

WILLIAM LONG FRANKLIN (1853–1917)

Eastertide! Step into any of our churches in the parish and you will find it beautifully decorated with flowers arranged by skilled craftspeople. Their creations are vying with each other in colourful eruptions of spring colours greeting the visitor with their message of joy. However, in the words most impressively sung by basses on a well-known anthem by S S Wesley: 'The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away'!

The rich pickings of grapes and the various flowers and leaves William Long Franklin designed, and with his craftsman carved in wood into the pulpit of our Parish Church, has already lasted for over 100 years and with due care will last in its glory for many more generations to come. The pulpit and the magnificent Eagle lectern are a lasting local memory to this great man. He trained his workforce of men to the highest standard of church carving and his firm became internationally known.

At his death the incumbents of the Parish Church wrote the following in the *Deanery Magazine*: 'We regret to announce the death of Mr W L Franklin, aged 64. He was buried on 13th August at Wilton, Taunton. Mr Franklin was the last representative of the famous church building family here which did such excellent work, both at home and abroad, one of their last undertakings being the erection of the beautiful screen for Hobart Cathedral, Tasmania. He was also parish warden for 12 years, during which time the church was much improved buy a new organ, a beautifully carved pulpit, and other additions. He also laid out the new churchyard and the approach to it.'

In February 1918 Mrs Franklin, his widow, has had an oak door with antique iron hinges fitted to the ancient aumbry within the sanctuary of the Church. This was done in accordance with the great wishes of her husband who provided the materials before his death.

Ruth Johnson, 2003