

THE NAVE: CAPITALS and CORBELS

“The church is a nineteenth century copy of English Gothic architecture. Various periods of Gothic are represented. The columns supporting the nave show the Early English delicate mouldings (circa 1200-1272); the capitals at their heads are carved in pure Decorated ornament (circa 1272-1349); the windows above the arches and below the oak hammer-beam roof are done in Perpendicular style. Hammer-beam roofing developed in the 15th century. In the nave of St. Mark’s we there find represented 300 years of English architecture, showing the easy transition from Early English to Decorated and into the Perpendicular.

Entering the nave from the west door one passes under a fine arch of solid stonework some forty feet in height, and seven feet six inches in width overall. The distance across the arch is some fourteen feet. It is a perfectly proportioned example of the Decorated style. There is a carved angel on each side from where the arch springs. The angel on the left holds a shield bearing the cross of St. George and All England while that on the right holds an open bible.

This arch leads into the nave which is about 132 feet in length and 33 feet in width, continued on the north and south sides by five stone arches supported by columns and capitals which show great refinement of detail. These arches support the three foot solid masonry of the upper walls which in turn support the hammer-beam roof.

The embellishment of the capitals and corbel figure heads is a beautiful 19th century copy of the style of the late 13th century, i.e. of the Decorated style, when the capital was decorated by carved foliage and flowers. The work was naturalistic, yet fragile, sensitive, and well designed. Particularly fine capitals at Worsley are those facing into the nave at the heads of the columns supporting the arches on the north and south sides. Beginning at the west end the four carved capitals on the north side facing into the nave show designs in oak, ivy, thorn and vine, while those on the south side, are in oak, ivy, passion flower and May-flower. It is interesting to pick out the carved faces among the foliage.

The details of the carved capitals facing into the south aisle are vine, oak, thorn and ivy, and those facing into the north aisle are vine, May, rose and ivy. (The rose motif on the third capital in the north aisle is particularly beautiful).

The figure heads carved on the corbels have poise and sensitivity of design. Generally the heads on the smaller corbels in the aisles are the most successful, and possess something of the charm of medieval craftsmanship”.

[from *James Attwood's* notes].