



Britain's Medieval Episcopal Thrones

Charles Tracy

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This book is the first major investigation of a subject of seminal importance in the study of church history and archaeology. The two stone thrones, at Wells and Durham, the three timber monuments, at Exeter, St. Davids and Hereford, and the mid-14th-century bishop's chair at Lincoln, all come under a searching empirical inquiry. The Exeter throne is the largest and most impressive in Europe. It is a distinguished innovatory example of the English Decorated style, with antecedents passing back to the court of Edward I. It exemplifies most of the historical and formal strands that suffuse the entire book - visual appearance, distinctiveness within the building, prestige, construction, stylistic context, finance, and the patronage and personal role of the bishop himself; as well as the subtler issues of the personal and collective politics of bishop and chapter, the monument's liturgical applications, its relationship with the cathedral's relics, its symbolism and what it tells us about the aspirations of the institution within the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy. The thrones also reveal much about the personal circumstances of an individual bishop, and where he stood on the scale of a good diocesan on the one hand, and ambitious politician on the other, as exemplified at Exeter and Durham. The text is by the art historian, Dr. Charles Tracy, a seasoned expert on church furniture both in Britain and on the continent of Europe. The chapter on the stone thrones was prepared by Andrew Budge who is currently preparing a Ph.D. thesis on 'English Chantry Churches' at Birkbeck College. The polychromy authority, Eddie Sinclair, spent many hours on the scaffold to bring forward her remarkable report on the Exeter throne. Her full report is to be published online. The Exeter throne is also interpreted by the established timber conservation practitioner, Hugh Harrison, and the St Davids throne by the experienced draughtsman, Peter Ferguson. In an age of the CAD, his meticulous measured drawings of the Exeter and St. Davids monuments are one of the most remarkable features of book. The architect, Paul Woodfield prepared the drawings for the Lincoln chair.

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