

NEW FLAMES FOR MINSTER CHANDELIER

By Robert Sherlock

A puzzle needs to be recognised before it can be solved. That proved to be the case with the top of the brass chandelier that hangs above the lectern in the quire. It had to be asked why a male screw was added if it served no purpose and why an unsightly suspension-hoop was left exposed. Could it be that something, hiding the hoop and held in position by a female screw, was missing from the chandelier? Confirmation was provided by the evidence of five comparable chandeliers. All to a greater or lesser extent were cast from the same patterns as those used in casting the Minster chandelier, and in every instance the top includes an ornamental finial taking the form of five identical swirling tongues of flame. It was reasonable to assume that missing at Southwell was just such a finial.

Solution of the puzzle posed by the top of the Minster chandelier might have remained an academic exercise were it not for the unusual circumstances that occurred earlier this year. One of the five comparable **chandeliers was auctioned by Southeby's on 15 November 2005. It was not** offered for sale by any church. Instead it had been hanging in the spectacular Surrey mansion of American multi-millionaire, Frederick Koch. In December the chandelier passed into the hands of Harris Lindsay, West End dealers in works of art. They commissioned Peter Brazier of Marnhull, Dorset, to restore the chandelier, and so an opportunity arose to use its finial as a pattern from which to cast a replacement finial for the Minster chandelier. The opportunity was realised, but only because Harris Lindsay granted the necessary permission, because Peter Brazier possessed the necessary expertise and because the Friends were prepared to allocate the necessary funds. Now the crowning feature of the Minster chandelier is once more again a flame finial. There is no female screw, but in other respects the form of the previous finial has been perpetuated. Further puzzles have yet to be solved. An inscription on the Minster chandelier reads: BONI EX BOMS 1769. Those three words, if correctly interpreted, would probably reveal how in 1769 the chandelier came to be acquired. They might even settle the question whether it has always been at Southwell or whether it arrived at the Minster second-hand.