



THE  
EXPERIENCE  
OF WORSHIP  
IN LATE MEDIEVAL  
CATHEDRAL AND  
PARISH CHURCH

# PAX-BOARD (PAXBREDE)



Photo :Sally Harper

The St Teilo Pax

## Description

The 'frame' for the St Teilo pax is fashioned from a single piece of beech; painted in gesso and gilded, with kissing plate appended to the front and iron handle-cum-stand fixed on the back. The miniature is painted in watercolour acrylic on thin parchment, covered with fine protective glass.

The pax was effectively the only means of physical contact between the people and the action of the priest at the altar. The priest kisses the rim of the chalice with the consecrated wine – the Blood of Christ – and then kisses the pax-board, offering the peace of the Church. Then follows a significant ritual: the clerk brings the pax-board out from chancel to nave, where each person is offered the pax in turn to kiss (by gender and rank).

## Measurements

120mm x 158mm x 16mm.

## Model

Several pax-boards fashioned from precious metal were examined, but the rare wooden 'Sandon Pax', found in Sandon, Essex, c. 1900, was selected as the most appropriate model for a modest parish church. The Sandon Pax takes the form of a picture-frame, with watercolour miniature of the crucifixion with the Virgin and St John. A series of small, regularly spaced holes in the gilded frame (with embossed decoration in the gesso) suggests that precious or semi-precious stones may have adorned the frame. Remains of fixings on the front below the painting, and what may be the remains of a pin in the middle, may well signal a lost kissing plate; on the reverse, bare patches in the gesso show where the metal handle-cum-stand was fixed, and one of the iron pins attaching the handle to the frame survives.

## Craftspeople

Alison Merry, artist, Bisley, Gloucs. (<http://www.merryilluminations.co.uk/>) (watercolour miniature)  
Jeremy Glenn, woodworker, Abergavenny (frame); Ross Smith, blacksmith, Pontypool (handle-stand); Lois Raine, specialist painter, Exeter (gilding and gesso); York Glaziers Trust (picture glass)

## Bibliography

J. Williams, 'A Wooden Pax At Sandon', *Transactions of The Essex Archaeological Society*, 22 (1940), 37–44.

*Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1987), 240.

*Late Medieval Liturgies Enacted: The Experience of Worship in Cathedral and Parish Church*, ed. Sally Harper, Paul Barnwell and Magnus Williamson (forthcoming, 2014).

Note compiled by Sally Harper

