



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP
IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL AND
PARISH CHURCH

CLOTH FOR HANGING PYX



Photo: Sally Harper

The St Teilo pyx cloth

Description

Cloth used to veil the hanging pyx (whose association with the consecrated Host required it to be kept covered). Made from white cloister brocade based on a medieval pattern, with red and gold fringing, and weighted gold tassels at each corner to enable it to hang evenly. A linen centrepiece accommodates a strengthened slit, set diagonally, for the hanging hook.

Measurements

Cloth length: 2ft (60 cm); width: 2 ft (60 cm); fringe: 2in; centre slit: 40mm; hook: 32mm.

Model

The St Teilo pyx cloth is modelled on the fifteenth-century 'Hessett Cloth', discovered together with a linen burse in the parish chest at St Ethelbert's Church, Hessett (Suffolk) during the nineteenth century, and now kept in the British Museum. The Hessett Cloth (2ft 4in square with fringe) is elaborately made from silk lace with a geometric pattern, fashioned by catching and knotting threads; the fringe is rose and yellow with four corner tassels, each originally hung with a gilt wooden ball, and a central hole to accommodate a hook. Medieval Durham Cathedral owned a similar cloth, described in the retrospective *Rites of Durham* (1593): '... the white cloth that hung over the pix was of uerye fine lawne all embroydered and wrought about with gold and red silke, And 4 great and round knopes of gold maruelous and cunningly wrought with great tassells of gold and redd silke hanginge at them, and at the 4 corners of the white lawne cloth. And the crooke that hung within the cloth that the pix did hang on was of gold and the cords that did draw it upp and downe was made of fine white strong silke.' (See also description of the St Teilo hanging pyx.)

Craftspeople

Mary Collings Church Furnishings, Ipswich (<http://marycollingscf.co.uk/>)

Bibliography

J. T. Fowler (ed.), *Rites of Durham; being a Description or Brief Declaration of all the Ancient Monuments, Rites and Customs belonging or being within the Monastical Church of Durham before the Suppression, written 1593*, Surtees Society, 107 (1902), 8.

P. G. Cobb, 'A Medieval Pyx?' *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 113 (1995), 179–82.

Images of the Hessett Cloth at Christopher Howse, 27 August 2010: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherhowse/7968174/Sherlock-Holmes-in-old-churches.html>, and <http://medieval-church-art.blogspot.co.uk/2008/09/hanging-pyx.html>.

Note compiled by Sally Harper

