

SOUTHWELL MINSTER GUILD OF STEWARDS

MATRON'S TOMB

By Wendy Chetwin

On the north side of the path leading from the west door to Westgate is a slab marking the grave of Susanna Wedge, for a short time matron of the **"Incorporated Workhouse near this town"** (i.e. the Thurgarton Hundred Incorporation Workhouse on the Upton Road, opened in 1824, which later, in 1836, became the Southwell Union Workhouse and is now owned by the National Trust).

Susanna died in 1826 at the age of 30 after giving birth to a son, William John, who died aged 3 days and is buried by her side. She had been a working woman who had had several jobs and seems therefore to have been an independent and educated woman.

The inscription on the slab is reproduced on the next page and gives rise to several questions. Why did the father, and not the husband, erect the tomb? – there is no indication that she was a widow. Where was John Wedge at the **time? Who was the Master when she was the Matron? Wasn't 30 years of age** rather old then to have a first child? Perhaps a steward, or indeed a group, might like to take this on as a research project.

The Becher tomb is also in the Minster church-yard, outside the south door. A memorial to John Becher is on the east wall of the south transept, above the Pieta.

Further information about the Thurgarton Workhouse and the Southwell Parish Workhouse (1808-1836 – now the Southwell Baptist Church) in Moor Lane (now Nottingham Road) may be found on the Internet at: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/workhouse/Southwell/Southwell.shtml>

READER BEHOLD THE UNCERTAINTY
OF HUMAN LIFE

This Stone is Erected by WILLIAM CADDICK
Of Basford near Nottingham. To the memory of His
daughter SUSANNA WEDGE wife of JOHN WEDGE.
Who after having filled various situations in life with
much satisfaction and truly respected. Was for a short
time Matron of the Incorporated Workhouse near this
Town. The duties of which Station she discharged with
great satisfaction to the Managers and comfort to the
poor. and died there in her first Child bed deeply
lamented the 24th day of April 1826 in the 31st year
of Her Age.

*O Lord! Hasten thy Kingdom and speedily reunite in
the indissoluble hands of Eternal felicity all those endearing
connexions which the ravages of time and death have
separated here below.*

By the side of her lies her Infant son WILLIAM JOHN

Aged 3 days

*When the Archangel trump shall blow
And souls to bodies join
What crowds will wish their lives below
Had been as short as thine.*