

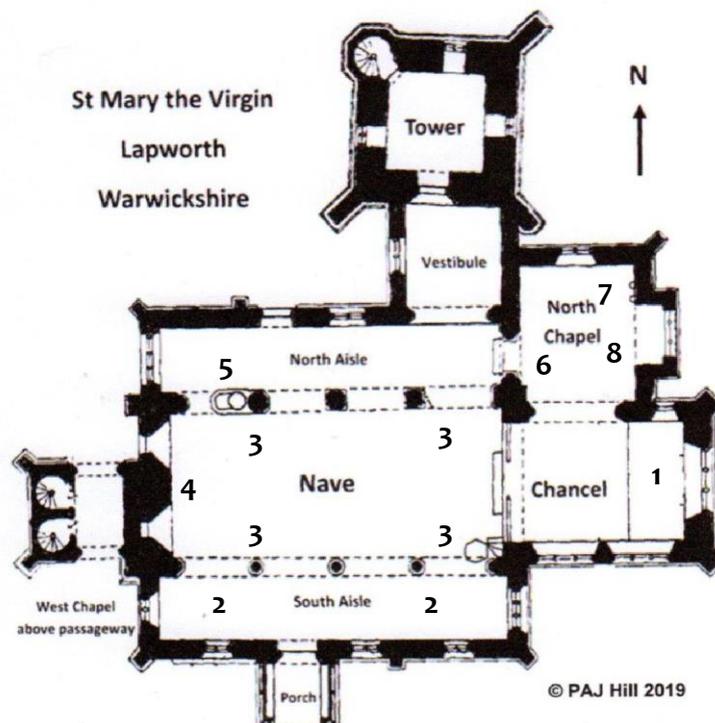
# Church Building - Sculpture

[Text and photographs by Peter A J Hill MSc MA]

The church contains sculpture (carved stonework) from the medieval period to modern times. The external 15th century stonework of grotesques and gargoyles has suffered from continuous and serious weathering with much now badly affected. The nave and south aisle contain an important collection of carved medieval human heads and grotesques, some of which form corbels.

Some of the sculpture which dates to the early 14th century on the font has been damaged, most probably during the 16th and 17th centuries, whilst that to the clerestory and south aisle is largely intact. Modern work includes that of Eric Gill (1928), *Madonna and Child* along with a piece showing Gill's artistic influence on others, the statue by John Poole (2001) *Mary and the Child Jesus*.

The plan below indicates the approximate location within the building to find the items mentioned in the text here.



PLAN OF LAPWORTH CHURCH

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| 1. Reredos by Earp 1860                            | 5. Corbelled heads to font c. 1315             |
| 2. Headstops c. 1470                               | 6. Eric Gill (1928) <i>Madonna &amp; Child</i> |
| 3. Carvings to the clerestory c.1470               | 7. Image brackets early C14                    |
| 4. John Poole (2001) <i>Mary &amp; Child Jesus</i> | 8. 'Lapworth Cherubs' early C18                |

## 1. Reredos by Earp 1860

The reredos was installed as part of the chancel restoration of 1860 under the direction of G E Street. The carved alabaster reredos was designed and carved by Thomas Earp (1828–1893) of Lambeth, London. Earp worked closely with Street producing sculpture for his Gothic Revival church designs.

The subject of the reredos at Lapworth is the **Last Supper** based on Leonardo da Vinci's mural at Milan. The carved panel measures h. 88 cm x w.165 cm.



It is thought that the cost was met by the rector, the Revd Charles Arundell St John Mildmay in 1860, as he made a significant financial contribution to the restoration work.

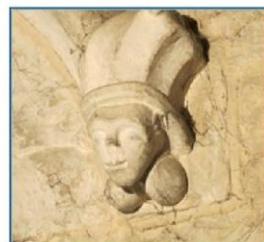
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## 2. Headstops c. 1470

All the hoodmoulding of the south aisle to the east and south windows terminate in label stops in the form of headstops and a grotesque. The headstops are a mixture of female and male carved heads with each one adorned with a flamboyant headdress (hat). There are seven in total with the eighth a grotesque.



They date to the 15th century work on the church when the clerestory was inserted in the nave and the south aisle had extra windows (south side) inserted to bring more light into the aisle which was given partial 'make-over' at this time.



The seven human heads lead to a grotesque in the form of an open-mouthed winged frog (?) about to devour them. The interpretation is that these carvings were a warning to the medieval worshippers at Lapworth of the danger to their immortal souls from one of the seven deadly sins: pride



### 3. Carvings to the clerestory c.1470

The clerestory carries an important collection of some 46 carvings some of which form labels stops or corbels.

They are a mixture of human heads and grotesques with the latter there to warn the medieval worshippers that evil was all around and so they needed to take care of their immortal soul.

The wall posts have capped angels holding a shield with both hands. Shields like these sometimes carry the arms of the founder.



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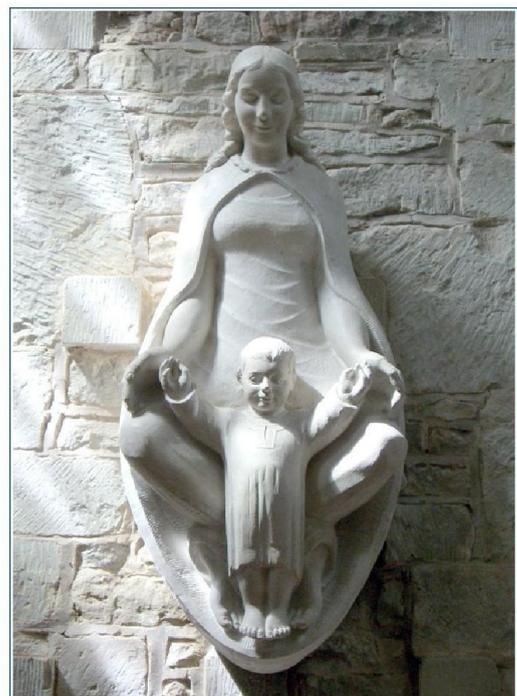
### 4. John Poole (2001) *Mary & Child*

#### *Jesus*

The statue of the Mary & the Child Jesus on the west wall of the nave was commissioned by the Bridgewater family and designed and installed by the midland sculpture A. John Poole in 2001.

The Bridgewaters had learned that in pre-Reformation times a statue of Mary, to whom the church is dedicated, graced the west wall but was removed at the Reformation; with the agreement of the rector they commissioned John Poole FRBS to create a new statue for the church.

John trained at the Birmingham School of Art and worked with William Bloye FRBS at his Birmingham studio. Bloye in turn had studied sculpture and letter cutting with Eric Gill in the 1920s hence his influence on Bloye and the work of John Poole.



## 5. Corbelled heads to font c. 1310

The font at Lapworth Church is situated on the north side of the nave with the base engaged with the west pillar and close to the blocked north door.

The octagonal bowl font dating to c. 1310 sits on a plain octagonal stem atop a stepped stone plinth set against and partly enclosing the west pillar of the north arcading.

There are projecting carved heads at the angles of the font bowl, some with wimples.

This font design can be seen in the design of fonts at four other south Warwickshire churches which include Wootton Wawen and Snitterfield.

All the heads have been damaged, most likely at some time in the 16th or 17th centuries when much artwork in churches suffered.

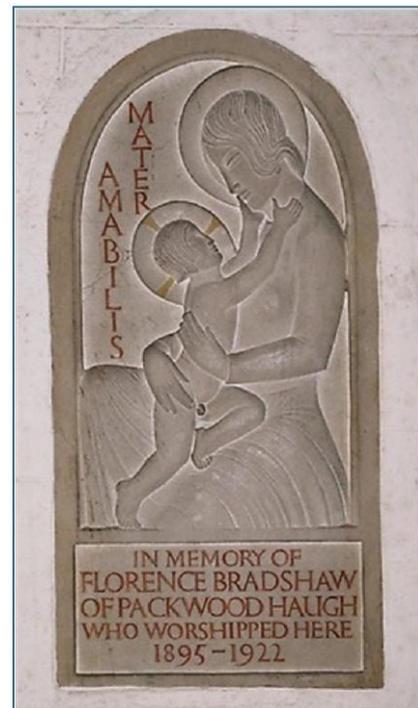


## 6. Eric Gill (1928) *Madonna & Child*

The Florence Bradshaw memorial, a wall tablet by Eric Gill (1882 - 1940), is set into the west wall of the north chapel.

Florence Bradshaw was the sister in law of the rector, the Revd Francis Lendon Bell. She had married John Gerald Bradshaw who founded nearby Packwood Haugh School and lived and worked there with her husband. She worshipped at Lapworth Church between 1895 and 1922. The Bradshaws then moved to Oxford but sadly Florence died young in 1926. Her husband commissioned Eric Gill to create this memorial to her to be placed in the church she so loved.

This work by Eric Gill, one of his favoured themes, was completed in 1928 with Gill himself visiting the church on Saturday 28th May 1928 to view it. Pevsner described this work as a 'very good example of his tender Expressionism'.



## 7. Image brackets early C14

There are two semi-octagonal image brackets on long slender engaged shafts refixed as capitals attached to the wall to the north of the altar recess in the chapel. They probably date to the early 14th century and may have carried images of St. Katherine and St. James.

The north one has a shaft ending in a moulded pointed corbel whereas the south one has a human head corbel supporting the shaft; a male head is face on with a protruding tongue.



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## 8. 'Lapworth Cherubs' early C18

When the stonemasons were creating an opening for a new window in the east wall of the recess in the North Chapel during 2014 they found amongst the rubble fill of the 19th century walling a piece of carved stonework.

This stone fragment was recovered, cleaned and placed on display in the chapel. It takes the form of a pair of carved heads of two winged cherubs of a type found decorating wall monuments in the 18th century.

Stylistically the 'Lapworth Cherubs' are similar to a pair of cherubs at the base of a marble monument in the north transept at Packwood church to Thomas Fetherston who died in 1714.



Lapworth Church



Packwood Church