

Interior of the Clerestory

On the inside of the clerestory, roof corbels carved as angels are mounted on the slender columns of stones that separate the pairs of windows. These are rather static in appearance, the angels wearing head-bands adorned with simple crosses stand on carved plinths which form the bases of the corbels. Some have blackened eye pupils. Half of them hold shields, the others hold ribbon-like banners, and these two types alternate along the rows of corbels and also across the clerestory, so that each angel holding a shield on one side faces an angel holding a banner on the opposite side. However, each corbel angel is distinctive in its facial features, head-dress, clothing and plinth. Their shields and banners would once have been adorned with lettering or heraldic symbols, but none of these remain.



The inside of the clerestory: light is flooding in, but it may be hard to see the carvings.

The angel-corbels alternate with carvings located at the internal springers within each pair of windows. On the northern side of the clerestory there are five, which comprise three truly demonic faces, gazing over the congregation below, and two odd sculptures interpreted as sheaves of flowers of some description. The demonic figures have blackened pupils, making them appear doubly sinister. This appears to be part of their original decoration. Many of the other carved figures have hollow pupils to their eyes, and it may be that some at least of these were originally filled with lead. Lionel Wall (*personal communication*) describes this in his work on church carvings in southeast Leicestershire, noting that plugs of black lead were used in some instances.

On the southern side of the clerestory, in marked contrast, the alternating carvings comprise two heads of what may be wise men or prophets (or kings), and three carvings of angels, two carrying shields and the other carrying a ribbon-like banner. This appears to be the ‘good’ side, in contrast with the demonic figures opposite (“the Devil’s Shadow”). The wise faces may represent specific figures, but just who they might be is uncertain.

The roof of the nave is supported by stone corbels carved as angels, some holding scrolls, others holding shields. As with many of the other carvings mounted close beneath the roof, these have their eyes picked out in black paint, in these cases applied to the pupils rather than the whole eyes as in the case of the demonic carvings.







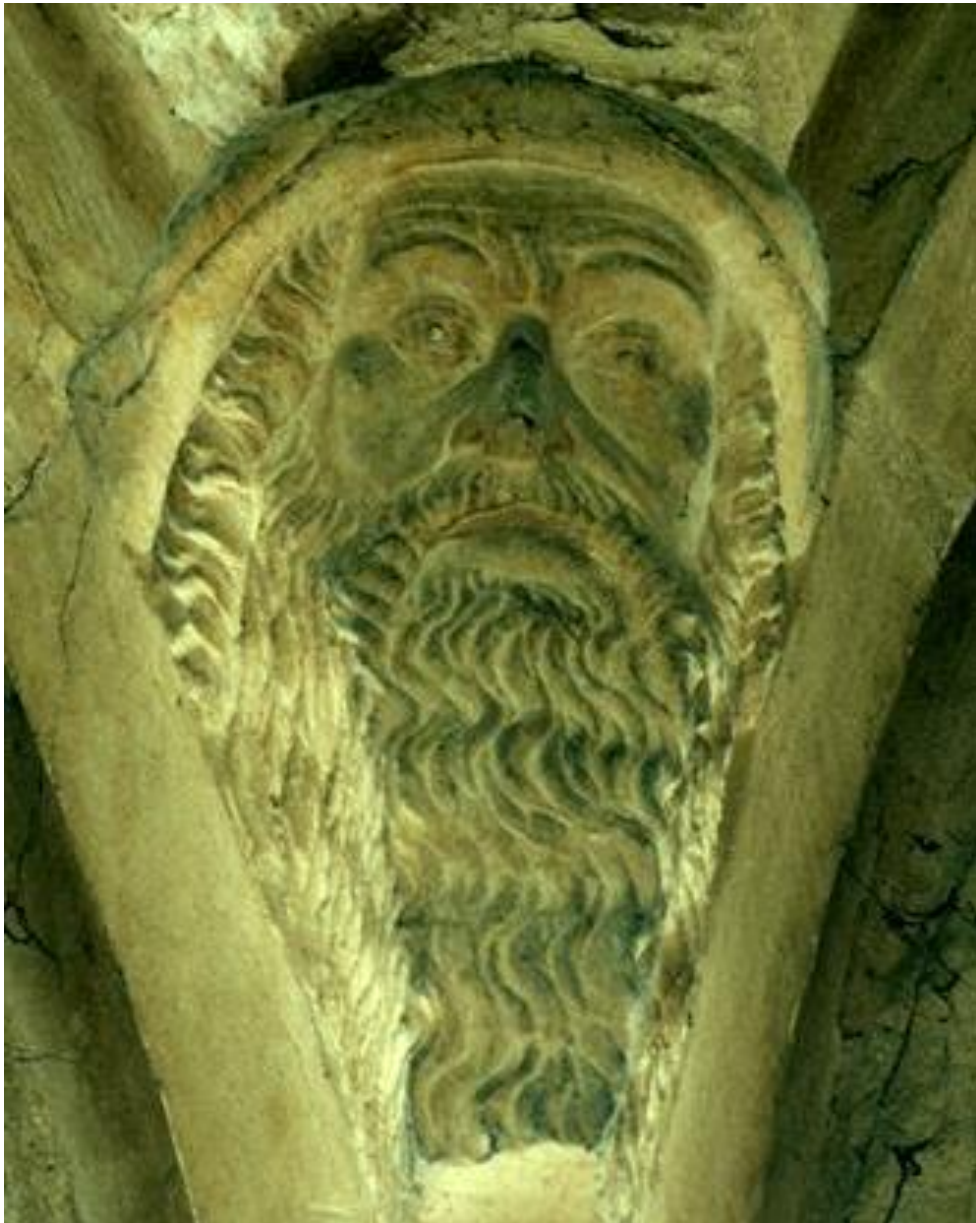
Previous page - Some of the most striking and perhaps unexpected carvings are between the windows of the clerestory, high up near the roof. There is little light, so that these are difficult to see (and not so easy to photograph), yet they are expertly and extravagantly carved blocks of limestone. Muzzles glare down with tongues lolling. Eyes are blackened, in contrast to the otherwise bare stone, adding to their theatrically sinister appearance. One has wrinkled or corrugated skin and bat-like ears: the other has smoother skin and pronounced nostrils. Its tongue is extraordinary, sticking out and curling, yet apparently all part of the single carved block of stone. On the crown of the head is a strange crest, reminiscent of a tiara.

This head of an ape with long tresses, blackened malevolent eyes a toothless mouth and cleft palate. Attached to the lower lip is a disc-like object of uncertain significance.

A carving of a sheaf of flowers in the north clerestory interior.



Above the southern side of the nave are the heads of two bearded men. One appears to be a prophet (left), the other may be a king wearing a cap rather than a crown, with an oval jewel or badge attached at the front. In neither are the eyes painted black, though it appears that the pupils have been carved so that they stand out (or are they scooped back?) and may have black highlights positioned to create the appearance of a gaze directed upwards.



These carvings on the southern side of the clerestory are of angels, which seem to be almost floating above the nave. They carry a scroll-like banner or a shield, which would once have been painted, the scroll perhaps with music, the shield with a coat of arms.

