

St James's Processional Cross



Victoria and Albert Museum #1 1500-1525 (made)

St James's Processional Cross

Around 2010 the Rev. Allan Barton who was curate here at that time left notes on the processional cross that was being used, and indeed is still being used, during Services at St James's Church in Louth. I am grateful to Rev. Nick Brown for this information and to Jennifer Smith for preserving the notes that follow –

- *dates from about 1500*
- *made from an alloy called latten*
- *mass produced in London in the later Middle Ages*
- *only 30-40 survive*
- *originally would have been gilded rather than silvered and possibly enamelled*

Now in 2017, confirmation of that information can be found by reference to similar Crosses held at the V&A Museum and illustrated on their website (links below and photos on page 1 and 3) –

V&A #1 - <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O109947/cross-unknown/>

V&A #2 - <http://m.vam.ac.uk/collections/item/O84703/cross-unknown/>

The first V&A example in particular is so similar as to be almost identical in form and displays the enamel that is probably missing on our example. On the St James's Processional Cross the roundels contain the symbols of the four Evangelists in the following order (from top clockwise) –

Winged Lion – St Mark

Eagle – St John

Winged Ox – St Luke

Winged Man – St Matthew

There doesn't appear to be any plating remaining now but there are possible remnants of enamel in the roundels - perhaps some red below the eagle of St John and also below the ox of St Luke. The background of the winged man of St Matthew has a bluish tinge under high magnification. The Victoria and Albert Museum example (#1; photo page 1) has blue champlevé enamel in the roundels.

Latten – is an alloy of copper and zinc resembling brass hammered into thin sheets and used to make monumental brasses and church ornaments.

CHURCH RECORDS

The earliest inventory of church goods recorded in the First Churchwardens' Account Book (1500-1524) (Dudding pp.150-158) includes three silver Crosses and another described thus-

1486

Also j cros of coper and giltt with images of christ mary and John

Clearly this description does not match the present Cross and the date of the inventory is possibly a little too early. A thorough search of the First Churchwardens' Accounts Book has not revealed any further records for the purchase of a copper (or latten) Cross although there is one entry (page 66) which may relate to the Cross already described above –

1504-5

It paid to Thomas Messanger mendying coper croos.....4d.

The first accounts book is the only one currently fully published with the later original manuscripts archived in Lincoln Records Office. However Robert Slater Bayley in his *Notitiae Ludae* (1834) has published some extracts from the second account book. One of the entries has this –

1553-4

Item. Paid for a crosse of coper.....6s 8d

and Richard Goulding in 'Louth Parish Church.....' (pub. 1916; 1930 and our Occ. Paper 2; 2015) -

1553-4

*An altar was erected. A holy water basket, censers, candlesticks, **a cross of copper**, and other things pertaining to the old ritual were bought.*

also this entry in Goulding from the third account book -

1566-7

Censers, candlesticks, altar-cloths, etc., were sold.

DATING

The date of examples from the small sample on the internet (see photos page 1 and 3) seem to favour a date in the late-15th century to around 1525. The St James's example however, unlike finds from unknown sources, does have the advantage of a sure provenance. There is no evidence of the purchase of such a Cross in the first churchwardens' accounts from 1500-1524 nor is it the one described in the 1486 inventory. However, there is a gap in the records between the 1486 inventory and the start of the churchwardens' accounts in 1500 during which time it is possible that another Cross might have been purchased.

It is not until 1553 that we can be certain of the purchase of another base-metal Cross when one was recorded amongst several items purchased in the year that Mary I came to the throne and briefly restored Roman Catholicism to the country until her death in 1558.

A future search of the original manuscripts (now in the *Lincolnshire Archives* at Lincoln Records Office) might resolve the dating issue if the 1553 Cross is not listed amongst those items that were later sold in 1566-7 (third churchwardens' accounts book 1560-1623) or purchased during the period of the second book (1527-1559).

Chris Marshall, June 2017

The Processional Cross is currently secured in the Vestry and may only be viewed by appointment.

The Bosworth Cross c.1485



Victoria and Albert Museum #2 Processional Cross 1500-1520



St James's Processional Cross



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Winged Lion (St Mark)



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Eagle (St John)



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Winged Ox (St Luke)



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Winged Man (St Matthew)



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Christ on Cross



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Reverse



St James's Processional Cross Detail – Reverse of Roundels

