

Rochester Cathedral Quire Screen Conservation - Visit October 2017 -

The following is a description of the screen and the conservation work done provided by Perry Lithgow, the lead conservator.

QUIRE SCREEN PAINTED DECORATION AND FRAMED QUIRE SCREEN BOARDS

“The 13th century Quire Screen retains much of its original painted decoration although largely overpainted in the 14th and 19th centuries. The painted scheme was discovered behind wooden choir stalls during refurbishment works by the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott in the 1870s.

At that time two of the Quire screen boards - with both the 13th and 14th century paint schemes exposed - were detached, preserved in a frame and displayed on a pier in the South Quire Ambulatory. The 13th century decoration comprises a trellis pattern of double lines framing ornately decorated lozenges. The principal colours being bright-red, light-green, yellow ochre and black; all on a white ground.

It is suggested that the colourful 14th century scheme of gilded lions and fleur-de-lis within cusped and scalloped frames may have been painted to show support for Edward III when he launched the Hundred Years' War against France in 1337. This decoration was carefully restored under the direction of Sir George Gilbert Scott, preserving intact the remaining early layers beneath the 19th century repaint.

This complex layering of paint on the timber boards makes the Quire Screen decoration fragile and vulnerable to flaking and loss. The main purpose of the current conservation treatment - to both the Quire Screen decoration and the framed boards - is to re-attach localised areas of flaking paint. The treatment involves injecting a weak solution of conservation grade adhesive behind each flake. The lifted paint is then eased back into place using a heated spatula. The heat serving to relax and flatten the distorted flakes and encourage the adhesive to become tacky.”

Picture 1 shows the quire screen at the back of the choir stalls. The part of the screen which was conserved was the areas to the immediate left and right of the entrance. The areas along the choir stalls were not part of the work done.

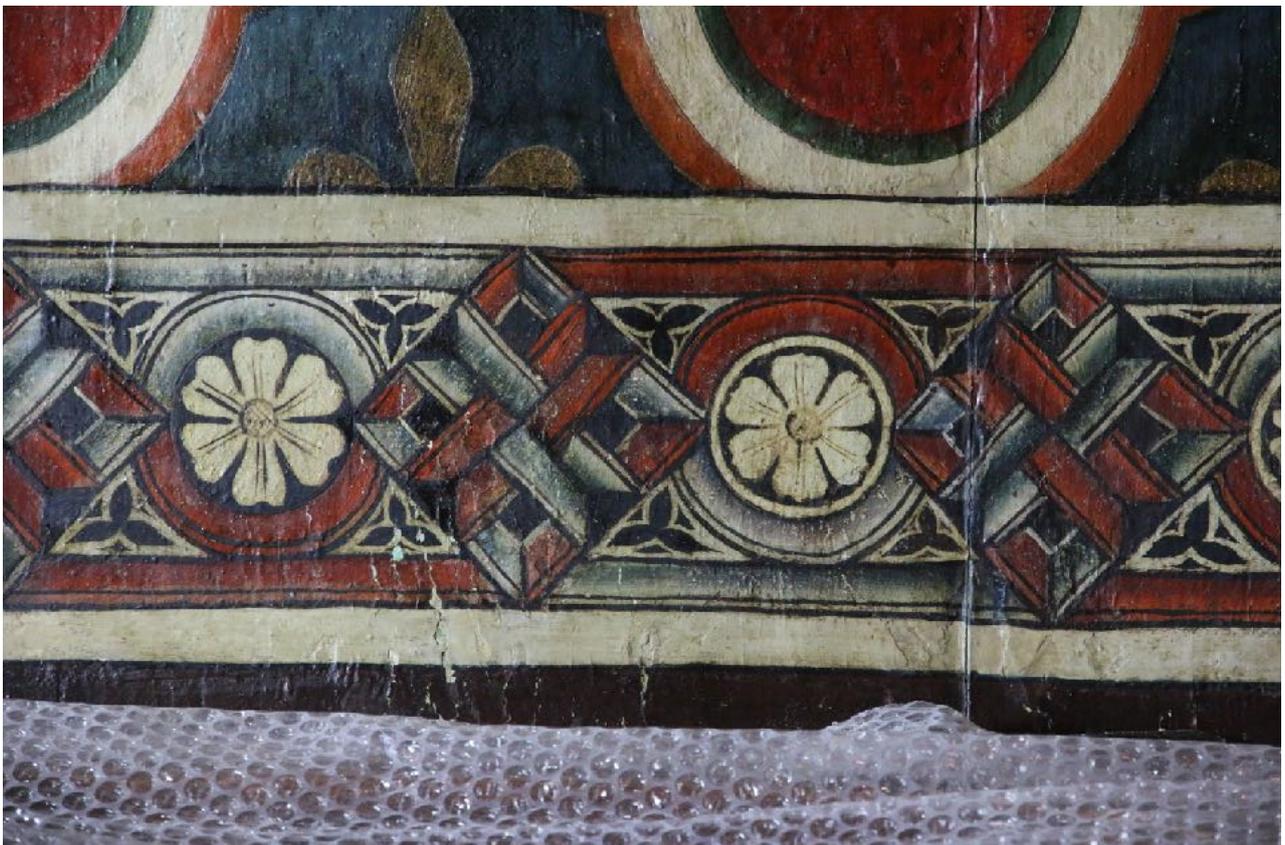


Picture 2 shows the 13th Century decoration which was treated. These panels were to be replaced in a frame and were to be placed outside the Quire on display.





Picture 3 shows one of the conservators at work whilst Picture 4 shows a part of the screen yet to be worked on.



Picture 5 shows the finished screen on the right of the entrance.



Lastly some attentive members:

