



The Cathedral Church
of Saint Marie

St Marie's Hidden Nature



Welcome to St Marie's Cathedral



The Cathedral of St Marie is built in the Gothic Revival style and largely modelled on the 14th century church of St Andrew's, Heckington in Lincolnshire.

It opened in 1850 at the end of three centuries of legal suppression of Catholicism in England, following Henry VIII's unsuccessful bid to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled by Pope Clement VII.

St Marie's became a cathedral in 1980 when the Diocese of Hallam was created to serve the Catholics of South Yorkshire, parts of Derbyshire and the District of Bassetlaw.

This guide focuses on one feature of the artistic heritage that can be found in the Cathedral - the hidden examples of the natural world.

Its creation was prompted by the theme chosen for this year's Heritage Open Days - Hidden Nature.

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture, bringing together more than 2,000 organisations and 46,000 volunteers organise 5,500 events.

Given that the Covid 19 Pandemic makes guided tours and organised visits difficult to arrange, St Marie's has developed a video and a web-based tour of its Hidden Nature, which you can find at: <https://stmariecathedral.org/heritageopendays/>.

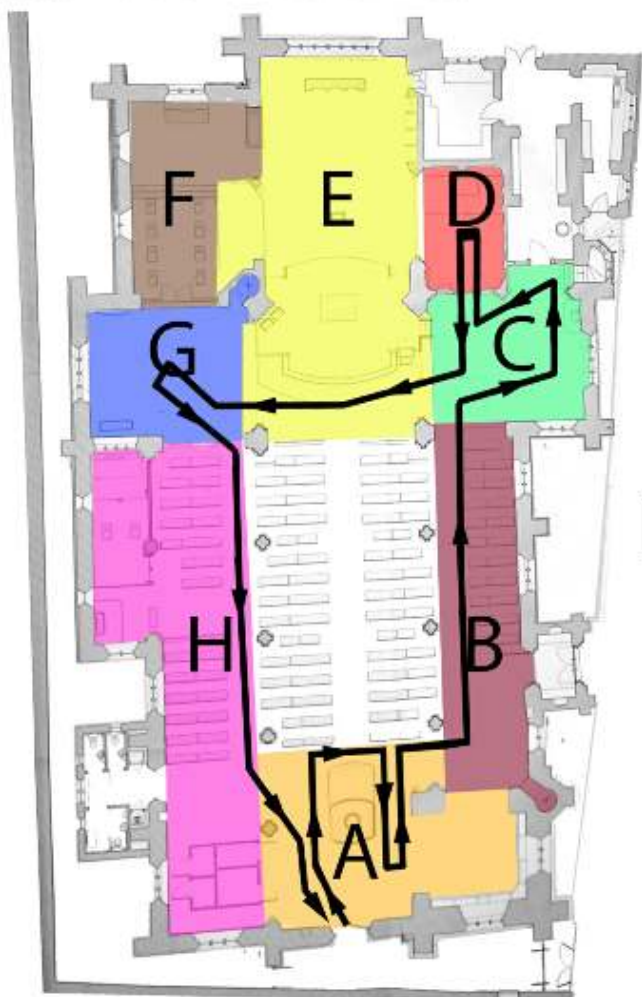
This guide is designed to supplement the video and web content and to create a permanent reminder for the 2020 festival.



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The Hidden Nature in Saint Marie's



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Introduction



As you walk around the Cathedral Church of St Marie, you will find lots of images taken from nature in the many sculptures, carvings and stained glass windows.

Some is there because it is part of a story - the birth, baptism, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, or the fate of a figure from the Old Testament of the Bible.

Other examples are plain to see, but a little puzzling. Why should a lamb carry a flag and why do exotic creatures like pelicans or lions feature in an English Church.

Yet more examples are hidden or easily overlooked at first; easy to dismiss as afterthoughts added because the artist was worried about leaving a blank space.

The reality is that all these images of flora and fauna have been carefully chosen. The hidden nature in St Marie's has hidden meanings, many of which would have been as plain as a pikestaff in medieval times, but are forgotten in the hurly burly of modern society.

Before you start your tour, why not explore some of those hidden meanings?



The Meanings of Images and Symbols

Agnus Dei - Lamb of God

A representation of Jesus as a sacrificial lamb. John the Baptist was the first person to describe Christ as the Lamb of God, when he greeted Jesus with the words: *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,"* predicting that by sacrificing his life on the cross, Jesus would save mankind from sin and death.

The image also evokes the idea of God shepherding his flock.

It is traditionally rendered as a lamb with a pennant bearing a coloured cross



on a white background resting on one shoulder and held by the lamb's cocked foreleg. The cross is usually, but not always, red and pre-dates the Cross of St George. It was St George who became associated with the cross and not the other way round.

Doves

A white dove symbolises the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Christian Trinity - God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit.

The representation appears in all four Gospels and is first mentioned at Christ's baptism, by John the Baptist, when Luke writes: *And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*



Palm Fronds and Crowns

Palm fronds signify the victory of the spirit over the flesh and are symbols of martyrs - a Greek work meaning "witness" that has come to represent people who have suffered persecution or been killed because of their religious faith.

Crowns are another symbol of martyrdom, representing the immortality of the martyrs' reputation on earth and their eternal life in heaven.



Pelicans



The pelican was once thought to feed its young with its own blood by pecking its chest - evoking the image of Christ nourishing his people with his blood through the Eucharist.

In the pelican's case, the reality is more unromantic.

They regurgitate semi-digested food which their young take from the pouch under their bill.

While the pelican may appear to be wounding itself, it is, in fact, pressing its bill onto its chest to empty its pouch.

The erroneous belief may have been fuelled by the fact that pouches become redder during the breeding season.

Red Roses

Red roses symbolise Christ's five wounds - made in his hands and feet by the nails when he was crucified and the spear that was thrust into his side, releasing blood and water, after he had died on the cross.



Pomegranates

Pomegranates can signify a number of Christian concepts.

The seeds bursting out of a pomegranate are likened to Christ bursting out of the tomb after his crucifixion, so the fruit represents resurrection and the promise of eternal life.

The Pomegranate's numerous seeds can also represent the Church, unity in faith and a community of believers. Pomegranates appear in depictions of the Virgin Mary as Mother of the Church and can also symbolise royalty.



Some of the symbolism harks back to the ancient myth of Proserpina (Persephone), the Roman goddess of fertility, wine and agriculture, who was abducted by the god of the underworld and forced to live with him for six months of every year after eating six pomegranate seeds during her stay in the underworld.

Lions, Bulls and Eagles



Lions are often used to symbolise kingly power. They also represent Jesus' resurrection because people used to believe lions slept with their eyes open - an image linked

with Christ sleeping in the tomb.

Bulls symbolise sacrifice, service and strength, while the eagle was thought of as a creature of the sky that could look directly at the sun, representing Jesus' Ascension to Heaven and His divine nature.

The Lion, Bull and Eagle are used respectively as the symbols of Saints Mark, Luke and John, the authors of three of the Gospels. The author of the fourth Gospel, Matthew, is represented by a winged man, indicating Christ's human and divine nature.

Vines and Grapes, Oaks and Acorns

The vine itself represents the growth of the church. The Gospel of John quotes Jesus as saying "*I am the vine*" before going on to explain how God tends Christ's



church to encourage growth.

Grapes symbolise abundance, prosperity and fertility, but above all Christ's Blood, received during Mass in the form of wine.



Wheat

Wheat symbolises fertility, renewal, rebirth and abundance and is, of course, the key ingredient for the bread used in the Eucharist, where it becomes Christ's body.



White Roses and Lilies

White roses and lilies signify purity and rebirth. They may also be used to signify virginity. The lily also appears as the stylised Fleur de Lis, made up of three lily petals.



Fishing for Faith by the West Door

Our tour begins with 'fishy' stories - not least because you encounter them as you enter the Cathedral by the West Door, the closest entrance to Fargate, coming through the glass covered passageway, known as a 'Narthex.'

Come in past the baptismal font and turn to look up at the great West Window.

The window is a traditional "Typological Window," designed to show how events in Christ's life were 'prefigured' - predicted or paralleled, if you like - by events recorded in the Old Testament.

The window has three rows of images arranged in two pairs of columns. Each pair of columns has a story from the Old Testament - before Christ's birth - in the left hand window and an event from his life in the right.

Starting with the bottom row, look at the images to the right. In the column on the left you see Jonah, the Old Testament prophet, emerging unscathed from the belly of a whale.

Jonah was swallowed by a whale while trying to avoid God's commandment to go warn the people of the ancient city of Nineveh that they would face divine an-



ger if they didn't stop doing wrong.

Instead of escaping, the whale delivered him to the destination God had told him to go to.

The panel to the right is from the New Testament and shows Christ emerging alive from the tomb, three days after being killed by crucifixion.

Now look at the two columns on the right of the top row. You can see the triumphal entry of the future King David - Jesus' human ancestor - into Jerusalem after killing the Philistine's champion, Goliath, whose head he carries on his sword.



Next to that panel, we see a depiction of the New Testament story of Jesus entering Jerusalem in triumph, riding on a donkey.

The first panel in the middle row, meanwhile, shows Old Testament priest Melchizedek offering bread and wine beneath a vine, while the second shows Christ, also offering bread and wine to institute the Eucharist - the 'thanksgiving' that commemorates his crucifixion and resurrection to bring eternal life to humankind.

If you turn left towards the bookshop and look up you can see a row of lions' heads around the top of stonework supporting the bell tower.



Lions are often used to symbolise kingly power. They also represent Jesus' resurrection because people used to believe lions slept with their eyes open - which is linked with Christ sleeping in the tomb.

The bookshop itself has two stained glass windows, one showing the Baptism of Christ.

Look at the tracery, the arched part of the window. At the top you will see the first of many representations of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God.'



In the main part of the window, you can

see the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descending on Jesus.



The left hand panel shows St Simon the Zealot, one of the lesser known of Jesus' twelve Apostles, holding a fish.

According to tradition, Simon and another apostle, Jude, who is shown in the right hand panel, introduced Christianity to Persia, now Iran, and other parts of the region.



The fish symbolises Simon's role as a "Fisher of men," or gatherer of believers, taken from the Gospel of Luke.

However, Simon the Zealot should not be confused with his fellow Apostle Simon Peter, whose occupation, before he followed Christ, was, coincidentally, as a fisherman.

And, indeed it was Simon Peter, rather than Simon the Zealot, who Christ originally urged to follow him and become a "fisher of men."

Now look to your right, at the window commemorating the lives of Sts Francis de Sales,



Oswald of Northumbria and Therese of Lisieux, surrounded, respectively, by fleur de lis, acorns and oak leaves and white roses.

Vines and Oaks in the South Aisle

Images of vines, grapes and vine leaves abound in the Cathedral - particularly on the south side.

Take a look at the window to the right of the South Door, close to the Bookshop, and you will see it depicts St Edward the Confessor and St Hilda of Whitby. Each image is surrounded by vines bearing leaves, which can also be found in the clear parts of the windows.

Close to the door itself, you can see a niche with a small basin for Holy Water, known as a 'stoup.'



The niche is surmounted by a carving of grapes and a vine leaf on the left and stylised oak leaves with acorns on the right.



Further up the South Aisle, just before you reach the South Transept, you will find a window dedicated to William of York, who lived in the twelfth century, was twice Archbishop of York and is rumoured to have died after poison was slipped into the chalice with which he was celebrating Mass in 1154.

The decoration around his image is of golden vine leaves and blue and green flowers with six petals and there are oak trees and red roses in the tracery.

Just past the window, on the last columns on either side of the aisle, is a vine with grapes and an oak tree with acorns.

As we mentioned earlier, vines represent the growth of the church, grapes symbolise abundance, prosperity and



fertility, but above all Christ's Blood, received during Mass in the form of wine and oaks and acorns are also symbols of growth, specifically the growth of the church.



South Transept



More examples of vine leaves can be found in the main window of the South Transept, with panels dedicated, left to right, to St Teresa of Avila, St Anne, St Joachim and St Joseph, Christ's adopted father, shown as a carpenter.



While Saints Anne, Joachim and Joseph are surrounded by vines, St Teresa is shown surrounded by white flowers with six petals.

The tracery, above the window contains red roses, representing Christ's wounds

and lilies signify purity, rebirth and virginity.

Hallam Window



Look to the right of the window and you will see the Hallam Window, installed to mark the creation of the diocese and St Marie's becoming a Cathedral in 1980.

It commemorates the lives of two English martyrs, Robert Ludlam and Nicholas Garlick, two priests who were arrested at Padley on July 12 1588, during the reign of Elizabeth I, tried 11 days later and executed the following day.

Both carry palm fronds and are shown on either side of the Virgin Mary, who has a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, above her.

As you turn to leave the South Transept, take a look at the shields over the doorway to the left of the main window and the entrance to the chapel, dedicated to Saint Joseph. Look, also, at the capitals of the columns and you will find yet more vines, bunches of grapes, oak leaves and acorns.



Saint Joseph Chapel



Enter the St Joseph Chapel and look to your immediate right, where you will see a statue of St Hilda with a shepherd's crook - the traditional staff carried by Bishops, Abbots and Abbesses.

The statue also shows her holding a building in her right hand - an indication that she founded the Abbey which she led.



Now look at the pillar her statue is standing on and you will see the fossil of an ammonite - an extinct type of sea snail, many of which are found around Whitby.

A local legend explains the presence of so many ammonite fossils in Whitby by claiming that they are the remains of a plague of snakes which Hilda ended by miraculously turning them all to stone.



Look at the tiling on the right wall which are images of six virgin saints: St Catherine, St Barbara, St Dorothy, St Agnes, St Clare and St Margaret of Antioch.

St Clare was the sister of St Francis of Assisi and is the only one of the six who is not a martyr.

Four of the six saints carry palm fronds. St Dorothy also

carries a platter of roses and apples, as befits the patron saint of horticulture, florists and gardeners, while St Agnes holds the Agnus Dei lamb - a wordplay based on her name.

You will also find pomegranates, signifying resurrection and the promise of eternal life, in the background of the image of Saint Barbara.

Look at the reredos, the carved screen behind the altar, and you can see a statue of St Joseph, holding a lily.

On the left hand wall, you will find a tiled tribute to the Sisters of Notre Dame, featuring the same six virgin saints that you saw on the opposite wall, together with Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, who we will meet later, together with a depiction of St Joseph, holding a lily, the Virgin Mary and the Agnus Dei.



Look to your right as you leave the chapel and you will see a statue of the martyred Welsh saint, St Winifred, holding a palm frond.

Legend has it that Winifred was the daughter of a 12th century Welsh chieftain, whose head was cut off by her suitor, Caradog, when she decided to become a nun. A healing spring appeared where her head fell to the ground and she was miraculously restored to life by St Beuno. Winifred went on to become an Abbess, while Caradog was struck dead on the spot and the earth swallowed him up.



The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary, next to the St Joseph Chapel, also has a wealth of hidden nature, starting with the roses climbing up the pillars.

At the front of the Altar you will find the image of a pelican feeding its brood - an image repeated on one of the heads of the Choir Stalls (above right).

The pelican was once thought to feed its young with its own blood by pecking its chest - evoking the image of Christ nourishing his people with his blood through the Eucharist.

In the pelican's case, the reality is more unromantic.



They regurgitate semi-digested food which their young take from the pouch under their bill.

While the pelican may appear to be wounding itself, it is, in fact, pressing its bill onto its chest to empty its pouch.

The erroneous belief may have been fuelled by the fact that pouches become redder during the breeding season.

The pomegranates seen in the image of St Barbara in the St Joseph Chapel make an appearance in the Sanctuary on the woodwork of the organ and, in addition to the pelican, some of the choir stalls have 'poppy seed' heads.

We came across lions at the west end of the Cathedral and you will also find lions in the Sanctuary.



Each of the six brass Altar Candle Sticks - found on low stone plinths to the rear and on either side of the Altar - are supported on the backs of three lions.

Another lion, this time with wings, is on one of symbols on shields



carried by four angels on the bottom of the reredos, the screen at the back of the Sanctuary, where St Marie's High Altar once stood.

The symbols on the shields are the symbols of the four Evangelists, authors of the four Gospels, which tell of Jesus's life and ministry and which are the first books of the New Testament.

The winged lion is the symbol of St Mark and represents the courage and kingship of Jesus Christ, which Mark's Gospel explores.



Two of the other Evangelists also have animal symbols. St Luke's is a winged bull and St John's is an eagle.

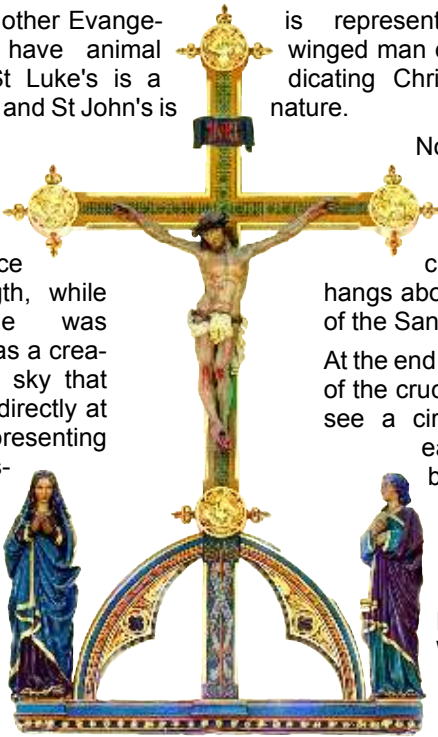
The bull symbolises sacrifice, service and strength, while the eagle was thought of as a creature of the sky that could look directly at the sun, representing Jesus's Ascension to Heaven and His divine nature.

The other Evangelist, Matthew,

is represented by a winged man or angel, indicating Christ's human nature.

Now look at the Rood Cross, the giant crucifix that hangs above the front of the Sanctuary.

At the end of each arm of the crucifix you can see a circular boss, each boss bears one of the Evangelist's symbols - the Winged Lion, the Winged Bull, Eagle and Angel.



The last piece of nature in the Sanctuary is sleeping peacefully at the feet



of Fr Pratt, the priest who inspired the construction of the Cathedral. Fr Pratt's monumental tomb is towards the

rear of the Sanctuary on the left and the animal sleeping at his feet is a dog - a traditional symbol of loyalty.

Blessed Sacrament Chapel

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel stands to the left of the Sanctuary.

Look at the three angels on the reredos and you will see they carry shields with representations of the pelican, the Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God and wheat, the key ingredient for the bread used in the Eucharist, symbolising fertility, renewal, rebirth and abundance, in addition to Christ's body.

Two of the angels have headbands bearing red roses.

There are white roses in the corners of all three panels and acorns and oak leaves in the reliefs at either end.



Beneath the angels, on either side of the silver doors of the Tabernacle, are panels of alternating tiles with white roses and pomegranates, while a vine laden with grapes surrounds the doors themselves.

You will also find representations of pelicans, bunches of grapes with vine leaves and wheat in the ornate roof bosses of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.



North Transept

Two shrines - dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Virgin and Child are - contain features from nature that are full of symbolism.

The Virgin and Child Shrine (above right) has images of white lilies and roses on its pedestal, signifying purity, virginity and rebirth. The lily also appears as the stylised Fleur de Lis, made up of three lily petals, in the tiling in front of the shrine.

The Sacred Heart Shrine, meanwhile, incorporates a marble panel with a heart surrounded by the crown of thorns the Roman soldiers thrust onto Jesus' head before his crucifixion.

Both are also surrounded by stylised flowers.

Pause also to look at the window in the North Transept, where the third panel shows St Elizabeth of Hungary carrying flowers in her robe.

According to legend, whilst she was taking bread to the poor in secret, Elizabeth met her husband Ludwig on a hunting party.



incorporates a marble panel with a heart surrounded by the crown of

Some of the gentry believed Elizabeth to be stealing treasure from the castle, so Ludwig - who supported her charitable work - asked her to reveal what was hidden under her cloak.

Instead of the bread, all that could be seen was a vision of white and red roses.

The gentry were satisfied and Ludwig was convinced that God's protecting hand was at work.



North Aisle



Moving from the North Transept, down the North Aisle we come to the Mortuary Chapel and Shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.

Looking at the arches you will see decorative 'stops' of oak leaves and vine leaves and capitals with vines, oak leaves and acorns.

The reredos behind the altar has panels carved with roses and grapes, flowers can be found on the tiling and there is



also a stained glass window dedicated to Elizabeth of Hungary, who we met in the North Transept. Once again, she is carrying the bread, transformed miraculously into flowers.



The nature trail inside St Marie's comes to a close in the North Aisle.



Look at the tracery in the window above the North Door and the statue of the Virgin and Child and you will see white lilies and roses.

To the left of the door you can see the Martyrs Window.

Although the window commemorates the lives of three English Martyrs, only St Philip Howard, 13th Earl of Arundel, who was martyred under Elizabeth the First, carries a palm frond.

The other two martyrs, Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher, were both executed by order of Elizabeth's father, Henry the Eighth.

Take a look at the tracery above the martyrs and you will see more white roses, surmounted by crowns - another symbol of martyrdom, representing the immortality of the martyrs' reputation on



earth and their eternal life in heaven.

The Exterior



When you go back outside the Cathedral, take a look at the stonework. There you will see fantastic animals, gargoyles and grotesques.



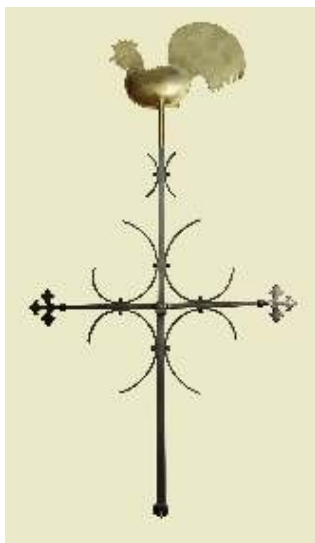
Now, walk down Norfolk row towards the Crucible Theatre. As you reach Norfolk Street, look at the carved relief over the rear door to the Cathedral, which shows the Annunciation, the moment when the Archangel Gabriel invited the Virgin Mary to bring Christ into the world.

You will see Gabriel is carrying a lily and there are lilies in the vase behind them, a symbol of Mary's purity, while the dove, representing the Holy Spirit, hovers above.



As you leave St Marie's, look up at the spire and you will see it is surmounted by a weather cock, the final piece of the hidden nature of Saint Marie's.

In Christianity, the cock can symbolise the victory of light over darkness and the triumph of good over evil, the



repentance of the saint and religious vigilance as well as resurrection.

As the rooster watched for the morning, so all Christians were to watch for the Lord who would one day suddenly return to judge the living and the dead.

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A Weathercock's-eye view of Sheffield



Acknowledgements

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Other St Marie's Publications

A Guide to St Marie's Cathedral Sheffield

A History of St Marie's Cathedral and Parish Vol 1

A History of St Marie's Cathedral and Parish Vol 2

A History of St Marie's Cathedral and Parish Vol 3

Mary - Reflections and readings about the Mother of Jesus, based on the decoration of St Marie's Cathedral, Sheffield.

The Saints of St Marie's - short lives of more than 50 saints represented in the decoration of the Cathedral church of St Marie's Sheffield.

The Angels of St Marie's - Angels represented in the decoration of the Cathedral church of St Marie's Sheffield.

All titles by Deacon Bill Burleigh

