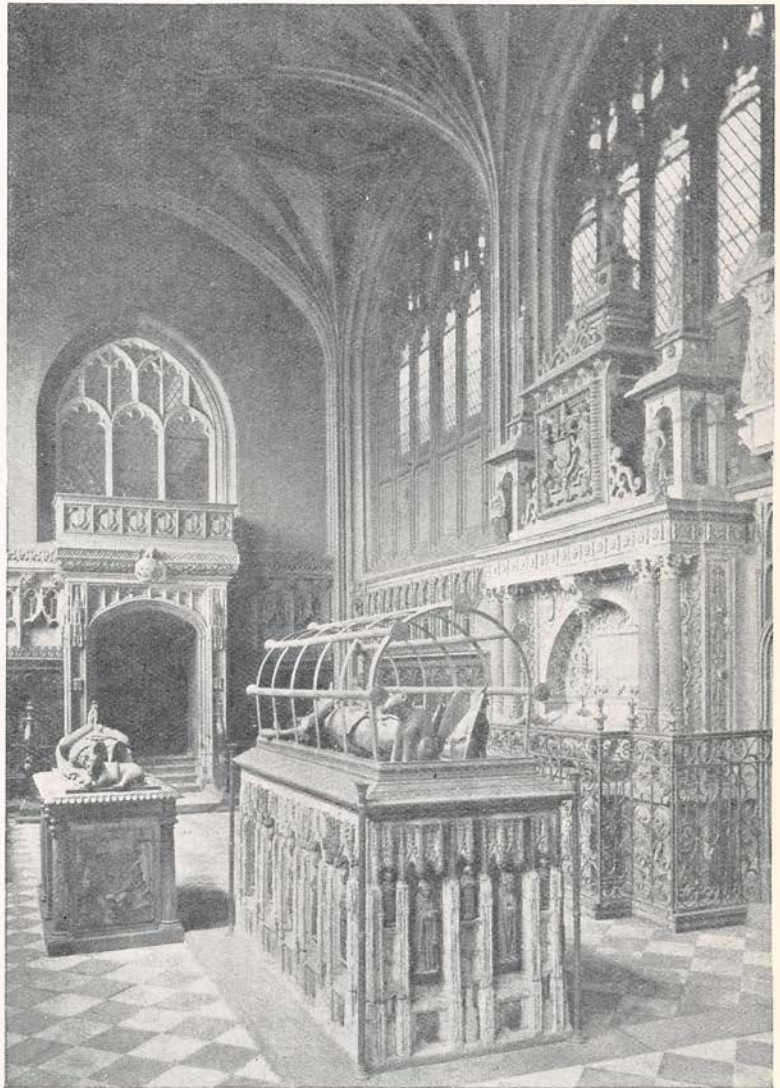


Photo by

IN THE BEAUCHAMP CHAPEL, ST. MARY'S, WARWICK.

[Frith & Co., Reigate.]

to-day about the matter, that this monkey must have been a great pet of the lady's, and that it was perhaps buried in this grave with her. Monkeys were so little known in our own land in 1584 that, when one was here as a pet, it must have been highly valued, especially if it were a gift, as seems probable in this case, since her husband had travelled widely. Our photograph was taken especially for this article by the kind permission of the authorities at Windsor Castle, and is the first that has appeared of this quaint tomb.

The pretty little village of Hornchurch, in Essex, can claim a unique example of



Photo by]

THE "KANGAROO" IN MORTHOE CHURCH.

[Phillipse, Ilfracombe.

animal carving, for it must surely be the only place in England whose church is externally adorned with the finely wrought head of an ox. This is to be seen over the gable end of the edifice, and stands out most prominently above the chancel window. The name of the village itself has been derived from this very ornament on the sanctuary, so we are told, though whether rightly so or not we must leave others to say. The church was formerly connected with a priory whose

sculptures that were full of meaning and that had most interesting histories attached to them. But this goose of Bisham was fortunate in escaping the hand of the destroyer, and, unlike many other memorials of animals in Thames-side churches, it remains whole to-day. Curiously enough, at the feet of the knight whose tomb is close beside it there will be noticed two birds, which were intended, doubtless, to represent eagles. But the eagle is quite common as a sculpture in

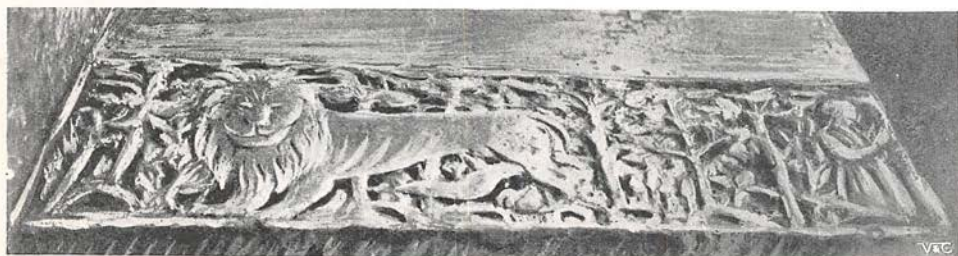


Photo by]

LION IN RIPON CATHEDRAL.

[Saunderson, Richmond.

crest, it is said, was an ox's head. This carving represented that crest, as is believed to-day; and though the church was once called "Havering" Church, owing to its being then in a parish of that name, it is surmised that it began to be called the "Horned Church," hence Hornchurch, as to-day. However that may be, there is no doubt of the originality of the emblem, for, except the oxen's heads on the Exeter throne, the cow has not been particularly prominent

the churches over England, just as is the lion, and for almost precisely the same reasons; therefore we have not given any other special photograph of it here. The goose is distinctly more scarce in this connection.

At Coxwold Church, in Yorkshire, there is a finely wrought stag. It is on what is known as the Belaysie monument, and here also there is a lion at the feet of the lady, whose effigy is beside that of her husband. At the feet of

in sculpture in English churches. There is one, however, on the pulpit of St. Peter's, Cornhill, London.

A goose, opening its wings for flight, is to be seen carved on a tomb in the church of Bisham, the pretty Thames village. It is an excellent piece of work, and is, which is more uncommon in these things, in excellent preservation. The iconoclasts of the days of Cromwell and of later days have destroyed thousands of such



Photo by]

[Frith & Co., Reigate.

ARCH AT BARFRETON CHURCH, WITH DOGS, RABBITS, PIGS, AND OTHER ANIMALS ON ITS INNER MOULDINGS.

the man rests a noble figure of a stag, complete except for one of the horns, which has been broken off. The effigy of the man is painted the colour of steel armour, and that of the lady is black. Both the lion and the stag are painted a dark brown colour, and this, together with the dark recess in which the monument lies, has made the work of the photographer anything but easy. Notwithstanding this, the figure of the stag can be clearly seen on our picture, and was probably intended to mark the knight's prowess as a hunter, or else was included as figuring in some coat of arms of the ancient Belasye family.

There are at least two cases where pelicans are prominent as fine carvings in English churches, and probably more than two, since the pelican has ever been a noted bird of scriptural allusion. A famous example is that of Foxe's tomb, in Winchester Cathedral. But the other, and the better example, is that of the pelicans above the choir-stalls in the well known St. Nicholas' Church, Great Yarmouth. The pelican is in each case represented as resting on her nest, and the young ones are looking up, waiting to be fed from the mother's bill. Fine, bold figures are they all, too. In grace and delicacy of finish,

the birds on the Winchester tomb seem crude and rough, indeed, beside these at Yarmouth.

At Barfreton Church, near Deal, there is a beautiful old Norman porch which has on its inner mouldings some strange carvings, including two pigs drinking from the same pot, several dogs chasing rabbits, and other subjects not usually found in similar positions. The church is said to have been erected as a thank-offering by a noble who almost lost his life in the forest, and this may account for the prominence given to forest animals in the beautiful sculptures which adorn it.

Mention of these forest animals naturally brings to mind the two hares which are to be found in the south choir aisle of Wells Cathedral. At the foot of an effigy of Bishop Harewell, to whose name they bear an obvious reference, they afford an excellent example of fourteenth century animal sculpture.

Then let us mention the carving of an animal which has given rise to more contention, most probably, than that of any other such subject in any church. We refer to the sculpture known as the "kangaroo," in the church at Morthoe, North Devon. This country church, about five and a half miles from Ilfracombe, has become noted for this

quaint carving. It adorns the end of one of a series of pews which have suffered much at the hands of some old carver. Fishes abound on some of these pew-end carvings, but there is only one "kangaroo." To us to-day the strange animal appears much more like an old drawing of the "leviathan" of Job, or like a sea-serpent, than like a "kangaroo"! But local tradition will persist in the belief that the sculptor, whoever he was, in his own times meant this for a picture of that animal, therefore it is always called the "kangaroo."

The Priory Church, Bridlington, can show a fine carving of two nondescript animals commonly supposed to be dragons. They are ready for fight, and below them are portrayed the figures of a wolf and a crow. But there has been some uncertainty whether the sculptor really meant to portray those animals, and one authority maintains that the figures are intended for a fox and a goose. Another sculptured animal here, which some folk call a cat, is believed to have been meant for a lion. It is not easy to say which contenders are right in such cases, for the carvings are often quaint and rare, in more

senses than one, and ancient ecclesiastical artists did not err on the side of over-scrupulous accuracy in their designs of human and animal figures.

One strange omission from this list of animals carved in our churches cannot fail to be noted, and that is the horse. There is no really satisfactory example of a horse carved in any English church. The omission would be extraordinary in any case, seeing how common an animal, even as a favourite, a horse is. But it is all the stranger when one thinks of hundreds of recumbent knights, men to whom, when alive, a good horse was a most necessary thing. How it is that not a single one of these—at any rate, of importance—ever commanded or suggested the sculpturing of his favourite steed on his own monument, is one of the many points of curiosity connected with the present subject. The model of a noble horse, a past favourite, is not unknown on gravestones in churchyards and on memorial stones raised especially over the tomb of the steed itself. But as an ornament of the more elaborate tombs in our churches, the sculpture of the horse may be said to be conspicuous by its absence.



Photo by]

[Saunderson, Richmond.

STAG AT THE FOOT OF A BELASYE IN COXWOLD CHURCH, YORKS.