

William of Wykeham's Crozier in New College, Oxford**Jeremy Montagu**

William of Wykeham, who was then already Edward III's Chancellor of England, was appointed Bishop of Winchester in 1366 and installed a year later. We assume that the crozier was made at around that time, though there is always the possibility that it was a later and more glorious replacement for an earlier one. In that case the last possible date is 1403, the year that Wykeham drew up his will bequeathing it to his New College in the University of Oxford. It is a stunning piece of work. Jackson called it 'incomparably the finest example of English goldsmith's work of the gothic style which has come down to us from the Middle Ages.' It is 6 ft 9 in high, silver-gilt throughout, with enamelled decoration. The shaft, which terminates in an iron spike 'for the admonition of rebels', is in three sections, divided by two lobed knobs and each section screws into one of these knobs. The shaft is decorated with lilies, the emblem of the Virgin whom Wykeham took as his patron, and these lilies reappear in the background of the musician panels. The capital of the shaft, supported by the wings of angels, is 11 inches high and incredibly detailed, with canopied niches and cast figures of saints in full relief. I shan't today go into any further details of its history or workmanship (you will find all that in my article in *Early Music* of November 2002), except to say that the crook is hexagonal in section, wider on its sides than the front or back and that among these saints, St Peter with his keys stands below one side and St Paul with his sword below the other. So because I'm not sure which is definably the right or left side of a crozier, for ease of identification I have called one side the Peter side and the other the Paul side. Our concern today is with the the musicians and their instruments.

But first, above the pinnacles and canopies stands a little house and originally each corner of that house was guarded by a small cast figure of a musician angel. Today only one survives, playing a gittern, plucking with a plectrum the three strings arranged in double courses. From the roof of this house springs the coil or crook of the crozier. This is decorated with beautiful engravings of angels with musical instruments, each on a silver panel around an inch and a half high (they vary slightly) and five-eighths wide, enamelled in colour, some of which is missing today, and each set within a silver-gilt border.

We will start by going up the Peter side, first a pair of cymbals with high conical domes.

For contrast and comparison, there is another pair of cymbals from the Paul side, quite

different in shape, with large rounded domes.

Back to St Peter's side with a triangle, the beater large and as heavy as the triangle, which is slightly unusual for its period in not having jingling rings on the horizontal side.

Next comes a bagpipes with a conical chanter, and so presumably with a double reed and a cylindrical drone. The player, as is common in the Middle Ages, has the right hand above the left.

The portative organ, which comes next, is the one instrument really relevant to this conference, and unfortunately it's a very schematic rendition, the least realistic of any of the instruments.

Our first rarity is what I think may be one of the earliest illustrations of a recorder, perhaps the first in England. It's certainly a duct flute and much longer than most mediæval penny whistles, but without being able to count fingerholes we cannot say with certainty that it is a recorder. The ordinary duct flutes had up to six fingerholes but the recorder has eight, or nine if the little-fingerhole is duplicated to be accessible to either hand as was customary.

Next comes the psaltery with ten strings, the psalmist's decacordum, plucked with a pair of short plectra. The left hand plucks the bass strings, perhaps accompanying a melody plucked with the right.

Then a long trumpet, closely comparable with that found at Billingsgate a few years ago.

And for comparison, the trumpet on the St Paul side, a panel which has lost all its enamel save for the angel's hair and the gilt of its halo.

Back to St Peter for what I think must be a short trumpet. There are many contemporary references to a clarion as distinct from a trompe, but never a definition to distinguish between them. However, in an article in the forthcoming *Galpin Society Journal* I have shown that clarions were lighter in weight, and therefore presumably shorter, than trompes – so maybe at last we have our distinction, in which case, this is a clarion.

Then a citole, with its characteristic coiled back head, played with a very long plectrum – unfortunately damaged just at the point where we could count its strings – my guess is five. The strings go right down to the end, rather than terminating at a bridge, as with lute, guitar, and the gittern we have already seen, and this is a sign that they were metal, for wire strings would rip a glued bridge from the soundboard.

And finally on St Peter's side a treble shawm.

And for comparison, the tenor shawm from St Paul's side.

The first, immediately above the dormer window of the little house, on St Paul's side is a singer, rather than an instrumentalist, a seraph with six wings, one those who sang the Sanctus to each other.

The second is a single kettledrum instead of the more usual pair of nakers, snared as nakers began to be in this period. The drumhead is tensioned with a network of cords.

Next comes a tabor, again unusual because the player does not also play a three-hole pipe, for pipe and tabor were the universal mediæval accompaniment to the dance. Again except for its hair the angel has lost all its enamel, allowing us to see more clearly the beautiful detailing of these panels, every feather of the wings clearly outlined, each fold of the robes, the lilies, and every feature of the angel's face. Remember that these panels are only about an inch and a half high and about 5/8ths wide.

Now a real rarity, so far as I know the earliest English depiction of a transverse flute, fully as long as our modern version.

And next rarest of all, a trump (sometimes called jews harp). This is so rare – I only know one other in all England, and that a stone carving of a century later in Northampton. We have many surviving trumps from the Middle Ages, including some in the Bate Collection here in Oxford, as well as customs documents recording their import, but only these two depictions of them in use.

Next a fiddle with four strings, the player holding the bow well above the frog, gripping both stick and hair. Here, unlike the citole, we have a glued soundboard bridge, as on a guitar, showing that the strings must have been gut as one would expect. Such bridges were not unusual on early fiddles.

And finally, because I have already mentoned the last three on St Paul's side, that instrument most often associated with angels in popular conception, a harp. Like the psaltery it has ten strings, again a decacordum.

I know of nothing comparable with these depictions. Remember that each panel is about 38 mm high, an inch and a half, and each is 19mm wide, about 5/8 of an inch – each angel occupies about half this area. The amount of detail is stunning, just as the crozier as a whole is a fantastically beautiful object. I am very conscious of the great privilege that I had of being allowed to publish all its instruments in such detail, and of being allowed to scan all the photographs to go with that article in *Early Music*, 2002, 540-62.

A paper given to a conference of organists in Oxford in 2007 as a very brief excerpt from my article in *Early Music*, referred to immediately above.

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