

Minster door glory restored

by Caroline Radford

MASONS and carvers at York Minster today surveyed the fruit from what they called their project of a lifetime – the restoration of the Great West Door.

A skilled team had been working on the £1m project for three years, producing the intricate Biblical carvings and geometric designs which decorate the five orders arching from above the double doors to the recently-restored Great West Window.

Carver David Willett, who was given the task of recreating the figures of Adam and Eve and Abraham and Isaac, as well as producing the ornamental canopies, said the detail of original carvings had been reproduced as far as possible but sometimes it had been necessary to fill in the blanks.

"In some cases there's not much of the original left and so you do have a bit of licence as long as it's in keeping with the era," he said.

"This has been a once-in-a-lifetime project – the chance to do work like this doesn't come along all that often, unfortunately."

Mason Ben Ungerechts agreed, saying part of the wages for the job was the feeling of pride and satisfaction at seeing the carvings taken from the workshop and put in place.

"I don't know if I'll ever get the opportunity to work on something as good as this again," he said.

"And it's wonderful to stand here and see the finished result."

For the Minster's Dean of Works, the Very Reverend Raymond Furnell, the unveiling of the doorway was a huge milestone on the way to the completion of the Minster's £4m restoration project, which is due to be completed by the Millennium.

"It is a tremendous celebration of this part of the restoration of the Minster but equally importantly a acknowledgement of the incredible craftsmanship of the Minster workshop's carvers and masons," he said.



Raymond Furnell with the stoneyard team outside the Great West Door Picture: David Harrison