

Glossary of new words

In this glossary we have put together a list of the words which we have learned during our visits to local Churches. This is not a comprehensive list of words relating to Church architecture or interior fittings, merely ones which we have not known before

Ambry/Aumbry



In the Middle Ages an Aumbry was a cabinet in the wall of a Christian church or in the sacristy which was used to store chalices and other vessels, as well as for the reserved sacrament, the consecrated elements from the Eucharist. They are sometimes found near a piscina, but more often on the opposite side. The word also seems in medieval times to have been commonly used for any closed cupboard or even a bookcase. It is rare to have two aumbrys in the same church though this is the case at Cullompton, The image on the left is at Branscombe.

Butterflies



Butterflies are a common symbol of death amongst many cultures and religions. It is believed that this symbolism started back in Ancient Greece, where a butterfly sighting after the passing of a loved one was seen to represent the soul of the deceased. This symbolism is still widely respected today, providing comfort to the bereaved. In the Christian faith, the butterfly symbolizes the earthly life you leave behind and the new, spiritual life you begin. The butterfly gives hope. In some cultures, butterflies symbolise re-birth and the resurrection of Christ. The butterfly is also a symbol of being transgender, because of the transformation from caterpillar to winged adult. In Devon, people once hurried to kill the first butterfly of the year, to avoid a year of bad luck. This window in Talaton Church has 6 hidden butterflies.

Celure, ceillire or cellure



Part of the roof, especially part of a wagon-roof, of a church, panelled, decorated and coloured, immediately above an altar or rood. It was like a canopy to honour the cross which stood on the screen. Also as at Talaton it leads your eye towards the main altar.

Probably from Old French

Foliage decoration



Foliage decoration in Churches is a common artistic theme reminding us of the Creation

Gargoyles



The gargoyle as a decorative downspout evolved as a necessity for preserving the structural integrity of Notre Dame Cathedral in France during its construction in the Middle Ages. The cathedral's original architects and builders needed a way to mitigate water erosion. The arched columns, flying buttresses, used to brace the outer walls of the soaring stone could serve a dual purpose. The top of these arches were carved with troughs to serve as gutters, capped with downspouts shaped to look

like demonic creatures, their mouths open for the water to escape. The picture shows one on the tower of Talaton Church but many other Devon Churches have them as well

Gnomon



The Gnomon is the projecting piece on a sundial that shows the time by the position of its shadow. This example is over the porch of St. Cyr and St. Julitta Church, Newton St. Cyres

Golgotha



It is sometimes called the "Golgotha" because it is carved with skulls and rocks and crossbones. During the Middle Ages, it was a common practice to erect a carved representation of the crucifixion scene at Golgotha above the stone or wooden screen dividing the chancel from the nave, This one in St. Andrew's Church Cullompton consists of two massive baulks

of oak carved in the fashion of rocks with skulls and bones and carrying the socket for the cross.

Green man



The Green Man, also known as a foliate head, is a motif in architecture and art, of a face made of, or completely surrounded by, foliage, which normally spreads out from the centre of the face. Apart from a purely decorative function, the Green Man is primarily interpreted as a symbol of rebirth, representing the cycle of new growth that occurs every spring. The image shows the Green Man over the porch door at the church in Talaton

Later foliate heads in churches may have reflected the legends around Seth, the son of Adam, He is said to have planted seeds in his dead father's mouth as he lay in his grave. The tree that grew from them became the tree of the cross of the crucifixion.

More information can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Man

Grotesques

In Church architecture a **grotesque** a style of decorative sculpture consisting of the interweaving of human and animal forms with flowers and foliage. They are purely decorative, unlike gargoyles which are designed to carry water away from the building..

Hatchments



A hatchment is a diamond shaped heraldic panel usually found on the wall of a Church or having been removed to a bell tower as at Talaton. It usually shows a coat of arms painted on a wooden panel, or on canvas, within a wooden frame. It was often carried to the Church in a funeral procession and then remained in the Church as a memorial. This one is in Gittisham Church

Hinkypunks and Hunkypunks



A **hinkypunk** was a diminutive, one-legged magical beast with the appearance of wispy blue, grey or white smoke. It had a proclivity for luring travellers off of their paths at night, into treacherous bogs or wetlands under the guise of a helpful, lamp-bearing being. They could propel fireballs far from their lamps, causing serious damage. They also sporadically emitted hollering and grunting noises. They figure largely in Harry Potter stories!

A **hunkypunk** is a feature that occurs on many churches, particularly in Somerset. The grotesque carvings are also seen in Devon though the term comes from Somerset dialect. The term derives from 2 old English words – ‘hunkers’, which is squatting on haunches, and ‘punchy’ describing short, squat legs and a thick body. Hunky punks can be found on the tops and corners of towers, string courses, the tops of stair turrets or on the side of porches. These grotesques are different from gargoyles in that they are a decorative rather than functional feature. Gargoyles, whilst similar, have the function of acting as drains to direct water off the roof often through the mouth.

Nave

The main area of the Church often separated from the Chancel by a **rood screen**. Used as a village meeting place where pigs, cattle and corn would be traded, bargains struck and feasts were held

Piscinas



A piscina is a stone basin where the priest washes the communion vessels after Mass. It is usually found in a niche in the south wall of a presbytery but where churches have been extended a second piscina is sometimes found near the altar. The image here is in St Mary's Church, Warbleton

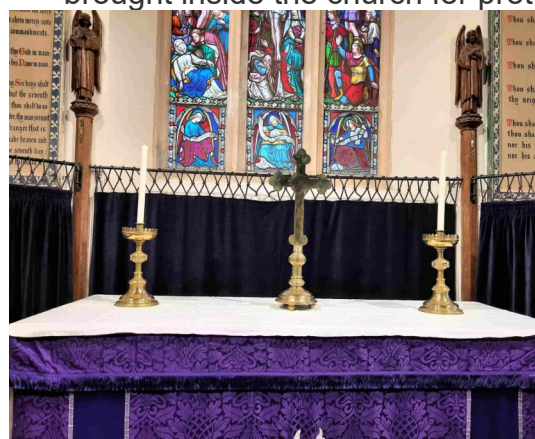
Quern



A quern is a word of Middle English origin defined in some dictionaries as a primitive hand mill for grinding grain. This particular ancient stone vessel in St Michael's Church, Axmouth, is said, to have come originally from a farmhouse on the approach to Hawkesdown Hill. Antiquaries have been consulted, but have failed to agree upon its precise function though some believe that it was used for the grinding of corn. For some years it stood outside in the churchyard, until it was brought inside the church for protection.

Riddel curtains and posts

Riddel curtains screen an altar on three sides, supported by posts which were often topped by a



carved or gilded candle holder. They were a medieval feature reintroduced by architect Sir Ninian Cooper (1864 – 1960) in the early 20th century. The example on the left is at Talaton Church and this curtain is made from the drapings in Westminster Abbey at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

Sanctuary knocker



In 693AD, Ina, the King of the West Saxons, recognised that if “... anyone accused of a capital offence flies to a Church, his life shall be spared, and he shall make compensation according to justice.” An alleged criminal could claim sanctuary for 40 days provided he or she touched the ring on the church door before they were arrested. They would then remain in the church for 40 days. This one still exists on the Norman door to the porch at Talaton. The practice of sanctuary lasted until 1624 when James I ‘enacted that no sanctuary or privilege of sanctuary shall hereafter be allowed in any case’.

Sedilia



Usually three stone seats built into the south wall of the Chancel, often next to a Piscina. They were seats provided for the Priest celebrating Mass and any Deacons who were assisting him. This one is in Branscombe Church

Stoups



Stoups, or Holy Water Stoups, are stone basins usually set in the wall just inside the church door. Those entering the Church would sign their bodies with the holy water as an act of self consecration and spiritual cleansing. Stoups had no drains so the water, mixed with salt, was changed regularly. This is the stoup outside Sidbury Church.

Wagon roof

A wagon roof is a curved roof made up of a closely spaced series of double arch braced trusses suggesting the shape of a covered wagon. They are sometimes highly decorated as at Talaton and Branscombe churches