

This is the thirty-first of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

THE CARVED WOODEN CORBELS IN THE CHANCEL

Last time I talked about the hammerbeam roof in the chancel and said that I would show you some pictures of the carved wooden corbels. I would encourage you to take a look at them, but they are not at all easy to identify, even with binoculars. To help you identify them, I have numbered them from No.1 to No.7 on each side, No.1 being the easternmost one (i.e. the end nearest the altar). However, I shall not show you either of the Nos.1, because these are badly mutilated. Nor shall I show you either of the Nos.7, because these are just simple designs.

Some notes on the corbels on the south side

No.3 is a 'rebus' or pictorial play on words swan + tun meaning Swanton. This is repeated as No.3 on the north side.

No.5 does not look like an antelope, but the carver would never have seen one, and a heraldic antelope does have horns like this.



No.2: A dog with a bone



No.3: A swan and a tun (barrel)



No.4: A kneeling stag



No.5: An antelope



No.6: A crowned lion

The corbels on the north side



No.2: A hedgehog



No.3: A swan and a tun



No.4: A dog licking its back



No.5: A bull



No.6: A goat looking towards its tail

Some notes on the corbels on the north side

If you look at No.3 on both sides you will see that both swans have a little knob at the roots of their beaks. This shows that it is a mute swan that is being portrayed. In medieval England most mute swans were 'pinioned' as cygnets to prevent them from flying away, so that they could be fattened for use as food.

In No.5 you can see that one horn of the bull has been broken off. Also, the legs are rather strange. You are not sure if it is meant to be lying down or getting up.

In No.6, it would appear that an attempt has been made to portray the goat in the heraldic position *couchant regardant*. This means lying down looking back towards its tail.