

This brief account of the Minster's story is primarily about the people - the people who were responsible for building it, the people who have served it, and the people who have worshipped here over the centuries. Of course it only scratches the surface, for there are countless people whose life stories are worth hearing, and many more who have left just a tiny mark which helps to bring history alive for us. All I have done for this morning is to string together just a few of the quotations, gathered from all manner of sources, some reliable, some perhaps less so (see note at end) which lead us through the years.

The early history of the Church here is uncertain. We don't know if the Romans who lived at the villa beyond Vicars Court were Christians or not, and if they were we don't know what happened in the post Roman era. Tradition has it that St Paulinus visited Southwell and founded a church here when he was preaching in the vicinity - a tradition which is upheld by the stained glass in the O'Connor window by our font, and the Paulinus story is also honoured by the carvings on our Bodley pulpit in the nave. But that he came here is a tradition only, even though, according to the Venerable Bede, a priest named Deda had told him that:

"a certain old man told him that he had been baptised at noon by Bishop Paulinus, in the presence of King Edwin, together with a great crowd of people, in the river Trent, near a city which the English call *Tiowulfingacaestir* (now thought to be Littleborough). He also used to describe the appearance of Paulinus: he was tall, with a slight stoop, black hair, a thin face, a slender aquiline nose, and at the same time he was both venerable and awe-inspiring in appearance".

He sounds very Italianate.

"He had also a deacon named James associated with him in the ministry, a man of zeal and great reputation with both Christ and the church, who survived right up to our days".

After the death of King Edwin of York at the battle of Hatfield Chase, Paulinus returned to Kent taking Queen Ethelburga and her children there for safety, and leaving James to continue his work. James was not only saintly, but he was very skillful in church music, and after peace had been restored to the kingdom he:

"began to instruct many in singing after the manner of Rome and the Kentish people".

As the choir display downstairs (i.e. in the Great Hall) suggests, it is nice to imagine that, if Paulinus had set up a church in Southwell, there may have been people here singing to James' instructions. However, that is all speculation, and the earliest mention of singing in this church does not occur until the church statutes of 1248 which order that:

"the clergy who are to sing should look at the order book for instructions, and should look over their parts beforehand, and also sing without books".

The first definite mention of Southwell comes in 956 (the date is disputed but that seems to be the generally accepted one) when the young King Edwy (or Eadwig), who was only 15 or 16 at the time, made a grant of lands to the then Archbishop of York, Oskytel. By the way, do look up the life of King Edwy sometimes - it was a short one but a gay one!. The grant began:

" I, Edwy, King of the English, concede to my beloved Bishop, Oskytel, in inheritance, part of my land at a place called Southwell, twenty hides with pasture, meadows, woods and all things great and small belonging thereto". Then follows a description of the boundaries.

Presumably Archbishop Oskytel built a Saxon church, a Minster Church, on this land. His successors were fond of the place and spent a great deal of time here, Archbishop Kinsius giving the church two bells, and Archbishop Eldred, the last of the Saxon Archbishops, establishing prebends and buildings refectory for the pretendants. At some stage, too, this must have been a place of pilgrimage, for a list of Saxon Saints, dated 1014 states that:

"then rested St Eadburgh in the Minster at Southwell, near the water called the Trent".

According to Provost Coneybeare, Eadburgh was the only Saxon lady to be canonised. Thought to be the daughter of King Adwulf, King of East Anglia, Eadburgh was a friend of St Cuthbert and Abbess of Repton, where she died. Repton being South of the Trent and in the war torn Mercia, her bones were brought to Southwell for peace and quietness. (It is worth mentioning that Richard Beaumont thought that St Eadburgh's tomb might have been in Paulinus' church which preceded the Saxon one - if, indeed, there was such a building).

Archbishop Eldred died in 1069. Next in line came Archbishop Thomas I, (Thomas of Bayeux) who spent most of his time rebuilding the church at York, which had been severely damaged during William I's harrying of the north, and reorganising the Chapter there which had been scattered. Archbishop Gerard followed him and he died very suddenly, in the garden of his palace in Southwell. His attendants found him with a book which they took to be about the forbidden art of astrology (it may well have been innocent astronomy), but fearing witchcraft they carried his body to York in disgrace, allowing people to throw rubbish at it on the way, and he was buried outside the church there, and only after many years was he reburied inside.

Then came Archbishop Thomas II who decided to improve Southwell. Soon after his appointment he wrote the following letter:

"Thomas by the Grace of God to all his parishioners of Nottinghamshire, greeting; in the blessing of the Lord, we pray you as most beloved sons, that in remission of your sins you will help by the blessing of your alms towards the building of the Church of St Mary in Southwell. And whosoever in the least degree shall give the smallest assistance, shall be to the end of time, a participator in all the prayers and blessings which shall be done in that and all our other churches. And this ye ought to do more willingly, that we release you from the need of visiting each year the Church of York, as all our other parishioners do; but instead you shall visit the Church of Southwell, and there have the same pardon that you have at York".

Can you imagine what a relief it must have been to the people of Nottinghamshire not to have to trudge up to York? It's bad enough now, with slow trains and crowded motorways, but with poor roads and only horse transport or shanks' pony, it must have been a real hard slog. Imagine, too, the great wonder it must have been for ordinary people who for the most part lived in tiny cottages to see this great building rising in their midst.

But it wasn't finished yet. Or, rather, almost as soon as it was, Archbishop Walter de Grey, a great builder of churches, decided that Southwell Minster was not large enough for the increasing number of canons and officials, and he ordered the pulling down of the Norman Quire and the building of a glorious Early English structure. Henry III was on the throne at the time and he gave the timbers for the roof; his head appears on the next pillar to the one with the carving of the Archbishop, though why the masons chose to carve a devil or a jester immediately above his head gives scope for conjecture.

Still in the reign of King Henry III, Robert de Lexington, a canon of this church, founded two chantries at the altar of St Thomas the Martyr, and they were founded

"for the health of his own soul and those of his ancestors, for the souls of King John, of Brian de Insular, of his father, mother, brothers, sisters, parents, friends, parishioners, all his benefactors, and for all the faithful departed; and also for all the living for whom he was in any way obliged to pray, or of whom he had ever received anything, either willingly or against their wills".

He seems to have covered everyone! To pay for this privilege Robert gave to the Chapter of Southwell some lands in Barneburgh, near Doncaster, together with the church there; and there were copious instructions as to how the income from them was to be used:

"for augmenting the divine worship in that church (the Minster), and the sustenance of two Priests, two Deacons and two Sub-deacons, to minister in their order, and to follow the choir as Vicars

according to the order of Archbishop Walter, dated at Oxton, in the twenty-sixth year of his Pontificate; and likewise to pay half a mark, yearly, to find lights, ornaments, and other necessities for the said altar; and to find twenty-seven pounds of wax to make one light for the great altar and thirteen pounds to make two, to burn on the day of his passion and translation, and otherwise as occasion shall require".

Robert de Lexington also founded a third chantry at the same altar "in the new work", for much the same purposes, but the instructions which went with this one included the instruction that "the priest who did the service was sometimes to read and sometimes to sing, whichever excited the most devotion".

Archbishop John le Romaine went one better and built on a Chapter House, which was to become famous throughout the world. He was also something of a disciplinarian and he set to work reforming the somewhat lax ways of some of his canons, and raising money at the same time. His decree of 1288 reads:

"For the levying of the arrears of the subsidy appointed for the construction of the Chapter House at Southwell, and for sequestration of the Prebends of those who do not pay. To the Chapter at 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 a levy of 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 the defaulters who have not paid the subsidy by the following Easter.

In another decree dated 13th January 1294 John le Romaine ordered that the Prebendal houses of the foreign canons be repaired within a year. Failure to comply would result in heavy fines, which would be used towards the building of the Chapter House.

I said that John le Romaine was something of a disciplinarian: he dealt with the Vicars Choral as well, and in 1293 decreed that they were:

"forbidden to have any female waiters but those who ages exempt them from all suspicion of amorous inclination"!

The pulpitum, or choir screen was the last major building work, in the mid 14th century, and the masons covered it with the heads of the famous and the infamous, with angels, animals and grotesques. It is still a joy to behold. Provost Heywood, when he was writing his guide book for the Minster looked at it through the eyes of a mason - perhaps the one who carved the man scratching his thigh - and wrote the following verse:

"Tom had a girl with a snuggly chin,
Bill had the devil for next of kin;
We're all the same when it comes to sin
So let's all go on to the screen:
Jane and Tom and Bill and me,
With some of our bastards out on a spree;
Crop and chisel - at least we're free
To put what we think on the screen."

In the Minster library there is the White Book which contains mainly charters, grants and letters, and also the Chapter Register from 1469 - 1547, which gives a full record of the life of the Minster during those years. It gives us quite an insight into the lives of the people of the day - not all saints by any means. Every three years the Chapter held a visitation to review the conduct and performance of the junior members of the Collegiate Church; they heard complaints and offered corrections and punishments for misdeeds. The junior members were the Vicars Choral, the Chantry Priests and the

Choristers. Already by 1291 there is a record of 16 Vicars Choral and 6 choristers. There were also 13 Chantry priests who served the 9 chantry altars and they also augmented the vicars choral. The vicars choral acted as rulers of the choir, as organists and as master of the choristers and they had dwellings in the area of the present Vicars Court; Richard de Chesterfield paid for a quadrangular college to be built for them there in 1349. The Chantry Priests lived in a house on Church Street, approximately where the shop and visitors centre now stand. So, what does the Chapter Register tell us about them?

In 1475 Ledenbam was a common frequenter of the taverns, while, John Bull, since Christmas last, frequents Agnes Saynton, seen leaving her garden at 1st peal for Mattins.

In 1477 the vicars choral were told not to wear daggers in town, and to keep the peace.

In 1478 "Gregory shirks choir to attend wine sales, he says to buy for church purposes"; though there is also a record that Bull, who "slept twice at Mattins this week" has never been corrected for beating Gregory in the cemetery. Sledmyr keeps a school of dice and backgammon in his chamber. The rulers of the choir are warned not to come late and not to loll about in the stalls. And Cartwright and Lane were suspended for striking one another in the churchyard, one with a dagger, the other with a club.

In 1481 Berkeley has indecently long hair.. and sleeps at Mattins, while Sledmyr often plays backgammon for money during service time, and he also plays at ball during service time.

In 1484 Gregory is in trouble again and is warned a third time because he spends more time in taverns than in choir. Webster also haunts the taverns, while Penreth hawks, hunts and catches moles during service time.

In 1495 there had been complaints that John Bagnall had been throwing stones at people's windows.

In 1503 it is recorded that "the choristers vestments are disgracefully torn, they don't dress properly, and they want a good whipping".

Everyone knows that Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who, among other posts, was Archbishop of York, was in Southwell in 1530. Having fallen out of favour with King Henry VIII and having lost everything, he came north and reached Southwell on the Thursday after Low Sunday. The Palace needed to be repaired so he stayed in the house of one of the non-resident prebendaries for 5 weeks until Whitsuntide. A pamphlet which was published six years later and which was quoted by Bishop Creighton gives an account of how he discharged his duties during his stay here:

"Who was Jess beloved in the north than my lord cardinal before he was among them? Who better loved after he had been there awhile? He gave bishops a right good example how they might win men's hearts. There were few holy days but he would ride five or six miles from his house, now to this parish, now to that, and there cause one or other of his doctors to make a sermon unto the people. He sat amongst them, and said mass before all the parish; he saw why churches were made; he began to restore them to their right and proper use; he brought his dinner with him, and bade divers of the parish to it. He inquired whether there were any debate or grudge between any of them. If there were, after dinner he sent for the parties to the church, and made them all one".

George Cavendish, his gentleman usher, speaks to a similar effect of his kindness to rich and poor, and his endeavours to patch up quarrels:

"He made many agreements and concords between gentleman and gentleman, and between some gentlemen and their wives that had long been asunder and in great trouble, and divers other agreements between other persons; making great assemblies for the same purpose, and feasting of them, not sparing for any costs, where he might make a peace and amity; which purchased him much love and friendship in the country".

That Whitsuntide people came from far and wide to see this fallen Prince of the Church, and to enjoy the sight of the processions and glorious worship and the synod. Less than two weeks later he was

woken in the night by the arrival of the King's emissaries, and having spent time talking with them and feeding them, he was still ready to sing a high mass in the Minster the next day, on the feast of Corpus Christi. He left Southwell a few weeks later, and was subsequently arrested; but he died on the journey back to London.

Of course, another thing which brought the crowds to Southwell that Whitsuntide was the continuing duty the people of Nottinghamshire had to make a pilgrimage here each year and to pay their dues, as Archbishop Thomas II had ordered in his letter of 1108. This continued for many years and has interesting connotations for today. Provost Coneybear wrote:

"Long years ago the people of Notts had to go to Southwell to pay their ecclesiastical dues, especially at Whitsuntide. They came in large numbers and were inclined to be unruly. So the Prebendaries decided to provide horse racing for them by way of entertainment along the road beside the Minster. Later they acquired a grass field half a mile away, which is still known as the race course. When about 1860, the railway was taken from Nottingham to Lincoln, a sporting company took over the racing, and bought a course three miles away at Rolleston. Being right on the railway it was much more convenient, but they called their meeting Southwell Races all the same. Now the hundreds of cars and buses dash past the Minster without a thought that it is to that sacred building they owe their pleasure. A curious instance of ecclesiastical development!"

These days we have the Gait to Southwell when Morris dancers from all over the county make their way to Southwell and present purses of coins (the Southwell pence of old times) at the church door before gathering inside for a brief service. This ceremony was revived in 1981. Morris dancing had been customary since at least 1530, when records show that the Borough council paid for the bells and coats of "ye morris dauncers" taking part in *The Gate to Southwell*, and for the ale they drank "at all times".!

Let's go back to our story. After Wolsey's time the Reformation was well underway. The personalities of that period make up a story in their own right, but they are not for today. Suffice it to remind you that the Chapter was disbanded and re-established by Henry; it was disbanded again under Edward VI. It was restored again by Queen Mary and the document with which it was re-established is interesting because it is headed not "Mary" but

"Philip and Mary, by divine grace King and Queen of Spain, England and Jerusalem".

Queen Elizabeth I confirmed the Chapter of Southwell's existence, and finally a properly recorded Act of James I made it secure - for a few years.

During this period and throughout the time of the Civil War in the following century, it wasn't only the clergy who were affected by all the changes. It must have been difficult for the people in the pews as their clergy came and went and came again, as they got used to bearing English instead of Latin, as forms of service changed several times between 1549 and 1662, and perhaps some of their clergy took wives.

In April 1603, King James VI of Scotland, now to be James I of England, passed through Southwell on his way to London. Like so many travellers of our own day King James

"was struck with surprize on beholding so large a pile of building as the Church in the centre of so small a town. One of his retinue observing that York and Durham were far more magnificent structures, James, who possibly estimated the value of any object according to the matter it contained, replied, rather peevishly, in his Scottish accent, "Vare wele, vare wele, but, by my blude, this kirk shall jostle with York or Durham, or ony kirk in Christendom".

As we have seen the Chapter was functioning again in Queen Elizabeth's time and there is a nice little entry which in 1596 records that ten of the day's youth were brought before the Chapter for trying to plough up the churchyard on Plough Monday: who says vandalism is a modern thing?

However, by September 1620 not everyone was happy with the way the Chapter were running things.

One Gervase Lee Esquire made no less than 14 complaints against the Chapter of Southwell Minster. These included church services being neglected, prebendaries not being in residence when they should have been, lack of hospitality, the catechism was not being taught on Sunday afternoons, and there were financial criticisms a-plenty - lands were being lost, properties demolished, rents were not being collected, the choir wasn't being paid, accounts were not being audited and the Vicars choral were being very shabbily treated. In addition, the church itself was not supposed to be in good repair. The Chapter defended themselves earnestly about all this. Read it all for yourselves! There is also an account of a libellous poem which Gervase Lee wrote about the canons - and that cost him £500 in the Court of the Star Chamber!.

Everyone knows how, later in the 17th century the Civil War raged around us and that King Charles I surrendered to the Scots at the Saracens Head. Everyone knows, too, the story of the young woman who was supposed to have been smuggled into the parvis room and then gave birth to a child there while the soldiers and their horses were garrisoned in the Minster below. The Chapter was dispossessed and its property was seized, as were the Archbishop's lands, and the palace was vandalised. After the Restoration the Chapter was reformed yet again by King Charles II; and work was begun on repairing the building. 6000 roofing tiles were bought, the steeple of the chapter house was repaired and the waterflashes were restored. Three men took at least 11 days to glaze the east window and the other windows were all done as well. The vestry was restored and new furnishings and plate were bought, and, of course, the font, which is clearly dated 1661. The vicars house and the prebendal houses also needed much repair.

Again there are Jots of 17th century people whose stories are well worth telling - Edward Cludd, Lancelot Andrewes and William Mompesson, to name but three, but sadly there is not time for them in today's programme.

Before things had been long back to normal came another upset - the great fire of 1711. Let us hear the contemporary accounts. Mark Keepe, clerk of the fabric of Southwell Minster made some notes about the fire and kept records of all his expenditure and details of all the work that was done. Of the fire he says:

"On Monday the fifth of November in the year one thousand seven hundred and eleven about ten o'clock at night, the top of the ball on the South Spire of this Collegiate Church of Southwell was fir'd by lightning which, back'd by a furious wind, that drove it almost directly upon the body of the church, in a few hours burnt down the spire and roof, melted down the bells and spa'd nothing that was combustibile saveing the North Spire, till it came to the Choire, where by singular providence it was stopt".

However it was one Richard Ingleman who may have been the singular providence. He had worked as a stone mason for the Minster for 47 years after which he applied to the Chapter for a pension, this strangely worded and unpunctuated quotation being part of the petition:

" ..In the time of the Fire when the South Steeple was on Fire that it fired the North Steeple which was seen by light in that Steeple so that Richard Ingleman went for longer ladders to raise the first window where he went up but could not get a pale in that window but dipt his hat in the water and so quenched that fire but the flames took hold on a great many small sticks brought in by jackdaws, which was very violent and afterwards quenched the floors and as soon as he had done that he found the end of the low roof on the North Ile on fire, next that steeple and so made way to bring water up stairs. So he broke a round window and threw water upon that roof so there was not above two or three spars burnt. Then he took the same ladder and carried it to the side of the Quire and raised it to the low Roof, and found no fire. Then he drew it up and raised it to the high Roof where by breaking through the roof we found a beam on ye Quire Roof on fire, so threw in water and quenched it, which could not be got to by any other way; so that if it had not been stopped by that means, it had surely burnt down all ye Roof "

Shortly after this the Chapter made a contribution towards the purchase of a parish fire engine!

There had been no Chantry priests since the Reformation period and the number of Vicars Choral was

down to six. These still seemed to be men of independent spirit. Mr William Neep, who was also the schoolmaster, was admonished for neglect of the boys. Mr Bugg often came home late at night and made a scene to get in. On one occasion he and a companion broke a lock, and **he was** admonished for it he challenged the Archbishop's right to make the ruling about them being indoors at a respectable time. He took a gate off its hinges and **filled** a lock with lead shot. Eventually, after he had asked workmen to unblock a bricked up doorway in his house, he was expelled, and even then he would not hand over the key! In 1736 three of the vicars choral refused to live in their proper houses at all (one of them was actually living in Yorkshire). But the houses were getting into a deplorable state and funds were raised to rebuild them. That was not done until 1779 and you can still see them in Vicars Court.

Vergers have always played an important role in church worship, using their verge, or wand to clear the path through unruly crowds to allow processions through. Records of our vergers go back to 1787, but there is a music manuscript of 1747 which contains this verse:

"He bore the verge, poor man, while he was able
Then laid it down upon the vestry table.
And now grim death has maimed his feeble legs.
Old Charles has taken his gown down from the pegs.
He reached the heavy age of eighty two
And then (God rest him) bade the world adieu".

Here is a sad story from the 10th July 1792:

"Thomas, the son of Mr Edward Bucklow, a fine boy of nine years of age, one of the choristers, in attempting to climb into the last window in the lower tier on the south side of the choir, next to the altar, the sole, a very ponderous piece of oaken timber, which he had taken hold upon, gave way, and falling with him to the pavement, killed him on the spot".

Although the Archbishop's palace had gone, the Archbishop continued to act as Visitor at the Minster and his coming was a great occasion which sometimes went on for a month or two and needed a great deal of preparation. The Journals of the George Hodgkinsons record some interesting snippets about one visitation, part of which reads:

"17th June. The Archbishop confirms here today. Walked down with my father and Mr Banks to the church this morning, when we had a very crowded congregation. The Archbishop did not attend, through his indisposition, either the morning or afternoon prayers. Dr Heathcote gave us an excellent discourse which was aimed at the Dissenters in general and particularly against Mr P... The Archbishop came to the church before 1 when he confirmed near 600 which he finished by ½ past 1"

That was pretty good going for someone who was indisposed, though he was well enough to dine at the Residence later.

And another sad story:

"April 2nd 1807. Easter Thursday, a melancholy catastrophe attended the celebration of a marriage in the church of Southwell; Robert Barlow Cook, a young man 27 years of age, had, for some years, paid his addresses to a female of the name of Sarah Sandaver; their union had been protracted from time to time, on account of his declining state of health; being at length arrived at the last stage of a consumption, and his case considered absolutely hopeless, he this morning determined upon attempting a marriage. Being with great difficulty raised from his bed, and after much trouble, clothed, he proceeded, supported by the arm of his intended brother-in-law, to the church; his rallied spirits supported him tolerably well throughout the ceremony; the Priest closed the book; but, before he could make the usual entry in the register, he sank on the floor and instantly expired

Nothing to do with the Minster itself, except that, once again it happened as part of the Whitsuntide festivities, a celebrity came to town:

"May 1th 1808, Mr Daniel Lambert, a native of Leicester, on his tour through the country, exhibited himself at Southwell; he appeared in good health and spirits, though he had attained the enormous weight of 50 stones or 6¼ cwts. His dissolution happened at Stamford a short time afterward".

The eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century were times when some of the wealthy had a concern for the poorer folk, and, as the charity boards in the Minster show they gave sums of money, land or property, the income from which would pay for doles of cash, bread or clothing, or for education. I particularly like the practicality of providing for ten poor children to learn reading, knitting and sewing, and also the charity, which provided six poor persons with a coat - provided that the same person did not have a coat more often than once in three years. The note at the foot of the board in the south transept is interesting too. It reads:

"N.B. the above sums, viz. of Four Hundred, Two Hundred, and Fifty Pounds, are reduced by the Legacy Duty, to Three Hundred & Sixty, One Hundred and Eighty, and Forty Five Pounds" and it is signed by the vicar and 4 Churchwardens. They obviously wanted to be perfectly open about the money they had available and were taking no risks that someone might say accusingly "They aren't spending all that money they were given you know: What's happening to the rest of it?"

By 1840 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had decided that Southwell should no longer be a collegiate church under the Archbishop, and all of the Chapter's property and land were taken over by them, going to help to finance the new dioceses of Manchester and Ripon. Only one voice was raised in protest - that of William Gladstone, then the brilliant young MP for Newark. He foresaw that the money might be needed for a new diocese centred on Southwell. Nevertheless the Minster came out of the arrangement fairly well as an Act of Parliament bound the Commissioners to maintain our fabric, and that they certainly did very well for many years.

As in the earlier centuries, lots of names stand out as worthy of notice: Sir Richard Kaye who gave the Newstead Lectern, Sir Henry Galley Knight who brought us the 16th century Flemish windows, the Revd. John Thomas Becher who, among many other things, was responsible for the Southwell Workhouse which we see being restored today, Ewan Christian with his brilliant restoration work, and Dr. George Ridding, first Bishop of Southwell. But let us look at some of the more humble people. In 1876 some parishioners wrote a long letter to the Commissioners, and one paragraph describes what it had been like worshipping in the church before they took over:

"The congregation was compelled to assemble in the nave, which for a considerable time was carpeted only with cocoa-nut matting in a decaying and offensive condition; and which until quite recently was ill-lighted and insufficiently heated; and where, in the absence of all seats, except a few chairs belonging to a local choral association, the inhabitants of Southwell had each to bring his own chair while the poor sat on the stone benches." There is a lot more in that vein, but I love the picture of everyone carrying their chairs to church!

Spare some thoughts for the mason John Gregory and his labourer and assistant who worked a ten hour day for many years, working on all parts of the church. Gregory was described as the best and cleverest of masons and the most vigilant and active in all matters relating to the fabric. He had devised and executed with his own hands every portion of the restoration and he was the only man who did not know his own value. He was never ill and would not permit anyone to be idle who worked with him. Poor John Cook, his labourer, at one time had the misfortune to have the iron bar from the west door fall on him (if you have ever lifted it you can guess what that would be like) and was off work for "a few days". In 1864, when they were working on the tower, an additional mason, a labourer and a stone cutter were employed too, and these were being paid 2d an hour more than Gregory and Cook. It was noticed and complaints were made and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners not only increased their wages but back-dated the payment by two months.

The other person who did such wonderful work at this time was Charles Henry Simpson, who worked as a wood carver for Cornish and Gaymer for more than 60 years. Our magnificent choir stalls with all their nature carvings are his creation. The variety of subject and the attention to detail is incredible. Some 50 years later Provost Coneybear's sister Dorothea wrote the following verse in

honour of Simpson and his work:

"I sometimes wonder which you loved the best:
The harvest mice, with tiny wheat-bowered nest,
The songster lark, arising from the clover,
The little wren, a-calling to its lover,
The chestnut from its prickly shell just glancing,
The butterfly so delicately dancing,
The airy sweet pea and the bullrush tall,
Fem, berry, leaf, you loved them all;
For love it was inspired the mind that planned,
The eye observant and the skilful hand,
And therefore, looking on your work, a thrill
Of love intensified uplifts us still.
Elsewhere in this dear Minster are we shown
Beauties of nature chiselled out in stone.
But here we think with reverent gratitude
Of you, who carved her loveliness in wood."

And so we move into the twentieth century which has no fewer saints and sinners amongst its clergy and officers and worshippers than we have seen in earlier times, but apart from some of the jolly little anecdotes we are perhaps a little too close to the characters to say too much about them. We will just remind ourselves that we acquired our first Provost in 1931, and, having been removed from the Province of York when we suffered the indignity of being pushed into the Lincoln Diocese in 1840, the Church Assembly agreed to us returning to the north in 1935. Things change all the time, as they have changed throughout all the centuries of the Minster's life. The Provost became a Dean last year, and we have a new Prayer Book for 2001. But whatever the place looks like, however we worship, whoever the people are, the basic reason for the Minster's existence is the same now as it was hundreds of years ago. Perhaps I will leave the last word, for us and for all the visitors we welcome, with Provost Heywood:

"No-one who sees Southwell forgets it. Many would hold it to be one of England's most beautiful buildings a fair place and the joy of the whole earth. Here is England epitomised. Here is a cathedral in a village. Here is a church 850 years old, speaking in its stones to the busyness of today. Here is one of the noblest examples of what our past has preserved for us, to be used in old ways and new to meet man's varied needs and to minister to his delight..... Here, behind the pageant and pomp of Archbishops and the press of politics, and the bickering of prebends, have lived and worshipped the men and women of an English village. And these stones embody not a grandeur remote from their common life, but their laughter and their desires, their enjoyment of forest and field, their awe and fantasy, their convictions, perplexed, and still, to some, perplexing, about the source of it all, and how they and all their surroundings are continually renewed and sustained. We can, if we will, atrophy all this with names - the technical names of theology and architecture or some varieties of history. But when we do so, we banish the persons who have quickened us here - that great company which no man can number, and the place may then lapse into being a mere museum, instead of a loved and loving borne, a treasure house, and a deep and inexhaustible well..... The music of the ages is echoing in these walls ... and you may find, as most do, that with the enjoyment there comes that which is beyond enjoyment, but which is never beyond your need".

Some people have asked me for the sources of the various quotations in this talk. I cannot give definitive sources for all of them as some have been culled from magazines and newspapers and the like over many years. Others are taken from old guide books (there are copies of the texts at the Information Desk), or parish magazines and stewards' Fact Sheets. Some of the books which I have referred to are: