



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP
IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL AND
PARISH CHURCH

THE HANGING PYX



Photo: Jermey Glenn

The St Teilo hanging pyx, awaiting painting

Description

Cylindrical hanging pyx made from a single piece of lime, polished and then painted white. (An earlier attempt using beech split on turning and had to be abandoned.) The pyx was the repository for the consecrated Host, kept ready suspended above the altar with rope pulley for use in emergency. Though kept covered, the hanging pyx still offered a visual focus for personal devotion.

Measurements

6 in x 6 in (152mm x152mm); sides 0.5 in. (13mm) thick; band of iron round top and bottom c.5/8 in. (16mm) wide (following the Bristol model, described below).

Model

The hanging pyx is inspired by a rare 'ancient host box' once used at the parish church of St Peter in the centre of Bristol, photographed and described not long before 1940, when it was lost in the bombing of the city. The St Teilo pyx follows the measurements and description recorded on the back of the lost photograph. It has a plate with key hole, a hasp hinged to a band crossing the lid, and a ring at the top to enable it to hang on a cord above the altar. (The photograph also shows an additional metal loop on the left hand side, and three keyholes on the plate.) The retrospective *Rites of Durham*, copied in 1593, suggests that a comparable (albeit more lavish) specimen hung over the high altar in Durham Cathedral: '... a marueilous faire pix that the holy blessed sacrament did hange in which was of most pure fine gold most curiously wrought of gold smith worke'. (See also descriptions of the St Teilo pyx cloth and altar bread pyx.)

Craftspeople

Jeremy Glenn, woodworker, Abergavenny (design)
Norman Lawrence, woodturner, Cwmbran
Ross Smith, blacksmith, Pontypool (metal fixing)
Lois Raine, specialist painter, Exeter, Devon (decoration).

Bibliography

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Note compiled by Sally Harper

