

St Mary's Parish Church, Wath

After Lunch a short walk brought us to the Parish church of St. Mary's, Wath. Here the members of the Graham family of Norton Conyers are commemorated in the chapel where there is an impressive memorial to Sir Richard Graham of Wetherby in the County of Cumberland. Our thanks go to Pauline Aldous for opening up a room to show us an interesting ancient piece of furniture. This oak chest is probably the one referred to as the 'Flanders Kyste' in the will of Christopher Best, the chantry priest around the time of the Dissolution in 1553. Whether this clamp-fronted chest is Flemish, German or English in origin remains a matter of debate (Fig.1). Made of oak boards that had been roughly cut through in places to allow for metalwork to be fitted and the whole front had carved panels; the central one a gothic 'window' pattern and smaller panels of animals and mythical beasts.

Ripon Cathedral

The group then moved on to Ripon Cathedral where we assembled in the Georgian Library to look at a collection of chairs – thank you to Julia Barker for putting these out for us. This display proved a valuable resource for the group to study and discuss. Perhaps the most unusual was a beechwood armchair with a drop-in horsehair seat and a simplified splat back and shaped top rail. However, to the back was fitted a wrought iron bracket to which was fixed an iron semi-circle that slid on a ratchet (see Fig. 2 with Peter Brears). A leather sling of three loops lay on hooks on the semi-circle. It was all well made, with castors fitted to the chair and slots in the front legs, probably to take a footrest. The illustration, Fig. 3, shows John Gall demonstrating how the chair may have been used. It is possible that the chair was used to aid the feeding of stroke victims and help them to regain the use of damaged muscles. The chair had a more sympathetic design rather than a restraining purpose.

It was good to see the Durham chair, mentioned in *RFS Newsletter* 55, (Autumn 2011, p.8). Some more examples



Fig. 1 Frank Wood inspecting the medieval chest at Wath



Fig. 2 (left) Peter Brears showing the unusual late 18th-century chair from the Poor House

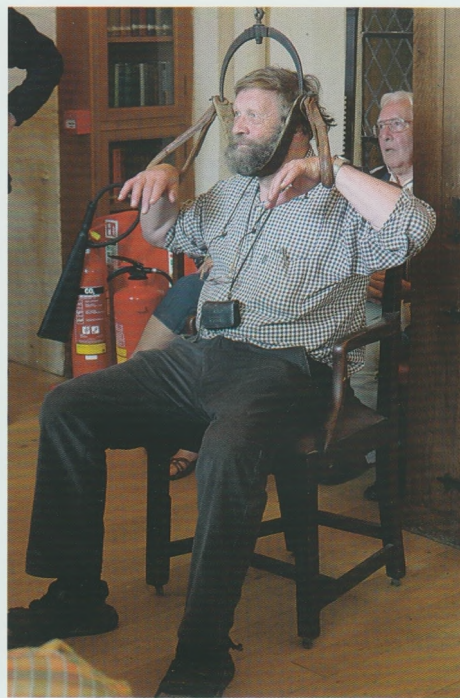


Fig. 3 (right) John Gall demonstrating one possible way in which the chair was used

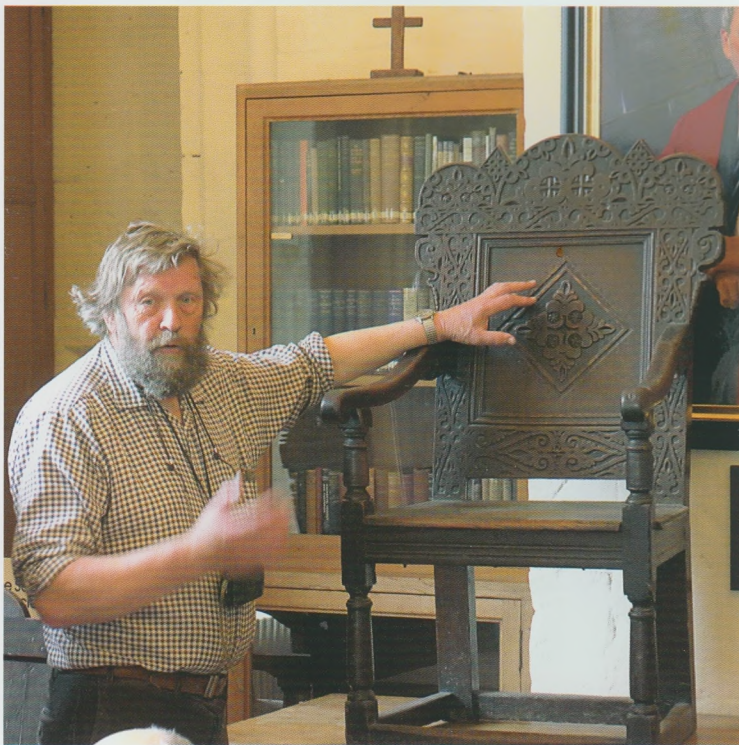


Fig. 4 John Gall explaining some of the finer points on one of the oak armchairs

can be seen there drawn by Peter Brears who was with us and pointed out various features (Fig. 4). There were also good examples of Yorkshire chairs, as one might have expected, as well as others to look at. After these gems there was still time to appreciate the choir stalls, completed in 1494, by Ripon woodcarvers. Parables and jokes featured on the finely carved misericords, which really deserved more time to appreciate.

Burnt Yates and the Old School House

The final visit of the day took us to the village of Burnt Yates and to the Old School House. Dr. Philip Dixon head of the Trustees showed us around the unusual meeting room and gave us some of the school's history. Established in 1760 with the addition of the meeting room in 1770, the Trustees meet twice a year. It remains today very much as when the school was finished; a panelled room to dado height, with an open fire and a large bookcase that is mentioned, along with other furniture, in a beautiful cashbook. A deed chest with three locks, a mahogany table and a set of eight finely carved mahogany chairs by William Chippendale completed the furnishings (see *English Vernacular Furniture 1750–1900*, Christopher Gilbert, Yale, 1991 p. 18–19). The afternoon finished with a cup of tea and biscuits in these rather special surroundings.

Daphne and Mike Todd



(left) Carved and inlaid joined oak armchair, West Yorkshire, late 17th century

(right) Carved joined oak armchair, County Durham, late 17th century