

SOUTHWELL MINSTER

THE BUILDING

Although there has been a Minster Church on this site since 956, the present building is of later dates. It is in three main architectural styles, Norman, Early English and Decorated. The Normans began to rebuild the Saxon church after 1108, at the direction of Archbishop Thomas II of York. The nave, aisles, transepts, towers and north porch which we see standing today are part of that rebuild. The quire which was built then was barely half the width of the present quire. Until very recently it was supposed that its east end was square, like the present one, and the Revd James Dimock's 19th century excavations supported that theory. However, in the light of more recent excavations at York Minster and elsewhere, some ecclesiastical archaeologists, notably Warwick Rodwell, now think that it may well have had an apsidal end, perhaps slightly inset from the side walls. The quire aisles certainly ended in apsidal ends, and there were apsidal chapels on the east side of the north and south transepts. In the 1230's the quire was rebuilt in the Early English style, and the Decorated Chapter House was added after 1288.

THE NORMAN NAVE

THE INTERIOR

The visitor who enters by the west door, or who is directed to the west end of the nave, is immediately confronted by one of the most perfect and unspoilt examples of Norman or Romanesque architecture in England.

When building began in 1108 the builders would have begun work at the east end so that as soon as possible there would be an area for an altar and for worship, and then they worked westwards. As the Norman quire was subsequently demolished, the slightly later part of the church which remained, the crossing, nave and transepts, is now the oldest part of the building, dating from approximately 1120 - 1150.

The stone used for the building is a soft, warm, honey-coloured, fine-grained permian sandstone which was brought from Mansfield. Some of the stone in the walls was re-used from the Saxon building, but most of that church probably ended up in the shallow foundations and as infilling for the pillars and walls. The stone has been worked to a smooth ashlar finish and there is very little ornamentation in the nave. The timbers which were used came from Sherwood Forest.

The Nave is over 193 feet (59 metres) long and 60½ feet (18.5 metres) wide. It has seven bays plus an extra, shorter one beneath the west towers. Simple, fairly short, drum piers which are 16 feet (4.9 metres) in circumference, rise from square bases and are topped with round capitals which are decorated with a variety of simple designs carved into them. These pillars are built from outer layers of dressed stone which are filled with rubble. From the capitals rise large round topped arches; these have a billet moulding round the edge, and plain ridge and roll mouldings on the soffits.

A string course of zig-zag moulding separates the arcading from the triforium, where each bay follows the pattern of the lower arches. The arches at this level are supported on short, attached half columns with scalloped block capitals. Each of the triforium arches has corbels at the springings and the stump of a shaft from the crown of the arch, suggesting that it was originally intended to be completed with small infilling arches as at Romsey Abbey. It is not known whether this was not done because of a change of plan or because of lack of funds. These arches also have ridge and roll mouldings on the soffits, and they have a double row of billet moulding round the face.

The triforium, or dark storey as it is sometimes called, is, strictly speaking, neither. The outer walls rise a little above the level of the aisle vault and the roof rises from that; a row of small, rectangular

windows give a little light to this gallery.

At clerestory level the inner walls are plain, with simple, round-headed arches, much smaller than those at ground and triforium levels, opening into a walkway within the thickness of the wall which runs right along the nave and round the transepts. The rows of windows in the outer wall behind these arches are round, bulls eye windows. From the outside they give the appearance of a row of portholes round the Minster and they are an unusual feature.

The general effect of the three tiers of rounded arches is reminiscent of a great Roman aqueduct, or amphitheater, and it is not hard to see why this style of architecture is known as Romanesque on the continent and is increasingly so called here.

The original roof was lost in a fire on 5th November 1711, when lightning struck the south west tower.. At that time it was replaced with a roof of lower pitch and with a flat ceiling. Then, as part of his 19th century restoration, Ewan Christian restored the pitch of the outside roof to its original state and put in the present beautiful oak roof which is barrel vaulted and probably not dissimilar from the Norman original.

At the east end of the nave, tall pillars on either side rise to the height of the triforium arches, and above the simple cushion capitals there rises a huge arch with dramatic and very fine cable moulding as well as ridge and roll and billet mouldings.

The nave aisles have quadrilateral vaulting, but compared with vaulting of a later date, these are crude. Some of the corbels supporting the ribs to the aisle vaults are decorated with carved heads, some of them grotesques; one, in the south aisle, shows the devil swallowing a man. At the intersection of the ribs to the vault under the north west tower there is a primitive carving, the only thing in the nave which in any way approaches an attempt at a calved boss. Stone benches along the walls of the aisles were originally the only seating in the Minster, intended for the infirm (hence the saying ""the weakest go to the wall"). Everyone else would have stood or knelt on the earthen floor. The present floor was laid in the 19th century, using, for a great part, tombstones from the churchyard.

Some of the stones in the nave, mainly on the pillars, still have masons marks.

The great west window has a wonderful perpendicular tracery in a Trinitarian formation which was inserted in the middle of the 15th century. The three windows on either side at the east end of the nave were enlarged during the 14th century. Most of the other windows were also enlarged in the past but have been returned to their original Norman shape. The most westerly window on the north side of the nave is the only original Norman aperture.

Spiral staircases from the north and south west towers give access to the towers and to the triforium and clerestory. It is possible to cross from the north triforium to the south triforium, by way of the unfenced walkway in front of the west window (presumably the thickness of the original Norman wall at this point).

THE PARVIS ROOM

From the north triforium steps lead down into the Parvis room above the north porch. This was where the sacristan would have slept in the Minster's earlier days. There are cupboard recesses in the walls, and a fireplace in the north west corner. Three small windows look out over the churchyard. Old records are stored in this room now.

For health and safety reasons and to comply with the conditions of our insurers the public are not taken onto the triforium or the clerestory, or into the Parvis Room.

THE NORMAN NAVE

THE NAVE FURNISHINGS

The west doors are made of oak, with medieval ironwork, and, according to Pevsner, probably date from the 12th century. The Revd Arthur Dimock, in his book of 1898, writes of them, "The oaken doors are of the same date as those of the north porch". The date has also been given as 15th century.

The attention of the visitor who enters by the west door is immediately drawn towards the great statue of the Christus Rex (the Reigning Christ) which hangs high above the altar and dominates the nave: the figure reaches out in welcome to everyone who comes into the building. It was made in 1987 by Peter Ball of Newark and was designed to fit in with the building's chevron and cable carvings. The body of the figure is carved from unseasoned elm and the arms are of 18th century oak from Ossington. The whole is covered in copper and highlighted with gold leaf. The oxidising of the copper is deliberate. The figure weighs 7cwt and is hung by 4 lines and a safety line.

Once inside the nave look up at the roof. This is barrel-vaulted and made of oak in 1879 - 80, as part of Ewan Christian's restoration work. After the fire of 1711 the roof had been replaced with a low pitched roof on the outside and a flat ceiling on the inside. Further work had been done there in 1802. In a letter to the Bishop of Lincoln dated July 21st 1875 Ewan Christian suggested the re-roofing of the Minster with the exception of the quire and the central tower. The estimate for restoring the pitch of the roof to its original position, leading the outside and putting the oak barrel roof into position was £3,500. The work was done by a Mr Clipsham of Norwell, but the actual cost was approximately £10,000!

(The small 18th century pews made of painted deal which until late in 2000 were on either side of the west door have been removed and restored and are at present in the Visitors' Centre).

The spaces beneath the two western towers are used for storage purposes.

On the first pillar on the north side are boards listing the Bishops of Southwell and the Provosts of the Cathedral. From March 2000 the list is of Deans. The boards were designed by Ronald Sims and were made and erected by Houghtons of York in 1986.

Almost opposite, in a glass case, is a matchstick model of the Minster. This was made by Mr Clive Holmes, from Holton-le-Oay, near Grimsby, Lincolnshire, a fire officer at Oeethorpes. It took three and a half years to make and it is made up of 35,000 matchsticks.

In the aisle behind the matchstick model is the Creation Station or Children's area. The statue of St Francis, made from cement fondu with a bronze finish was made by Mrs Molly Hill. The *banners* were made under the direction of Mrs Lyn Morris.

The large notice board on the north side of the nave was made in oak by Thomas Long of Nottingham in 1959. In 1960 he also made the outside notice board by the west gate.

The chairs in the nave were made in 1980 by Reynolds of Ludlow, at a cost of £28 each. They were provided by the Friends of Southwell Cathedral.

The present font was made in 1661 by William Balme at a cost of 5 guineas, including 1 shilling for beer for the workmen. This font replaced the original which had been destroyed during the Civil War and is one of several similar fonts ordered as replacements by local churches after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.

A paschal candle stand designed by Sims in 1986 stands beside the font.

The north porch which leads from the north aisle has early 14th century doors, with the tracery carved out of the solid wood. It is datable by reference to the traceried surface alone. The motif is reticulated ogee, with quatrefoils inserted in each reticule; the cross sections of the continuous raised

muntings conform to rolls with three fillets - which were of maximum popularity between c1270 and c1330, and a date close to 1300 is suggested for these doors.

The inner porch was designed by Ronald Sims in 1978 and was built by Houghtons of York.

The blue notices inside the door and elsewhere in the Minster are the work of Robert Dixon of Southwell, and their iron stands were made by Ken Ware, also of Southwell. The glass collecting box here, and the one by the south door were made by Radfords of Southwell.

To the east side of the north porch is the Information Desk, the gift of the Friends of Southwell Cathedral in 1999. A matching stand for guide books and post cards stands next to it.

The nave pulpit is a fine example of late 19th century woodwork. Moved to its present position on the south side of the church in 1987, it was designed by G.F.Bodley and made by Ratty and Kett of Cambridge in 1898. The carvings round the pulpit show Mary and Jesus in the centre panel, with *St Augustine of Canterbury* on her right (left as you face it) and *St Paulinus* on her left, with the rose of York decorating his robes and in the top of his crozier; on the side of the pulpit we see *King Edwin of York* and his Queen, *Ethe/burgh*, formerly princess of Kent. The rose of York is liberally scattered over the pulpit and especially round the tester board. On the ledge inside the pulpit is the following inscription: "To the Glory of God and in memory of Rev **John** Gordon and Frances Octavia, his wife." The pulpit was given by a Miss Gordon - probably a daughter - and was dedicated at Evensong on September 11th 1898 by Bishop Ridding.

The brass lectern in the nave is not a copy of the Newstead lectern in the quire. The wooden steps were made by David Hall in February 2000. Two iron candlesticks stand beside the lectern.

The nave organ console is near the lectern, though it is mobile and sometimes moves! The organ was originally built in 1905 by J.J.Binns for Heckmondwike Upper Independent Chapel. It was rebuilt for Southwell Minster in 1992, by Woods of Huddersfield, and the pipes were installed in the front four bays of the South Nave Triforium.

The nave altar and chairs were designed by Ronald Sims and were made by Houghtons of York. A Sims candlestick beside the altar holds a lighted candle which symbolises the presence of Christ. The four altar rails at the sides of the altar were made by the Thompson factory at Kilburn in 1957, and have incised mice carved on them. The credence table was originally the altar in the Bishop's chapel and was given to the Minster in 1999.

The *silver gilt and enamel cross behind the nave altar, and the matching candlesticks* on it, were made in 1928 by *Alexander Fisher* for the great chapel of the monastery at Kelbam, then the home of the Society of the Sacred Mission. The cross is mounted on a moveable stand made by Ken Ware.

The nave choir stalls and conductor's desk were designed by Marting Stancliffe and were given by the Friends of Southwell Cathedral in 1998. The tapestry hangings on these choir stalls were designed and made by Jaqueline James, a partially sighted designer from York. The panels are alternately coloured red and blue, with a natural-coloured design, but they can all be reversed to show a neutral background during Lent and Advent.

THE CROSSING AND TRANSEPTS

At the crossing the arches to the nave, the quire and the transepts are built on a grand style. All of them have the ridge and roll moulding on both sides. Most of them also have impressive cable moulding on both sides, but some have it only on the side which faces into the crossing. There is also billet moulding. The capitals on those pillars to the east side of the crossing, on either side of the organ, are finely carved with early and fairly primitive portrayals of stories from the life of Christ. They show The Annunciation, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and Christ washing Peter's feet, but these are difficult to see from the floor of the church.

High above the crossing floor four walled walk-ways, with Norman arches in each wall go round the sides of the tower above the large arches and beneath the belfry floor.

This floor was designed by architect Dowland in 1961, but in 1973 it proved to be unsafe and another floor was fixed above it. Until 1961 there had been only an open gallery around the crossing at this point and it was from there that the bellringers operated.

The crossing itself is not exactly square: the pillars, like the pillars in the nave, are not perfectly aligned.

In both north and south transepts round-beaded arches, rising from slim pillars with short capitals, open into walkways within the thickness of the walls at triforium and clerestory levels. Some of these arches are decorated with cable moulding, and some of that in the south transept is rather crude or actually turns the wrong way! In the outer walls the windows in both north and south transepts have round-headed, Norman windows at ground and triforium levels, and bullseye windows round the clerestory.

In the east walls of each transept huge Norman arches indicate the position of the former apsidal chapels. The extent of these chapels can be seen in the Pilgrim's chapel where the outline of the rounded wall is marked on the floor. The arch in the north transept has been adapted to form the entrance to the later chapel, and beneath the stone infill at the top there are two 13th century arches of unequal size which spring from an off-centre pillar. A flight of steps leads down from the transept into the chapel.

Opposite the entrance to the Pilgrim's Chapel in the north west corner of the north transept there is a small door which gives access to a spiral staircase to the triforium, the parvis room and the clerestory.

Above this doorway is the one piece of the Saxon church which remains visible in the Minster (There is a small piece of a pillar in the Visitors' Centre). This carved Tympanum shows St Michael slaying the dragon, and David taking the lamb from the lion's mouth (though it has also been interpreted as David fighting with the lion while the Lamb of God looks on from above). This tympanum was set right into the wall until 1984, when it was taken out for display at the Romanesque Art Exhibition in the Hayward Gallery in London. At that time it was in three pieces and it was repaired for the exhibition. When it was taken out from the wall it was seen that the carving on the underside extended to the parts which had rested on the walls and had not been visible. When the tympanum was returned to Southwell, a piece of plain stone was set into the wall and the tympanum was mounted on that so that the new discovery could be seen.

Until the 19th century there was a door in the north wall which gave access from the central gate on Church Street, but it was blocked up, so the story goes, because townsfolk were in the habit of taking short cuts, with their wheelbarrows, across the crossing and out of the south door!

The alcove behind the bust of Bishop Hoskyns was at one time the site of a door into a small passage and was the entrance to the Pilgrim's Chapel. The strong room now fills that passage.

The large Norman archway in the south transept has been completely filled in, and it also has a mullion: blocked Norman archway within it. This has not been satisfactorily explained. One suggestion is that it may have been a Norman window which was reused, and that it was used as a doorway when

the library was situated to the east of the south transept. To the south of the large archway an opening in the wall appears to have been the aumbry from an earlier chapel.

The low doorway in the south wall of the south transept, was the Archbishop's entrance from the *Palace* to the church. Although this doorway is low it is still high enough to interfere with the line of the windows above it and necessitates a small window.

Beneath the Bread Pews, just inside this door there are Roman tesserae, which once formed part of the flooring of the Saxon Church. Whether these were brought here from the Villa, or were part of a Roman building on this site is not known.

CENTRAL TOWER

(Notes by John Meredith)

There are two entrances to the Minster's Central Tower. By far the easiest and most used, is the one in the south west corner of the south transept. The door is outside in the west wall. This is not the original doorway; the old one was blocked up during the nineteenth century, and is only visible from inside the cupboard at the right hand side of the south porch.

On entering, you ascend the stairway in a clockwise direction. The first two doors you arrive at give access to the triforium levels. The first of the doors leads along the west side of the transept to the nave, and the second takes you round the south and east walls to the south quire aisle vault. These doors are always closed and being made of heavy oak they act as fire seals; they replaced older ones in 1993. Just before you reach the clerestory level another small oak door gives access to the transept clerestory on the south and east walls.

At clerestory level you have climbed 70 steps and passed six small windows. You now walk along the west clerestory to the south west corner of the central tower, passing two of the round Norman windows. Ascending again in a clockwise direction, after a few steps you encounter three more oak doors; the first leads to the south nave clerestory and the others to a passageway within the thickness of the walls which run round the bottom of the tower, just above the four crossing arches. These have two open arches on the inner wall of each side but only the outer walls of the south, west and north sides have these open arches. From the east side there is simply a trap door leading into the quire vault.

Continuing on up the steps you soon arrive at two doors leading into the ringing chamber. Only the first one is used by the ringers. The second gives access to another passageway which runs round the outside of the ringing chamber within the thickness of the tower walls. This passage also opens into the ringing chamber on all four sides by way of two half round arches in each wall. Opposite to each of these arches there is a window in the outer wall. There are also trapdoors in the four outer walls; three of these lead into the vaults of the nave and transept roofs, but the one on the east side is now blanked off as the present quire vault is lower than the previous Norman one.

Until 1961 the ringing chamber was not floored over. There was simply a narrow gallery round the walls on which the ringers stood to ring the bells. The oak floor of 1961 was added by the architect Caroe, and can still be seen from the floor of the crossing. However in 1973 this floor was found to be unsafe due to a weak support beam. Ringing was stopped until 1975 when a new floor was put in over the existing one. It is mounted on two steel beams that rest on the inner passage, with the old floor anchored to it. The table in the centre of the room was a gift to the ringers from British Sugar. In the north west corner of the chamber is the central heating header tank. Boards on the walls commemorate special "peals" rung over the years. Coloured wool woven into the bell ropes, and known as the "sallies", is in the traditional colours of red, white and blue. What appears to be a cupboard in the south east corner is nothing more than a protection case for the clock weight, and in the ceiling on the south side is an enclosed box containing the clock pendulum.

Continuing further up the stairs you reach the oak door leading into the clock chamber. This room also has a passage running round the thickness of the walls and is almost an exact copy of the ringing chamber but without the trapdoors. On the south side of this room is a small wooden cabin containing the clock which was constructed by Joyce of Whitchurch in 1896 and is now maintained by Smiths of Derby. The clock face is on the outside of the north wall of the tower and a spindle drive housed in a wooden case passes through the centre of the room to reach it. The clock marks each quarter hour with the "Westminster Chimes". In the north west corner of the chamber is the tune-ringing machine given by Thomas Wymonsold in 1693. The present one is a rebuild of the earlier machine which was destroyed by fire in 1711. It plays three tunes; Southwell, Bedford and the National Anthem, and it plays at 12 noon and 4 p.m. each day. When a different tune is required it is changed by one of the vergers. On the outside sill of the easterly window of the south wall there is a small sundial. The bell ropes also pass through this room, two of them inside the clock cabin. Under the ceiling and across the floor are the wires for the clock chimes and the ringing machine.

Climbing further up the stairs you find a second door to the clock chamber; this is always sealed.

The last door on the stairs leads into the bell chamber. In each wall there are two windows containing louveres. On three sides these are closed in by wooden shutters; those on the west wall are closed only at

the top half. This is to allow a certain amount of the sound from the bells to be contained within the tower. The bell frame stands diagonally across the corners of the chamber on one level, partly constructed of wood from the original frame of 1721 and partly from steel from 1961. There are 13 bells (a ring of 12 with a semi tone) hung anti-clockwise. The largest bell, the tenor, weighs 25cwts. All of the bells were cast by Taylors of Loughborough, eleven in 1961 and two in 1897. The pole in the centre of the chamber is the bottom half of the flagpole.

A few more steps brings us to the trapdoor at the top of the tower, leading out onto the flat roof which was constructed of concrete in the 1920's. The parapet round the edge is of a much later date than the rest of the tower, which, with its stairways and chambers is completely Norman in design. The four pinnacles on the corners are also Norman, and it is said that they came from the ends of the transepts, and looked similar to those on the north porch. The flagpole passes through the concrete roof from the bell chamber and is the mast from a sailing ship. By now you will have climbed 180 steps and passed 15 small windows, 2 round windows and 14 doors.

SECOND ENTRANCE

The second entrance to the central tower ascends from the doorway in the northwest corner of the north transept, under the Saxon Tympanum. Again, climbing in a clockwise direction you come to the open entrances to the triforium and clerestory levels. On arrival at the clerestory you walk along the passageways on the north and east sides, passing more round windows and a blocked up doorway which leads into a room, now the library. Coming to the north east corner of the tower, and again climbing clockwise, you will come to two more openings, both to the lower passageways above the crossing arches.

Continuing up the tower you pass a small door containing a glass window which leads out onto the quire roof. The next oak door is another entrance to the ringing chamber. The final steps lead to two remaining doors, one to the clock chamber and the other to the bell chamber. At this point the steps finish and there is no alternative exit onto the roof of the tower.

THE PULPITUM

The Nave, the re-built Quire and the Chapter House were all completed by about 1300, and no major building work or reconstruction work has been done since then. However in the mid 14th century the [Pulpitum](#), or stone Quire Screen was erected to close off the Quire from the Nave and the Transepts. It was probably started in the 1330's, though Pevsner and others date it as late as 1370. The architect is unknown, but Mr R. Petch, who made a study of such work in other places, believes that Iva de Raghton, father and/or son, was working in Southwell in about 1330. The fact that Roger Mortimer's head is on the screen may also indicate the earlier date, as the event would then have been fresh in the minds of the masons.

The Pulpitum is lavishly decorated. On the western side three arches enclose a vestibule with a ceiling carried on flying ribs. Within this screen, there is a small chapel on either side of the entrance to the quire. The matching altars are made by Thompsons and have tapestry frontals made by Watts; the second of these was given in 2001 by Major Dodd of Landseer Road, in memory of his wife, Joan. These altars were formerly two halves of the old nave altar. The kneeling desks were also made by Thompsons and, with their kneelers, were given by the Diocesan Mothers' Union and Young Wives for the millenary in 1956. Both the altars and the desks have incised mice.

Across the top of the screen on the western side is a row of heads which is said to include King Edward III, his wife Queen Philippa and a lawyer with asses' ears! Lower down, on the cusps at the north end are heads which purport to be [Roger Mortimer and Queen Isabella](#). Smaller heads of people, animals and grotesques gaze from every protuberance.

[Iron gates](#), hand-wrought by Mr Caldron in his blacksmith's forge at Brant Broughton and given in memory of Mabel Player in 1934, fill the archway that leads into the Quire. At this point a staircase leads to the top of the screen, from where, originally, the Gospel would have been read to the congregation in the nave. The [Nicholson organ](#) installed in 1996 is on top of the screen, though the earlier organ case by Caroe was kept at that time. Near the bottom of the staircase is a very faint mason's mark which is believed to be that of Ivo de Raghton..

On its eastern side the pulpitum is even more lavishly decorated with leaves and heads, almost 300 in all. The Bernasconi Brothers extensively restored many of the heads in plaster stone in the early 19th century, but much 14th century work can still be seen. In about 1787 Canon Kaye asked S.H.Grimm to make many drawings of the Minster. One of these shows in detail the east side of the pulpitum before it was restored.

Immediately above the entrance arch is a gilded statue of the Virgin and Child. Among the carvings of Kings, Queens and bishops it is possible to see a listening angel with finger to the ear, a mason with gavel who tugs at his beard, a crusader(? the Black Prince) and a workman scratching his leg. On either side of the entrance there are three stalls, each beneath a pointed gable, crocketed, cusped and covered with carved decoration. The stall immediately to the south of the gates is covered with a diaper pattern, and was probably the Archbishop's seat; it is now used by the Bishop of Southwell. The corresponding stall on the north side is the seat used by the Dean of Southwell. Each of the seats in these six stalls has a [14th century misericord](#), mounted in a modern setting. The carvings on the underside are reminiscent of some of those in the Chapter House.

Damage to the screen at the northern and southern ends was caused by the erection by the Bernasconis of plaster side screens which were later removed by Ewan Christian.

THE QUIRE

From c1108 the Minster had a quire in the Norman style of building and it probably looked very like the present nave. Until very recently it was supposed that the eastern end of that building was square, like the present east end, and the Reverend James Dimock's excavations in the 19th century supported that theory. In the light of recent excavations at York Minster and elsewhere, some ecclesiastical archaeologists, notably Warwick Rodwell, think that it would have had an apsidal end, perhaps slightly inset from the side walls; but this is disputed. The Quire aisles certainly did have apsidal ends, and there were also apsidal chapels on the east side of both the north and south transepts.

The rebuilding of the quire was begun at the instigation of [Archbishop Walter de Grey](#). By 1233 AD the new building was taking shape: the bishop's register for that year records 30 days-indulgence for those helping. Two types of stone are visible. The yellowish stone was re-used from the Norman building, and the lighter stone with blue veining possibly came from quarries at Mansfield Woodhouse (Richard Beaumont). Masons' marks, which are most easily seen on the pillars in the north quire aisle, show that at least 50 masons were at work. It is double the size of the Norman building it replaced, being 128 feet (39 metres) long by 73 feet wide with the aisles. The side aisles are 98 feet long, and the width between the pillars and also across the east end, is 27 feet. Measured right across the church including both transept chapels the full width is 108 feet.. It has been very little changed in more than 750 years.

At the east end the building is squared, and the aisles, which stop two bays short of the full length, also have square ends. There are also two small side chapels, which in effect form little eastern transepts.

In contrast with the heavy, plain, round drum pillars in the nave, those in the quire are composed of clusters of tall, slender columns, topped by composite bell capitals from which spring high pointed arches decorated, except for three of the arches on the south side, with dog tooth carving. The capitals on the north side have nail-head carving round them, but three of those on the south side do not. There are different bases round the bottoms of some of the columns. Stiff leaved carving and carved heads are a prominent feature. Above the arcading the triforium and clerestory levels are united behind a screen of lancet arches. The centres of the quire, the aisles and the transept chapels all have stone vaults; a ridge rib runs the length of each vault, with leaf corbels at each intersection. The central roof rib continues down the centre of the east wall necessitating an even number of lancet windows instead of the more usual odd number.

Work started at the east end, and then, probably, the Norman quire was demolished and work began again at the west end. Where the two elements of building joined some adjustment of levels became necessary. On the north side this can be seen as a small change in the level of the string coursing below the triforium level. On the south side the crown of the arch is lower than that of its neighbours, and the space between it and the stringcourse is filled with a carved medallion. Where the new quire joins the Norman building near the Crossing, the remains of the semi-circular piers can be seen, partially obscured by the new stonework, just inside the quire aisles. The building of the Early English Quire was probably completed about 1250.

Walls and carvings would originally have been highly coloured. They were whitewashed in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century [Ewan Christian](#) asked permission to repaint in the original colours, but the Bishop of Lincoln would not allow it. When the quire was cleaned in 1981 colour showed up while the stone was wet, but faded as it dried. There are small traces of colour to be seen on the screen and on the third arch of the sedilia, as well as in two of the chapels.

Carvings in the Quire include, on the north side, a small king and queen with their heads together, the heads of [Archbishop Walter de Grey](#) and of [King Henry III](#) who has an imp, or jester, with two reptile bodies above his head. Henry III, on 12^h July 1237, gave orders to Robert de Rod of Mansfield to give to the Archbishop of York, 150 oaks from Sherwood Forest for the building of the church at Southwell, and as the quire was being built at that time the timber was probably intended for the roof beams. On the south side there is a green man and what has been described as a dancing lady or a Sheela-na-Gig. The only stone-carved head of Jesus which can be found in the Minster is on the East wall, high up on the south side.

Early in the 19th century the quire had galleries and screens at each side. In 1802 the Italian sculptors, the Bernasconis, built plaster screens at right angles to the pulpitum. When these were removed by Ewan Christian the damage that we see today was revealed. At one time there was a canopied stall in the quire for the Prior of Thurgaton. The sedilia which is now on the south side of the sanctuary are unusual in that

they have 5 seats instead of the more common 3. They were originally in the quire. Possibly carved by the same men who carved the Pulpitum, and heavily restored by the Bernasconi brothers, the sedilia show scenes from the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt.

The marble floor in the Sanctuary, with the symbols of the four evangelists, was laid in 1887.

FURNISHINGS AND FITTINGS IN THE QUIRE

As one enters the quire beneath the Pulpitum the early 16th century Lectern meets the eye. It was made for Newstead Abbey and was rescued from the lake there. Beside the lectern stand two brass candlesticks which are from the early 16th or late 15th century, but nothing is known about their history and there is no record of them coming to the Minster. Almost immediately above the lectern is an 18th century brass candelabra.

On either side of the lectern are the beautiful choir stalls made by Cornish and Gaymer of North Walsham, Norfolk, and carved by Charles Henry Simpson in 1886. The bench ends and the fronts of these stalls are lavishly decorated with carved flowers and leaves, birds, animals, angels and musical instruments. Cornish and Gaymer also made the remaining four blocks of stalls. Those next to the Simpson stalls were given by James Dawson Lewis, M.A. Honorary Canon, in loving memory of his parents, while the easternmost stalls were given by members of the Chapter of the Cathedral. Caroe designed all these four blocks in 1902. The oak screens at the west end of the quire were also installed by Cornish and Gaymer, to replace the Bernasconi plaster screens. They were designed to be similar to the original screens, fragments of which Ewan Christian discovered in the room above the Chapter House passage.

Robert Lee of Southwell made the oak music stand in 1947.

The quire pulpit, designed by Caroe, was made in teak by Robinson's of Bloomsbury. The carving shows the Virgin and Child, the Child being held on the Virgin's right arm). The carving round the pulpit reads, "In the beginning was the Word". This was gift from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and was dedicated by Bishop Ridding on 9th May 1897. Until 1987, the steps from the pulpit led down into the Airmen's Chapel, but at that time the pulpit was rebuilt by Ronald Sims so that the stairs are now accessed from the quire.

A wrought iron handrail next to the pulpit to enable parishioners to negotiate the steps to the altar, was given by Mrs Margaret Hill in 1996 in memory of her husband, Canon Bernard Hill and their daughter, Susan.

A plaque on the floor in front of the altar rails commemorates the visit of Queen Elizabeth II for the Maundy ceremony on 19th April 1984.

Between the quire and St Oswald's Chapel is a fine monument to Bishop George Ridding, first Bishop of Southwell. F.W.Pomeroy made the figure, and it is on a base designed by Caroe in 1907.

Thompson of Kilburn made the altar rails in 1950 (8th August); the triple kneeler in the sanctuary is also by Thompson (1948), as is the Dean's desk (1957), the latter being a memorial to the Revd W.J.Conybeare and bears his coat of arms. Two small kneeling desks (1996) given in memory of Nora Healey, and two hymn boards made for the quire in 1996 and given by the Southwell ringers with a contribution from the Friends, are also Thompson creations. There is a portable lectern which is normally kept in the quire as well. All of these items carry the Thompson Mice.

A faculty for the lengthening of the high altar was issued on 24th April 1934.

The carpet in the sanctuary dates from 1956.

A chair with a lovely carving of St Francis and oak kneeling desk were given in memory of Joseph Whitaker or Rainworth who died in 1932.

The Bishop's Throne was originally in two parts. The chair is a memorial to Bishop Moseley, and the desk was given by the parish in memory of Bishop Hoskyns and was dedicated on 5th December 1926. The two parts were joined together in 1942 and were subsequently altered in 1984; it is still possible to see where the sides and back have been sawn off and spoilt the desk. The throne has moved around the cathedral according to the dictates of various bishops. It has sometimes been behind the high altar and sometimes

in the nave. The two parts of the throne were separated in 1999 and moved to the present position on the north side of the sanctuary.

Francis and Dart of Devon made the credence table from oak in 1925. The cross and candlesticks on the high altar are of silver and were given in memory of Becher in 1942 at a cost of £425

The North Quire Aisle

The frontal cupboard was made in 1920 by Robert Lee of Southwell from oak beams which had been removed from the nave roof during Ewan Christian's restoration. Above the cupboard are a [Charity bequest board](#) and a board recording the gift of [the chimes](#). The mall wall cupboard with holes in the door beneath the charity boards is the dole cupboard. There is also a collage commemorating the Queen's visit on 19 April 1984 for the Royal Maundy Ceremony. The photograph shows the Queen, Prince Philip, Bishop Dennis Wakeling and Provost J. Murray Irvine. The Maundy money and the purses in the display had been presented by Her Majesty to Mr Don Keefe. Also on this wall is a coat of arms bearing the initials C I (Charles the First) and the date 1629, but the coat of arms is that of James I. Possibly it was started in the reign of James and then erected after he died with the changed initial. The library door is 17th century and is made from painted deal. The vestry doors are oak and were designed by Carce about 1919 - 1920. Near the vestry door is a vestment chest, and also an oak table given in memory of Canon Gem, which is a portable altar for some services in the quire. The vestries themselves were built in 1918.

WINDOWS IN THE QUIRE

(For more details see also the section on Arts and Crafts and also "The Stained Glass of Southwell Minster" by John Beaumont.)

The windows around the quire and the eastern transept chapels are all lancet windows.

The windows in the lower lights of the east window are very fine 16th century Flemish glass, probably the work of Chastellain. Originally made for the Temple Church in Parish, which was demolished at the French Revolution, these four panels were bought by a local gentleman, Henry Gally Knight, MP for Warsop, who gave them to the Minster in 1818. The subjects depicted are, from north to south, the Baptism of Christ, The Raising of Lazarus, the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and the Mocking of Christ. When the panels were installed in the Minster some additional glass had to be added to make them fit the lancets. The newer glass is easy to distinguish. By 1988 this glass was in need of help and Keith Barley of York removed it, cleaned, repaired and re-hung it.

The upper four lights of the east windows are by Clayton and Bell, 1876, and depict the four evangelists with their emblems.

On either side of the sanctuary are windows containing early 19th century heraldic glass showing the heraldic devices of some of the old families of Nottinghamshire. The window on the north side has the shields of Charles James Musters, Henry Middleton, John Lumley Savile and Gally. Those on the south side are Henry Duke of Newcastle, Richard Sutton, Frank Sotheon, and Knight.

The remaining window in the sanctuary is by Kempe (with wheatsheaf symbols) and illustrates St Peter and St John, and the visit of the women to the Garden Tomb on the first Easter Day.

Working from the east end the coloured glass in the south quire aisle is as follows:

A patchwork of old glass found in the room above the Chapter House Vestibule and put together by Butler in the 1920's. There is a large letter B for Butler near the top of the window.

A Crucifixion with the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John, by Clayton and Bell in 1876.

St Michael and St George, two soldier saints, make a memorial window, by Kempe, to two members of the Sherwood Foresters who were killed in action in France in 1915. A faculty for the erection of a stained glass window in the south quire aisle was issued on 4th October 1917.

THE CHAPTER HOUSE

"In design and execution alike, in its general proportions and in its minutest details, it is impossible to conceive anything more beautiful. It is the most perfect work of the most perfect style of Gothic architecture". (AF.Leach)

What either Cologne Cathedral or Ratisbon or Weisen Kirche are to Germany, Amiens Cathedral or the Sainte Chappelle are to France, the Scalagere in Verona to Italy, are the choir of Westminster and the chapter house at Southwell to England" (G.E.Street, R.A.).

[Archbishop John le Romaine](#) (Romeyn or Romanus) was appointed to York in 1286 and it was he who initiated the building of the Chapter House at Southwell. He was an influential man of great energy and a keen disciplinarian. He did his best to set to rights the problems which he found in his various churches; he disliked the custom of non-residence, especially by some of the foreign prebendaries who had been appointed by the Pope and who had never set foot in England, let alone in Southwell. He embarked on many ambitious building programmes - the quire at Ripon, the nave at Beverley and the nave and Chapter House at York.

John le Romaine was in residence in Southwell in January 1288 and a decree dated 25th January reads:

"For the levying of the arrears of the subsidy appointed for the construction of the chapter house of Southwell, and for the sequestration of the prebends of those who do not pay. To the Chapter of Southwell. The proctors of your church aforesaid have advised us that it is lawful for you after a special meeting of you all ... to ordain the levy of a fixed subsidy for the necessary construction of your chapter house, which should be raised for this purpose, by general agreement of the colleagues, out of the established incomes of the different prebends, by a fixed date; some people, however, have not as yet paid the aforesaid subsidy according to the rate provided, though others promptly acquitted what they owed; and on this account they have humbly besought us to provide action against those who have not paid". He then threatens sequestration against all defaulters who have not paid up by Easter next.

Entrance to the Chapter House is through an arch from the north quire aisle. This decorated archway, with the head of a king carved on one side and a bishop's head on the other side, is divided into two smaller arches separated by a small pillar with an open trefoil at the top. A serpent, much worn by years of handling, decorates the northern side of this pillar. Two steps lead down into a covered passage, fifty-four feet long and ten feet wide, which leads to a small vestibule. The east side of this passage originally had open arcading onto a small courtyard formed by the walls of the quire, the northeast transept chapel and the Chapter House. The archway nearest to the quire was transformed into a doorway which once led into the courtyard. On the under side of the doorway arch, between the inner and outer arches, there is diaper work, but the others are plain. The courtyard or cloister contained a well, which was subsequently covered. The vestries and boiler house were built over it. The lower part of the arcading was partially closed with a stone wall, and in 1996 the tops of the arcading arches were filled with glass painted by [Patrick Reyntiens](#) (there had previously been plain glass with lozenge shaped leading, probably from the mid 19th century). A string course runs along the top of the arcading: there is a change in the level of the string course towards the north end of the passage, and the figure of a man astride a beast fills the gap and breaks into the top of the arcading. A doorway gives access to the room above the passage and to the Chapter House roof. The blind arcading on the west side of the passage is built between the buttresses of the north transept chapel (the Pilgrims' Chapel), and buttresses interrupt both the string coursing and the arches. Masons' marks can be seen. The passage has been reroofed and the height of the walls has been changed over the years: the level of the earlier roof can be seen on the north side of the entrance. A row of 8 clerestory windows was put into the heightened walls to give light.

The passage way ends in a small but higher, vaulted vestibule that gives a change of direction, its east wall forming the entrance to the Chapter House. Windows make the vestibule lighter than the passage and it is easy to see the carvings which include a blackbird eating berries, and a woman who either covers her mouth with her wimple or is wearing a scold's bridle!

The light also enables us to enjoy the full beauty of the doorway from the vestibule to the Chapter House. The arch is of five orders and is divided by a central clustered shaft into two smaller arches with a quatrefoiled circle above. The arch is supported on either side by four pillars of polished Derbyshire fossilised limestone. Continuous capitals of the finest leaf carvings cover each group of pillars. The arched entrance is surrounded by two bands of magnificent carving, and at the apex of the outer band of vine, a

man can be seen holding onto the branches with a basket of fruit on his arm. Damaged dragons lurk at the base of this carving on either side of the door.

The Chapter House itself is built as a regular octagon 31 feet in diameter. The roof is a ribbed stone vault and it is unusual in that it has no central column to support it. It is said to be the only octagonal medieval Chapter House that has an unsupported stone vault (That at York is unsupported, but, being much larger, the vault is made of wood). Additional ribs, called tierceron ribs, spring from the same piers as the main ribs, but these run obliquely to the diagonals, not to the centre. The joins are developed into bosses with leaf carvings.

External buttresses at the angles take the thrust of the vaulting, and the walls between the piers can therefore become windows. Slim mullions divide the window sections and the tracery at the top is in the geometric style, made up from quatrefoils and trefoils. The small pieces of stained glass which have been set into the windows come, mostly, from other churches. (See "The Stained Glass of Southwell Minster" by John Beaumont).

The Chapter House has 36 seats (5 on 7 sides of the room and 1 next to the entrance). Slim columns with foliage capitals separate the seats, and these support plain trefoiled arches. Each arch has a high, crocketed gable above it, the finial of which rises above the stringcourse. The corbels on which the gables rest have carved heads and foliage carvings. The tympana between arch and gable are also filled with carving. At least ten of the carvings in the Chapter House illustrate a [Green Man](#).

More than one carver was at work on the Chapter House and it seems that they had considerable freedom to carve as they wished. Almost all of the carving here is lively and realistic. A great variety of leaves was used in the designs: maple, oak, hawthorn, ranunculus, vine, ivy and hop, and more. Possibly the [symbolism of plants](#) was, for medieval craftsmen, a decisive factor in what they carved. Animals also figured heavily in folklore and many of these were probably carved for their symbolic meanings. We do not have to know why the craftsmen carved the things they did. We can simply enjoy them and marvel at the quality of the work.

Some of the heads and other carvings have been damaged over the years. Some damage was probably done at the time of the civil war, but vandalism goes on and paint has been daubed on capitals in very recent times and they are often misused in various ways (e.g. visitors hand coat hangers on them!) However much of the damage is due to natural causes and the splitting away of stone because of movement or damp, or because stones have been used against the natural grain of the stone. The first photographs of the carvings, which are preserved in the Minster Library, show the carvings much as they are now. For several years an important [conservation programme](#) has been carried out in the Chapter House.

Almost certainly the Chapter House would have been painted and would have been a riot of colour. There are small traces of paint left even today. •

(N.B. There is still plenty of material to come, but see also the [Guide book to the Chapter House](#) and also "The Leaves of Southwell by Nicholas Pevsner)

WINDOWS

The Chapter House was without glass throughout the Commonwealth period.

Most of the glass is plain but there are fragments of medieval glass arranged within the plain. Most of these are from the 14th - 15th centuries, though some areas late as 18th century. They come from the nave, Gonalston Church, Annesley Church and other churches. Some of these fragments show the arms of Eleanor of Castille, wife of King Edward I who was on the throne at the time when the Chapter House was built. For full details of these fragments see "The Stained Glass of Southwell Minster" by John Beaumont

The six-sided table in the centre of the Chapter House conceals a radiator. The tabletop is an old tester board (sounding board) from the pulpit in Gedling Church The words around it read:

"ff thou chance for to find a house built to thy mind without thy cost, serve thou the more God and the poor, then my labour's not lost."

There is also a small Jacobean walnut table which is used by the Chapter. (This is not always in the Chapter House).

THE FIVE CHAPELS

Four of the chapels are an integral part of the quire, being at the eastern end of the north and south quire aisles and in the two small eastern transepts. The style is Early English. It should be noted that where the pillars come at outside corners, the size and number of the slender columns is different from the main pillars in the quire. (Some of the bats roost in the narrow gaps between these columns).

THE CHAPEL OF CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The Early English, southeast transept of the quire forms a small chapel which is currently known as the Chapel of Christ the Light of the World. In the past it has also been known as The Blessed Walter Hilton Chapel and as the Southwell Saints Chapel. It was possibly the site of one of the early Chantry Chapels.

The roof is vaulted, and there is an aumbry cupboard niche in the east wall (this usually contains a floral display). There is also a double piscina in the south wall; (as early as the 9th century Pope Leo IX ordered that there should be a basin near each altar for the washing of hands and sacred vessels. In the 14th century it was decreed that there should be two basins, one for washing the priest's hands and another for washing the sacred vessels, but in the 15th century one basin again became the rule). In the south wall there is also a tomb niche. The sedilia built into the west wall has 3 seats, the rest of the space being taken up by a doorway to a spiral staircase. The prayer request board hides the door.

The chapel is dominated by the statue of [Christ the Light of the World](#), carved by Peter Ball in 1990; in 1992 Martin Stancliffe designed the wrought iron votive candle stand which surrounds the statue. The two plain chairs are used by the Archdeacons and the two 18th-century chairs by the Lord Lieutenant and his lady; the cushions on the latter were made for these chairs when they were in the old Airmen's Chapel, and they match the kneelers in the present Airmen's Chapel (qv). Two of the prayer stools are the Dean's property. The remaining chair, with the mitre, is popularly known as the Bishop of Sherwood's chair, but it is older than that post.

The two windows in the east wall are both by [Christopher Whall](#), one showing the Crucifixion, and the other St John's Vision on the Isle of Patmos. The two window lights in the south wall are of plain glass. The single window in the west wall, by [Burlison and Grylls](#), shows the Ascension of our Lord.

ST OSWALD'S CHAPEL

This chapel is situated at the east end of the south quire aisle. It is dedicated in honour of [St Oswald, 10th century Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York](#), not of King Oswald of Northumbria. The chapel has a very small aumbry and a small, projecting single piscina in the south wall. There are traces of paint on the wall above these.

The windows are all by [Kempe](#). Those in the east wall show the Adoration of the Shepherds; those in the south wall the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and the Boy Jesus talking with the Doctors in the Temple.

The reredos, by Caroe, is of bleached oak; it was painted and gilded in 1990 at the expense of [Mr Eric Freckingham](#). John Piper designed the red frontal that is on the altar for most of the year. The symbol of the raven holding a ring in its beak is thought to symbolise power and kingship and is therefore the symbol for St Oswald, King of Northumbria!

The credence table is by Thompson, with an incised mouse.

The kneeling benches were given in memory of John Haxley, Canon of Norwich, who was at the Minster from 1883 to 1900.

The red kneelers were designed by the Right Reverend Dennis Wakeling, seventh Bishop of Southwell, and were embroidered in 1982 by a group of ladies led by Mrs Josephine Wakeling, the Bishop's wife.

THE AIRMEN'S CHAPEL

Situated at the east end of the north quire aisle, this chapel has been suggested as the site of the Chantry chapel founded by Richard Sutton in 1283 and dedicated in honour of St Peter and St Paul. It was also, possibly, the site of Archbishop de Corbridge's tomb. There is an aumbry space in the north wall and a double piscina set into the east wall of the chapel. All the windows are by Kempe. Those above the altar illustrate the Annunciation and those on the north side the Adoration of the Magi.

This Chapel has been known as the Airmen's Chapel since 1984 when it was dedicated on Sunday 11th March: until then all of the furnishings were in the north-transept chapel, site of the present Pilgrims' Chapel. The altar was made at Coal Aston Aerodrome (Norton Woodseats), near Sheffield, home of No.33 Squadron, as a memorial to the men of that station who had died in the First World War. It was given to the Minster in 1919. Made from wood taken from aircraft that crashed in France during the War, the panels are made from broken propeller blades, the cross from the cylinders, (and, no longer in the Minster, the vases from the aluminium, and the plates from the copper used in aeroplanes). When the Airmen's Chapel was situated in the chapel off the east side of the north transept there used to be a notice that read:

"This altar was presented, by the permission of the Air Ministry, to the Bishop of Southwell for preservation in the Cathedral, as a memorial to those members of the Royal Air Force in the Norton Camp, near Sheffield; who sacrificed their lives in the Great War 1914 - 1919.

The Altar, with all its ornaments, is unique as symbolic of sacrifice. It was designed and made in the repair sheds of the aerodrome, and is composed from fragments of aeroplanes which had been shattered in air battles in France. The panels are made from the broken propellers; the cross from the cylinders; the vases from the aluminium; and the plates from the copper used in aeroplanes.

The highly skilled mechanics at the Camp willingly made and gave this precious gift for use in the Church Hut until the Aerodrome was closed in 1919."

The oak kneeling desk was made at RAF Cranwell in 1926, £20 having been collected by the RAF to pay for it.

The chair by the kneeling desk was given in 1999 in memory of Murray John Townley. Known as "Tim" Townley, he had trained as a steward but was taken ill and died before he could be admitted to the Guild of Stewards. "Oakwood" of Chester made the chair. It has the RAF eagle symbol on the back and bears the inscription "In loving memory of Murray John Townley, 1926 - 1997. They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

The communion rail was made at RAF Newton in 1984. (It was made by Senior Aircraftsman Kim Tansley and Corporal Pete Milne, whose initials appear - quite unknown to the powers that be! - on the under side. Kim drafted the original design "on the back of a fag packet" before producing his official drawing. The CO paid £400 for the teak top, on which is carved the albatross design (not an eagle, according to the man who carved it, but see the entry on the [RAF!](#)) Most of the work was carried out at Newton, though a specialist at East Bridgford turned the legs). RAF Newton also replaced the silk ensign in 1984. In 2001, when RAF Newton was finally closed, the Minster was given the wooden eagle lectern from the chapel there.

The wooden plaque on the wall comes from the 12th Squadron HQ.

The carpet was given in 1941 by the comediennes Elsie and Doris Waters, who took a personal interest in the Airmen's Chapel, their brothers having flown with the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War and/or with the RAF in the second. They gave the carpet "in thanksgiving for the devotion and bravery of the RAF in the present conflict."

The kneelers were designed c.1962 by Professor Anne Morrell, and were embroidered by local ladies. The altar rail kneelers, the three designs on the small kneelers and the cushions on the two chairs that are now in the south eastern transept show aircraft wings and angels' wings. The aircraft wings (with the red, white and blue roundels) were researched in the Science Museum, and the Angel wings are based on the Sion Cope and other ecclesiastical embroideries in the Victoria and Albert museum. The thin black lines represent the airflow going round the wings and being stopped by them. Some of the kneelers can be put together so that these lines fit together jigsaw-wise.

The blue chairs in the chapel were a gift from the Community of St Laurence, brought from their Convent at Belper when the nuns moved to Southwell in 2001.

The [Peace Triptych](#) behind the altar was painted in 1988 by [Hamish Moyle](#) of the Little Gidding Community, and was inspired by Edith Sitwell's poem, *Still Falls the Rain*, which is written in the upper part of the closed panels. A miniature of the paintings, with the words of the poem on the back, can be seen at the altar rail.

[The Katyn Memorial](#) on the north wall of the chapel was installed in 1987 to commemorate the massacre of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest in 1940. An urn of earth from the Katyn Forest has been placed in the wall behind the memorial. The stone was designed by architect Ronald Sims and is a very fine example of modern lettering. A Polish flag hangs on the wall beside the Royal Air Force Ensign. On the first Saturday in May each year the Polish Association come to the Minster for a service of remembrance and the Katyn Memorial forms a focal point for the laying of wreaths.

Beside the Katyn Memorial there is a much older memorial stone tablet to William Talbot. The lettering on this is also considered to be a very fine example of lettering from its time and style.

In his book "Here's a church - let's go in", Provost Coneybeare wrote a paragraph about the Airmen's Chapel. When he wrote about it, it was situated in the north transept chapel, but most of the furnishings were the same ones we see today, though the flag has been replaced.

"There is another war memorial in the Minster: to airmen everywhere, who gave their lives in the two wars. An ancient chapel has been set apart for that purpose. It came about in this way. There was an aerodrome in this Diocese where the planes that crashed on the Western Front during 1914 - 1918 were brought so that the material might be used again. The Chaplain had a small chapel, and skilled artisans pieced together bits of broken propellers (they were made of wood in those days) and made a small altar. The designer was a member of St John's College, Oxford, and so he followed the lines of the altar which Archbishop Laud had placed in his College Chapel in the reign of Charles I. When the aerodrome was closed, the Air Ministry offered it to Bishop Hoskyns, who had consecrated it, and so it found a permanent home at Southwell. Shortly after this the cadets at Cranwell gave a prayer desk. During the last war the Misses Waters, of broadcast fame, gave an air-force blue carpet, bearing the Air Force arms and badge "Per Ardua ad Astra", made by a disabled man in the Birmingham School. At the close of the war the airmen from Hucknall presented a banner in memory of their comrades. It is a unique and holy place."

(See also some notes in the History section)

ST THOMAS'S CHAPEL

This small chapel is situated in the northeastern transept. It was possibly the site of the first Chantry Chapel, founded in 1241 by [Robert de Lexington](#) and dedicated in honour of St Thomas the Martyr (Thomas Beckett). While some people still regard this chapel as named for St Thomas of Canterbury, most think of it as the chapel of St Thomas the Apostle.

There is an aumbry in the north wall, and a double piscina in the east wall, while the west wall forms a five-seated sedilia. All of the windows are by Kempe: those on the east side show the Visitation, those on the north show the Flight into Egypt, and those on the west side illustrate the First Miracle at Cana. A photograph exists of a tomb in the north wall. The chapel was at one time used as a vestry.

This chapel is set aside for private prayer and the Sacrament is reserved in the aumbry. The sanctuary lamp was given in memory of Canon Leeper and Mrs Olive Weil made the aumbry curtain in memory of Canon Ernest Weil. The altar, with its frontals and ornaments, along with the altar rails and blue carpet came from the Chapel in the Convent at Belper, and were given in 2001 by the Community of St Laurence when they moved to Southwell. The Credence table was given in 1926 in memory of Mrs E.A.Merryweather. The Friends of Southwell Minster gave the blue curtain.

This chapel was also known, for a time, as the Girls' Chapel because the cross and candlesticks here then had a red design, while the cross and candlesticks in the Boys' Chapel on the other side of the church were blue.

THE PILGRIMS' CHAPEL

This chapel, down the steps on the east side of the north transept, was built shortly after the quire and replaced the Norman apsidal chapel circa 1260. (The semi-circular markings on the floor just inside the door show the position of that apse and the thickness of its walls). The striking Norman arch from the transept has been divided by two pointed arches of unequal size rising from an early English pillar that is not centrally placed. Entrance to the chapel is gained, these days, through the smaller of these arches. A wooden screen, the lower part of which was designed by Caroe, fills the larger arch. The top part of the screen was designed by Ronald Sims and made by Houghtons of York in 1984; it was delivered the day before the Queen came! (When the old part of the screen was dismantled a penciled message was found: "This screen was erected by G.Arterton and B.Hollis, May 1904 for Cornish and Gaymer, North Walsham, Norfolk).

Although the arch leading to the Chapel is so unevenly divided, once inside the chapel it becomes clear that the pillar is at the centre of the new chapel which is divided into two equal sections with equal vaults. On each side of the chapel there is an aumbry and a piscina, suggesting that it was at some time used as two, undivided, chapels. These were probably [chantry chapels](#), possibly dedicated to St Nicholas and St Stephen. The windows are 14th century replacements, and are not identical; two have three quatrefoils at the top and the third has one quatrefoil and two trefoils. The glass in the window in the north wall is by Nicholson and is a memorial to Major John Pickard Becher who died in France in 1916; a full description is available. Near the east wall at the south side of the chapel consecration crosses can still be seen in a stone on the floor; possibly the top of a medieval stone altar. Graffiti have been scratched onto the north side of the east wall.

Now a chapel for private prayer, this chapel has, at various times, been the Choir School, the Library (with entrance where the strong room is now) and a Vicars' vestry. On October 2nd 1919 it became the Airmen's Chapel, fitted out by the RAF Camp at Norton, Near Sheffield, which, being in the County of Derby, was then in the Diocese of Southwell. Bishop Hoskyns dedicated it in the name of [St Eadburgh](#). It was dedicated as the Pilgrims' Chapel in 1984. The modern furnishings were designed by Ronald Sims and made by Houghton's; the chairs (and the altar which is now used in the nave) were made in 1984 and the present six sided altar in 1988. The Greek words Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy) are carved round the top of the altar, and the Chi Rho symbol (XP, the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ) are carved into the front panel. Above the altar hangs a corona which mirrors the shape of the altar, and a three dimensional cross and crown of thorns. The chair by the door was made in the 19th century in Ottery St Mary, Devon, and was given to the Minster by Canon Bailey; the words "Mecum Habita" mean "He lives in me." The picture on the north side of the entrance is of St Catherine and is said to have come from the former Chapel of St Catherine, Westhorpe. The statuette of the Holy Family was sculpted by Cecilia Webb in memory of the parents of Dr Mary Elliott of Cropwell Bishop. Mr & Mrs Coleman from Melton Mowbray modelled for Mary and Joseph and their son Bruce was the model for the child Jesus; Mr Bruce Coleman, now living in Surrey, still visits the Minster occasionally. The green kneelers with designs of ivy and oak were made in Grimsby by a group of embroiderers, one of whom was sister to Mrs Edna Dixon.

[The Tapestry](#) on the south wall is the work of Mrs Geraldine Brock and was given by the Nottinghamshire Constabulary on 13th May 1990 to commemorate 150 years of policing in the County. As it hangs in the Pilgrims' Chapel and is the gift of the police force the design reflects the two themes of pilgrimage and policing. A full description is available.