

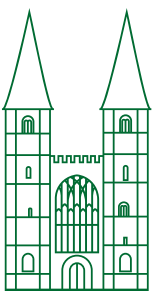


Pepperpots

Magazine of The Friends of Southwell Cathedral – issue 62, Autumn 2025



The Friends support the Minster's Flower Guild on a regular basis and gave an additional grant for the glorious displays seen at this year's Southwell Music Festival (article, page 5)



Southwell Minster – Established in Saxon times and a cathedral from 1884

Chairman's Welcome

Charlie Leggatt writes



High Table at the AGM; left to right Roger Wilson (Hon. Treasurer); Dean Neil; Bishop Paul; Charlie Leggatt (Chairman); Alison Salter (Hon. Secretary)

Welcome to the Autumn 2025 issue of Pepperpots. As ever, there seems a lot to report, I am glad to note! On Saturday 14th June we held our Festival and Annual General Meeting. The guest speaker in the morning was to have been Professor Veronica Pickering, the Lord-Lieutenant, but a last-minute family matter meant she had to step aside. Into the breach came Nora Senior, the Vice Lord-Lieutenant, who did us proud with an enthralling talk on her multi-faceted career in business, education and the charitable sector. It was a pleasure to listen to Nora and everyone attending was most grateful to her. The AGM in the afternoon was followed by another of Margaret Noble's excellent teas, and then it was Evensong – always the perfect ending to the day – where our preacher was the Canon Precentor, Richard Frith.

The Saturday before, 7th June, Emma Frith and the Needlework Guild put on a sale of their work in Trebeck, in aid of the Friends. This was hugely successful and very well attended. For those who could not make the day, Emma ran a 'pop up shop' in the Crossing during morning coffee on AGM day. This also benefited our funds, so enhancing the support we can give the Guild. The conserved Victorian processional banner (written about in earlier issues of Pepperpots) is now on display in the North Transept in a display case also funded by the Friends. An information panel to the side thanks us for our support of this project, which Emma oversaw.

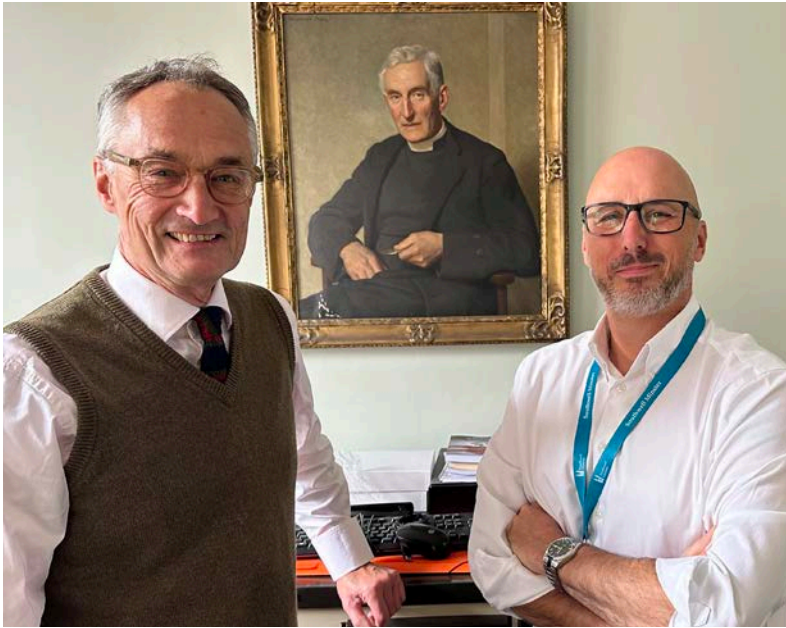
In the last issue, I noted I would give more detail on the grant support we plan for the Music Foundation. Your Council has agreed a grant of £30,000 from 2026 each year, for three years. It is our hope that this sum can be improved upon, but the prevailing financial climate - and other requests from Chapter - may



The Victorian processional banner now on display in the North Transept

dictate otherwise. In which regard, I wrote about the humbling legacy we are to receive from David Spencer, a former Lay Clerk. With an abundance of caution, common to professional executors, the lawyers acting for his estate are waiting the maximum period the law permits before distributing to the beneficiaries. This is to ensure no unexpected claim is made (and as I write, none has been, nor is any likely to be). The upshot is that the sum David left us - which likely doubles our existing portfolio - will not be received until just before Christmas. It then needs investing to become income-bearing (David's Will requiring us not to distribute the capital).





Charlie and Philip Morris meet under the watchful eye of Provost Coneybeare

Charlie and Pauline, with assembled Friends at Irnham church



In August, Chapter welcomed Philip Morris as the new Chief Operating Officer. I was delighted to meet with him and start a conversation of how, going forward, the Friends can best support Chapter in these difficult days.

By the time you receive this issue, our evening organ recital (3rd October) given by Jonny Allsopp, with participation from the Lay Clerks, will have taken place and I am going to anticipate that it will have been a splendid occasion, both erudite and jolly. Hopefully, Pepperpots will be with you before the Chairman's Reception (20th November) when we have afternoon tea followed by a talk on all the good things Henry VIII did for England's cathedrals. Both events are privately sponsored, so our charity's funds are not expended on social gatherings.

Pauline Rouse, Events Secretary, writes (page 11) about the marvellous visit she organised on

14th May to Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire, which was followed by a delicious lunch in the charming Griffin Inn at nearby Irnham. This was followed by a tour of the village's medieval parish church, famous as home church to the Luttrell Psalter of circa 1325/40 (British Library). I have a vested interest in the range of superlatives just employed, as Irnham is my home village and I am churchwarden.

At our AGM next year (13th June), we hold elections for a new Council of the Friends of Southwell Cathedral. These are the voting members who are trustees of the charity. Full details will be included in the Spring 2026 Pepperpots but, if you are interested in joining, I would be happy to have an informal chat to discuss the skill-sets which will help with our deliberations and decision making (contact details on the back cover). As I write, most of the present Council hope to seek re-election.

Gift Aid

Many thanks if you let us claim Gift Aid upon your subscription.

We need to remind you periodically that you must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the Friends of Southwell Cathedral reclaim on your contributions in the tax year.

Please inform us if you cease to pay tax at this level, or if you change your name or address.



Dean's Column

The Revd Canon Dr Neil Evans writes



I have a vague memory of singing Choral Evensong at Southwell Minster in the late 70s, on the way up north to a week's residence at Ripon Cathedral with a choir I then belonged to. Clearly, with hindsight, we got it wrong and should have stayed at Southwell! Just a year ago, Debbie and I came to the Festival Eucharist shortly after retiring to Bingham, with no inkling that I would soon be Interim Dean. A wonderful circle completed, I thought!

Music has been part of my life since childhood, from my father whistling HMS Pinafore off key, to singing in choirs and becoming steeped in the English Choral tradition. Music is so much a part of my faith that I have sometimes wondered what it would be like to live in a world without Bach. Enjoying the magnificent performance of the B Minor Mass at this year's Southwell Music Festival was therefore a real joy.

We are so fortunate here at Southwell Cathedral to have a world-class choir enriching our worship through term time, and a world-class Music Festival to crown our summer. And my time here as Interim Dean will be sandwiched between two Christmases filled with exquisite musical offerings.

The privilege of serving as Interim Dean has been profoundly enhanced by the joy of worshipping in the context of beautiful music. Yet I am also conscious of the hard work and the cost that make this possible. I have been struck by the very simple way we can contribute to our Cathedral music through the Milo Chorister Fund. The Friends have most generously contributed to this Fund corporately, and individual

members of the Friends have also shown great generosity, for which the Cathedral is very grateful.

As a supporter of the Chorister Fund, you are not only sustaining a great tradition but also shaping the future. Your generosity transforms the lives of young musicians, giving them world-class training, the chance to sing in one of the most inspiring buildings in the country, and the joy of sharing music with the thousands who join us in worship. Together, we ensure that this living tradition continues to inspire, uplift and enrich.

I end with words from one of my favourite pieces of English Choral music, Ralph Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs, words by George Herbert:

***Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,
my God and King.
The heav'ns are not too high,
His praise may thither fly;
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,
my God and King.***

***Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,
my God and King.
The Church with psalms must shout,
no door can keep them out;
But above all, the heart must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,
my God and King.***



The Milo Chorister Fund

The Cathedral Choristers play a vital role in keeping the musical tradition at Southwell Minster alive. The Milo Chorister Fund helps ensure every child has the chance to benefit from a unique musical education.

Your gift, whatever the size, makes a real difference – from £50, which covers a chorister's music lessons for a week, to £1,600, which supports a chorister for a whole year.

To donate, please visit www.southwellminster.org and click Donate at the top right. Cheques can be made payable to Southwell Cathedral and sent to: Milo Chorister Fund, The Minster Centre, Church Street, Southwell NG25 0HD.

For more details or to request a leaflet, please contact Ruth Massey at ruth.massey@southwellminster.org.uk, 07584 135640



The Flower Guild of Southwell Minster

Kathy Hocking writes

The Guild is a group of some sixteen enthusiasts who use their creative skills to produce arrangements in the Minster on a regular basis.

Some of us do have qualifications in Floral Art or Floristry - however this isn't mandatory, a love of using flowers and foliage artistically and a willingness to learn from others is what is required.

We meet annually in March to plan the rota for the year. I liaise with the Head Verger to prepare the calendar, which includes the extra events such as weddings, craft fairs and civic services. Members select dates depending on their availability.

Flowers are arranged weekly in the Nave, by the High Altar, next to the Madonna and, with a candle ring usually on the font, this completes the regular designs (except for Lent and Advent, of course). On special occasions in the Church's year, such as Pentecost and Harvest, a small team meet to plan colour schemes and

choose appropriate flowers and foliage. Flowers are purchased locally and, where possible, they are British grown.

Foliage is usually provided by the arrangers from their own gardens or from the Minster gardens. Claire Connely, the gardener, is always helpful with suggestions for what we can pick and her knowledge is invaluable.

Christmas and Easter are the highlights of the year when our beautiful Minster is decorated in traditional flowers and foliage by a large number of the team. Some artificial materials supplement the fresh flowers and at Christmas add a bit of sparkle!

Also, arrangements with a musical theme for the Southwell Music Festival in August sets us a challenge. These occasions allow for some individual creativity and a chance to socialise over coffee and seasonal refreshments.

The whole process of producing an arrangement is very time consuming! Foliage is cut one to two days in advance and placed in water for a good drink. Flowers are ordered then collected, or journeys made to markets or supermarkets to select suitable material. All placed in water and transported to the Minster usually on a Friday morning. Arrangements from the previous week are dismantled, containers made ready with foam and carried into position before a single flower is put in! This can take most of the morning. Throughout the week the arrangements need to be watered at least twice to ensure they last well.

However, all this time and effort is worthwhile when we receive so much wonderful feedback from the congregation and the general public, including visitors.

Members are encouraged to arrange without the use of floral foam by using deep containers and chicken wire. This reduces the amount of foam we use which at the moment does not readily decompose.

We really appreciate the generous funding from the Friends to enable us to produce the sizeable arrangements which enhance our magnificent building. Our members very much enjoy arranging in the Minster and, for me, it is a labour of love!

The Editor writes:

The Friends support the Flower Guild on a regular basis. We were delighted to make an extra donation of £500 to the Guild this year to support their efforts over the August Bank Holiday and Southwell Music Festival, when many will visit the Minster for the first time. The image, left, and that on the front cover, show how talented the team are.



The Remarkable Life of Saint Catherine of Siena: Mystic, Politician and Peacemaker

Theo Wilson writes



In an era where female religious influence was largely confined to the cloister, Catherine of Siena emerged as a public figure whose spirituality gave her a unique access to key political events of her age. Though her life spanned a mere 33 years, she was a pivotal player in the religious and political turmoil of the 1370s. This paper explores two defining aspects of her remarkable life: her practice of extreme religious fasting and her critical role in the papacy's return from Avignon to Rome in 1377.

The life of a saint

Born in Siena on March 25, 1347, Catherine of Siena came from a family of prosperous wool dyers who were part of the city's powerful merchant class. She was a twin, but her sister died in infancy—a loss that, according to her biographer, Raymond of Capua, profoundly shaped her early life.

From a young age, Catherine showed a deep devotion to God. She resisted her family's attempts to force her into an arranged marriage and instead, at 16, she joined the “*mantellate*”, a group of laywomen associated with the Dominican Order. For the next three years, Catherine lived in seclusion in her family's home, dedicating herself to prayer and religious vigils. According to the hagiography of her life, around 1366, she received a vision from Christ who instructed her to re-engage with the world. Following this divine command, she began her public ministry, which involved providing food and care for the sick and poor of Siena. Soon, she gathered a dedicated group of followers and supporters.

After 1373, Catherine's focus shifted to political and religious matters as her influence grew. She wrote letters to influential figures like Pope Gregory XI encouraging him to make a return to Rome and travelled extensively throughout Tuscany, using her growing reputation as a religious figure to promote peace and Church reform. In 1376 Catherine travelled to Avignon, then the seat of the papacy, as part of a diplomatic mission for the Republic of Florence and to persuade Pope Gregory XI to return the papacy to Rome. The Florentines had sought her intervention to negotiate peace with the Papal States after the Pope had placed them under interdict. She returned to Rome, and spent the last few years of her life there before dying in 1380. She was canonised by Pope Pius II as Saint Catherine in 1461 in recognition of her influence on the Church and the impact of her life and writings on the Church. Her written legacy includes over 300 letters, 26 prayers, and her spiritual treatise, *Il Dialogo dell Divine Providenza* (Dialogue of Divine Providence).

“Holy Feast and Holy Fast”: A Path to God

Catherine of Siena's religious practice was characterised by a severe and increasingly restrictive diet, a form of self-deprivation that was extreme even by medieval standards. This practice of bodily mortification—denying the body's needs for spiritual purposes—was a central part of her religious devotion and dedication to Christ. According to her biographers, she ate very little, often consuming only water, wild herbs, or stale bread.

For Catherine, this abstinence was a path to achieving spiritual “purity” and a way to imitate the suffering of Christ on the cross, a practice known as *imitatio Christi*. By enduring physical suffering, she believed that she was drawing spiritually closer to God. This was a common but intense form of religious expression for many holy women in the Middle Ages. Some historians like Caroline Bynum, in her book *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, have argued that women used these practices of self-denial not only to gain spiritual authority in a male-dominated world, but also to assert agency over their own bodies in a society where female autonomy was severely restricted.

Far from an isolated figure, Catherine of Siena exemplified a larger phenomenon of intense religious asceticism that flourished among medieval holy women, particularly within the Dominican Order, which seemed to attract such individuals. For example, Saint Agnes of Montepulciano (1268-1317), a Dominican prioress, was said to have fasted for 15 years on just bread and water. Catherine also had a deep devotion to Mary Magdalene, who was often depicted as a desert hermit living on prayer and minimal food. Regardless of how we view her practices today, in her own time, Catherine's extreme religious fervour and suffering were seen as a mark of her sanctity, enabling her to transcend social limitations and to exert a profound influence on the religious discourse of the era.

Catherine as a Political Mover and Shaker

Beyond her role as a mystic, Catherine was a remarkably effective political figure. She is famously credited with persuading Pope Gregory XI to move the papacy from Avignon back to its traditional seat in Rome in 1377, ending nearly 70 years of the “Avignon Papacy.”

Early accounts often portrayed her as an uneducated, divinely inspired woman. Recent scholarship, however, such as F. Thomas Luongo's *The Sainly Politics of Catherine of Siena*, presents a different picture. Luongo argues that Catherine was a politically astute woman who exercised a clear agency in pursuing her

... Continues on p. 8





Saint Catherine of Siena. The painting by Carlo Dolci of circa 1665 – 70 in the collection of Dulwich Picture Gallery, London (DPG 242). Avid readers of Pepperpots will recall that this was illustrated in our last issue and I had several requests to see it on a larger scale.



political goals. Her family, the Dodici, were part of Siena's powerful merchant guilds and had strong ties to the city's political factions. This background likely gave her the opportunity to be immersed in the inner workings of Italian politics. Catherine was also clearly literate and familiar with religious and secular works. Sources suggest that Catherine learnt to write by 1377 and that it was around this time she started dictating the "Dialogue" and her letters to political figures, most notably Pope Gregory XI.

Catherine's role in the Pope's return was not simply a matter of divine guidance, it was likely borne out of political necessity. The Avignon papacy had been accused of being heavily influenced by the French monarchy and was losing authority and territory over the Papal States in central Italy due to incursions of contadini. The Avignon popes, especially Clement V, were viewed as having abandoned their role as neutral, universal authorities to become partisan allies of France. This perception was fuelled by their practice of appointing French relatives to high office within the Papal court. Similarly, Clement's direct financial support for King Philip IV of France, which included facilitating the dissolution of the Knights Templar at the request of Philip and allowing him to seize their wealth, resulted in further accusations of partisanship. At the same time, Pope Gregory XI was engaged in the ongoing War of the Eight Saints (1375-1378) against Florence and other Italian city-states who were encroaching on papal territories in central Italy. The Pope needed to return to Rome to re-assert papal dominance in the region and to re-invigorate the papal military machine. Ultimately, the widespread perception that the papacy was a political pawn of France – along with the ongoing war in Italy – created an environment where Gregory XI's return to Rome was not a choice, but a political necessity to preserve his authority.

Catherine's arrival in Avignon was perfectly timed, providing the Pope with a perfect justification to return to Rome. Gregory could argue that he was following the will of God, as channelled through a revered mystic, rather than one borne out of political necessity. This would allow him to circumvent any potential reprisals from the French at their loss of influence over the papacy and add a boost to the military campaign through the implication that it was a divinely sanctioned act. Catherine of Siena, not no doubt knowingly, provided Gregory with a religious justification for a move that was, in reality, a political necessity. By leveraging her spiritual authority, she offered the Pope a way to bypass French political opposition and to frame his return as a divinely sanctioned act.

Conclusion

Catherine of Siena was a woman of extraordinary contrasts as an ascetic mystic who actively engaged in the secular world. Her intense religious fervour, expressed through her extreme fasting, gave her a unique authority and influence in a world where religious and secular life were deeply intertwined. By leveraging her spiritual reputation and political connections, she played a vital role in the great events of her time. Ultimately, her life stands as a testament to the power of a single individual to shape history, and her legacy continues to resonate today.

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The Thiman Collection at Southwell Minster

Guy Turner writes

Friends may or may not be aware that the archive for the twentieth century composer, Eric Thiman, is held in the Paul Hale Choir Library in the Archbishop's Palace. Here is a little information about Thiman, and how the Collection came to be housed in Southwell.

Eric Thiman (1900 – 1975) was an English organist, conductor, and teacher, a revered teacher at the Royal Academy of Music for over 40 years, as well as a prolific composer, especially for amateur performers and for

He composed music throughout his life and over 1,300 pieces were published...

the non-conformist churches. He composed music throughout his life and over 1,300 pieces were published – I have been so far unable to find any British composer to equal this number, though it has to be acknowledged that most of his pieces were short! For over forty years he was the organist, and occasional conductor, of the annual festivals of the Free Church Choir Union, mostly at Alexandra Palace. For all of his professional life he was a church organist, firstly at the Park Chapel in Crouch End, and then at the City Temple, Holborn (the

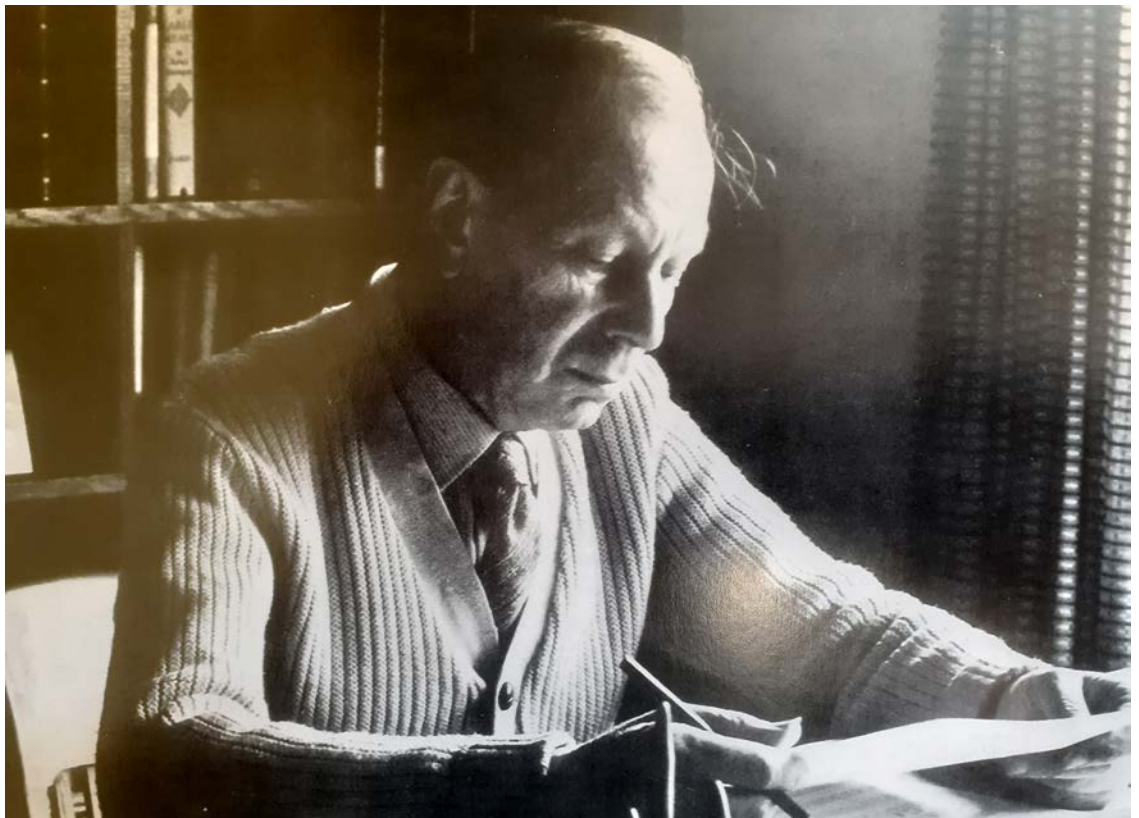
organ he designed for the City Temple, has recently been removed and is being reinstalled and restored as the new organ of Chicago Cathedral).

About twelve years ago, Thiman's niece, Frances, his nearest surviving relative and a Nottingham resident, approached Paul Hale (then Rector Chori) about the possibility of developing a Thiman Archive at the Minster, and that became possible as part of the Palace Heritage Lottery Project. As it happens, I used to sing in a choir for Eric Thiman when I was a student, and I came on board to put the archive together. The Collection was launched in 2014. Much of his music and memorabilia had been passed by Thiman's widow to his friend and protégé, Gerald Barnes, and this proved the basis from which we build the collection. We now have 1277 of his compositions (with quite a few still to find) in the Collection, as well as many books, letters, photos, concert programmes and posters etc.

More details about the collection, including a half hour talk, and links to much of his music, can be found here: www.southwellminster.org/eric-thiman-collection/

Guy is archivist of the Thiman Collection.

He was a Minster Lay Clerk from 2008 to 2024 and is now Secretary of Southwell Minster Choir Association (SMCA), our sister charity in support of Southwell Minster



Garry Humphreys (1946-2025)

A tribute by Garry's widow, Linda, and daughter, Rhiannon

The Editor writes:

I was saddened to learn of the death earlier this year of Garry Humphreys, a member of the Friends for forty-four years. Garry was proactive, emailing me with thoughts and suggestions. In my home church, we use a particular prayer regularly, but nobody knew what it was – it was simply rather lovely for a rural parish. I published it in the Spring 2021 issue of *Pepperpots* and Garry swiftly unlocked the mystery, identifying it as a Suffolk prayer for those who travel.

Garry Humphreys (1946-2025), a Friend of Southwell Cathedral since 1981, sadly died on 7th May 2025, four months after being diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. He was a professional baritone, freelance writer and reviewer, researcher and chartered librarian.

Garry was born in Nottingham and brought up in Hucknall, in the diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. He began his library career in Nottingham and worked at Nottingham Commercial and Technical Library under Malcolm Stacey. In 1969 he joined the Corporation of London, working in the City Business Library, eventually heading it as City Business Librarian. In 1998, he was awarded the Library Association's Centenary Medal, for 'outstanding contribution to and achievement in library work'.

He was a librarian for thirty-nine years, but his main passion was music, and he had a second career as a professional baritone which his library career helped him sustain.

Garry gave over sixty years of his life to singing in church choirs, starting aged eight at his local parish church of St Mary Magdalene, Hucknall. During this time, he enjoyed visits to Southwell Minster for its services, music, and architecture, and considered ordination.

As an adult, he became a member of the Nottingham Harmonic Society, which sometimes performed at Southwell Minster, singing Verdi's Requiem there in 1969, accompanied by the orchestra of the Royal Academy of Music.

After moving to London, Garry sang in the choirs of a number of London churches, including as Lay Clerk at Southwark Cathedral; and deputising at St Paul's Cathedral. He appeared as a soloist in concerts, recitals and broadcasts, and as a member of various professional ensembles. Later, he sang with the choir of Christ Church, Southgate, and was delighted to return to Southwell in 2011 when Christ Church sang as a visiting choir.

Garry studied conducting and was greatly influenced by Adrian Boult's conducting style, having corresponded with Boult since he was a schoolboy, initially to ask him to be the President of the music society at the Henry Mellish Grammar School in Bulwell. He met Boult several times, including when he conducted a concert at Southwell Minster, inviting Garry and his school friend David Sibley to watch the rehearsal.

Not limited to just music, he gave lectures and recitals to various music societies, including the Elgar Society. In 1986, he gave a presentation called 'The Man Who Writes Tunes: a portrait in words and music of the composer Eric Coates' in Hucknall, on the centenary of the birth of Coates, with the actor Robin Bailey voicing him, as Hucknall was the home town of all three of them.

Latterly, Garry prioritised writing concert programme and CD liner notes, alongside regular arts and music reviews for the Church Times and elsewhere. He wrote obituaries, mostly musical, for the Independent newspaper, and for various music journals.

Garry was erudite, with a knowledge of classical music that was prodigious, was constantly researching, and derived great enjoyment from sharing his knowledge generously with others; he was an active member of numerous musical societies.

He lived in London for much of his life, but had a continued dedication to Hucknall and Nottinghamshire, and the history of the area. He kept in touch with local historians, contributed to and collected local history publications and wrote a short memoir of his childhood in Hucknall, which was deposited in local archives and is used as a teaching aid in nearby schools.



Out & About

Pauline Rouse writes

The lesser-known east front of Grimsthorpe, with King John's Tower on the left corner



Below: Friends of Southwell Cathedral enjoying lunch at the Griffin Inn, Irnham



The Friends outing in May was an absolute treat. On a beautiful sunny day, forty of us visited Grimsthorpe Castle and the nearby village of Irnham.

Grimsthorpe Castle sits majestically within extensive parkland. While not a castle in the traditional sense, its character is massive. It is still in the original family ownership and is, today, the home of Jane Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, twenty-eighth Baroness Willoughby de Eresby. Her family is one of three who still fulfil the hereditary office of Lord Great Chamberlain.

The entrance front of the house was the last masterpiece of the great Baroque architect, Sir John Vanbrugh, but the other facades reflect architectural styles since the thirteenth century. The oldest part of the building being King John's Tower, reputed to have been built in the reign of King John (1199 – 1216).

After leaving Grimsthorpe, we drove to the nearby village of Irnham, which is home to Charlie, our chairman. He had organised a splendid lunch for us at the Griffin Inn, after which we walked a few minutes to St. Andrew's church, where Charlie is churchwarden. He gave us a most interesting talk, highlighting the Luttrell Psalter, an illuminated book of circa 1325/40 which was commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, the then squire of Irnham. Although now in the British Library, we were able to look at the excellent modern facsimile which is on display in the church.



Called to Serve

– Unravelling the mystery of vocations

Jamie Bostock writes



The Nature of Vocation

The idea of vocation is often perceived to be outmoded, and outdated. In the modern world, people seek a job that works for them on the sleek and smooth pages of LinkedIn or from job adverts that they found listed on Indeed. They may only be looking for a short-term position before they feel that they would like to move on to somewhere new. I happened upon my most recent job one afternoon in June 2020 when I was browsing LinkedIn, still dressed in my bath towel, having been in the shower. At first glance this can seem a world away from the idea of a vocation. As readers of my last article will realise, I like to approach the world we live in, through analysis of the words that we use to describe it. The word ‘vocation’ comes directly from the Latin *vocatio* which can mean both a call or a summons. It refers to a job that we feel drawn to, and for which we are, perhaps uniquely, qualified or suited¹. Perhaps we haven’t fully abandoned this idea in the modern age. In fact, someone close to me was recently called upon to go for a new job, without even looking on LinkedIn, the job, seemingly, came to him because he was well-suited for it.

Types of Vocation

As Christians, our tradition is saturated with the idea of God calling, or summoning people in order to set them apart to do particular work. We would do well not to lose sight of this idea. We find in the narrative of the calling of Samuel, someone who wasn’t necessarily sure of their role, until God made a very specific verbal intervention into their life (1 Samuel 3:3-9). As someone who is discerning my own vocation, potentially one that may lead me into ordained ministry, I often wish the pathway was as direct as it seems for Biblical figures - they are directly called by God, and enjoy pretty precise instructions as to what he wishes them to do, and how he wishes them to do it. Moses is called out of Egypt to lead the people of Israel to the edge of the promised land (Exodus 3:1-10, Numbers 20:12), Levites are called to a priestly vocation (Numbers 18:1-7), David and Solomon are called to be Kings over Israel (1 Kings 1:28-34). As we move from the Old Testament to the new, this ‘calling out’ or ‘setting apart’ becomes very apparent in an Apostolic context. When Matthias is chosen to replace Judas in the Apostolic ministry he is described as being ‘chosen’ - ἐξελέξω - by God to fulfill that role (Acts 1:12-26).

The Priesthood

In the Church of England today, we still hold to the apostolic vision of vocation - being an ordained ‘minister’ within the Church of England, is seen as following the pattern of the early followers of Jesus, and

taking one’s place in ‘apostolic succession’².

We take from the New Testament and the living, catholic tradition of our Church, the threefold order of ministry - Bishops (‘Overseers’ - ἐπίσκοπος) Priests (‘Presbyters’ - πρεσβύτερος) and Deacons (‘Servants’ - διάκονος). Granted, this can look different depending on which diocese and Church community we live in. In the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham, this takes the form of a long process of discernment, journeying initially with a group, then with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, and working within one (or more) Church communities to discern whether ordained ministry is a vocation to which you are called. This is by no means a ‘one stop shop’ that’s a definite pass to Ordination. Far from it. It is a process through which you discover more about yourself, your own relationship with Jesus, and God’s role in your life. You also discover areas in life where you feel called to do more, areas of your personal and professional life where you have struggled, and areas where you feel that you are not satisfied.

This process can be lengthy, and, at times, emotionally challenging. Luckily, our Christian tradition recognises this, and there are many layers of support. There are essential checks and balances that are put in place to ensure that the process is constructive for you, for your Church communities, and for those diocesan representatives that guide you and examine you throughout the process. Every prospective ordinand goes through the DBS and Safer Recruitment checks. This is a pertinent reminder of how the Church of England is striving to keep everyone in our communities safe. Each prospective ordinand also has the opportunity to receive spiritual direction from someone outside of the diocesan framework. This helps us to continue our own journey of discipleship and growth as a follower of Jesus, alongside the more targeted and rigorous process of discernment testing that happens within the specific Church and Diocesan structures. This journeying alongside another person, finds its roots in both Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Churches too. It helps to form a person in the models of Christian life and keep them accountable for the way in which they live. It can also be a way that a Christian shares their own struggles with another, and is given considered and prayerful advice as to how to overcome these challenges.

All Christians are called

Vocations, however, don’t have to take the form of ordained ministry. Each Christian is uniquely called to serve all people and the Christian community in the way that matches their own skills and gifts. ‘Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.’ (1 Corinthians 12:27, ESV) Teachers, Doctors, Cleaners,

1. Vocation - Etymology, Origin & Meaning, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/vocation>

2. Henry C. Vedder, *The Doctrine of Apostolic Succession in the Church of England*, Cambridge, 2009.

Civil Servants, Electricians, Lifeguards, Crafts people, we all have a role to play in building up others for the Kingdom of God. We all play a part in creating a society that reflects fairness and God's love and value for all people.

Living the life that God intended for you, and serving God's people to the best of your ability, may not always take the form we expect.

Leaving the comfort zone

Proverbs reminds us that 'In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.' (Proverbs 16:9, NIV). For me, spending two years in the diocesan discernment process helped me to come to various conclusions about life. It made me recognise how much I love to teach and support young people, how much I feel I would like to develop my skills as a listener and as a teacher, but also forced me to recognise where I had become overly 'comfortable' in my day-to-day life and where I had more to learn. While my process of discernment and growing in discipleship

continues, I have felt compelled to deepen my teaching skillset and have decided to retrain as a Teacher of English to Speakers of other Languages. Broadening my experience and widening my worldview, I feel, is an essential step towards being ready for whatever God's plans for me might be. I am mindful that I still have much to give in my political life, my professional life, and my spiritual journey. As a result, I felt a change of career direction might help me to realise and unlock the fullest potential of God's plans for me. Leaving the Minster School after five happy years, has felt like a wrench, and a leap of faith into the unknown. However, I am confident that '...we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). I hope that, as I move forward with this new chapter in life, while continuing to discern whether Ordained Ministry is the fulfilment of all of the gifts and talents that I have been given, I will move closer, step-by-step, towards the vocation that God has laid out for my life. It can be a daunting experience to walk into the world, and to make decisions that involve risk. However, as Christians, it is vital that we try to have sufficient trust in God to follow the opportunities that he presents to us, even if they lead us far from the comfort and safety of what is familiar. Sometimes we have to wander, before we find the place to which God is calling us.

Stop Press!



On 11th September, the final copy day for this issue of Pepperpots, Friends had a most enjoyable and informative visit to Stow Minster. More in the Spring 2026 issue!

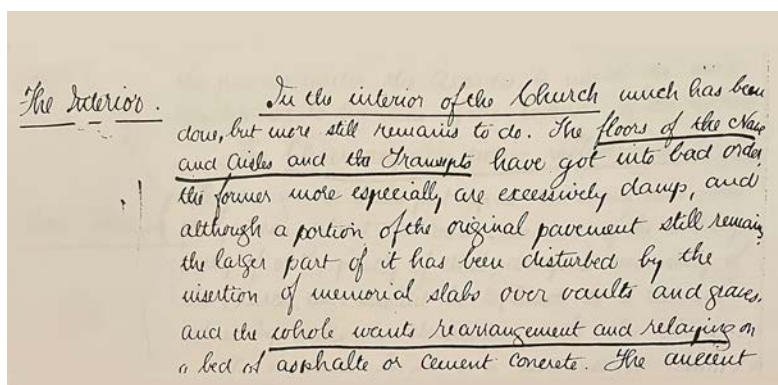


That which Lyeth Beneath

Victoria Arthurson, Hon Librarian and Archivist, writes

What is underneath the floor of Southwell Minster? There is a belief that there are no human remains, an error which I consider occurred as a misunderstanding of Ewan Christian's restoration of the building in the nineteenth century.

Mr Christian laid a floor on a new base placed on top of the existing structure.



Mr Christian's report to the Church Commissioners, 1875

“During the Middle Ages it is likely that layman burials were confined to the churchyard. The burial of priests and (arch)bishops and leading laymen would be normally inside the building. Where there are table chests the actual place of burials is not entirely certain. Some may have been confined inside the tomb. Several of these which have been moved at Ely have not had bodies inside them, which means that they were probably buried beneath the tomb and the place of their burial is now uncertain and the floor re-laid, eg Dean Caesar's tomb in the North aisle of the chancel at Ely. After the Reformation the interior of Southwell Minster was clearly used, but the flooring throughout the Minster was re-laid by Mr Christian in the 1860s and 1870s and the ledger (grave) stones re-laid to form a more artistic layout. No clues therefore to the original position. The burials in the Chapter House were probably in the slype and their slabs certainly repositioned by Christian: nothing underneath them but 19th century levelling. There is slight evidence (a bone) just outside the Chapter House door.”

Prof Philip Dixon, Minster Archaeologist.

Whether or not the monument to Archbishop Sandys was placed over his burial site, it has certainly been moved at least twice since its installation near the chancel. Two more of our Archbishops, Thomas de Corbridge and William Booth rested under brass slab table effigies - de Corbridge in the choir and Booth in the now destroyed Booths' chapel. There is scant evidence of those lesser mortals buried in the medieval Minster bar a few beautiful cross-slabs and fragments

of the same. These were all re-arranged by Mr Christian mainly in the nave, though there are three in the Chapter House. Unfortunately, they do not carry names though the occupation of the deceased can sometimes be discerned if there is, for example, a chalice. Sadly, all the brass stones remaining were mutilated when raided for their fittings, but in some places the outline of the figure can be seen.

The White Book (Southwell Minster Cartulary) contains a collection of thirty-one Wills proved by the Chapter of the Minster between 1470 and 1551. Not everyone states where they wish to be buried but of the ones that state the Minster, ten are in the church and five in the churchyard. Some are quite specific: Thomas Baxter, chantry priest, and Agnes Barra, widowed, both requested burial near the image of St Mary, Lady of Grace. Possibly the image that was on a pillar in the Nave near to the parish pulpit. Robert Barra, Canon of Southwell and York, wanted, if he died in Southwell, to be buried where the choir sing *Venite*.

Underneath the Minster floor is likely to be a honeycomb of plots over which earth, or vaults, slabs and - post medieval - bricks would be placed followed by the visible floor, usually with a ledger stone. However, even a church as large as the Minster would eventually fill up. When necessary, remains would be removed for new interments. Bones would be pushed aside or replaced. Sometimes reverently, sometimes not. This may seem disrespectful to the modern reader but -

Medieval belief in the literal resurrection of the dead during the end times, when souls would be physically reunited with their refabricated former bodies, meant that the continued existence of bodily remains was essential.

However, the disarticulation or fragmentation of remains presented no issue so long as they remained on consecrated ground

Thomas Farrow, EPOCH. 2020

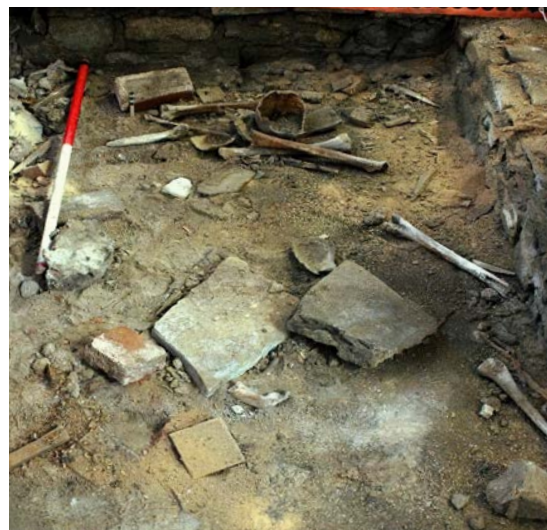
Following the Reformation, demand for in-church burial steadily increased and by the eighteenth-century it was no longer just the privilege of clergy and the rich. Many of the markers for these graves are visible in the Nave and Transepts, though not necessarily where they were laid originally (and there are numerous wall plaques).



Left: Underneath the floor. Excavations at St Augustine the Less, Bristol, 1983-84. EJ Boone, Bristol and Avon Archaeology, Vol 4, 1985.



Right: Recent work at the Prebendal Church of St Laurence, Norwell, revealed these skeletal remains; the floor removed was found to be lying directly on human bones, much to the shock of a young workman.



Of course, burial inside a church was costly and Warwick Rodwell in *The Archaeology of Churches*, uses an epitaph from a church in Devon

*Here lie I by the chancel door,
Here lie I because I'm poor.
The further in, the more you'll pay,
Here lie I, as warm as they.*

A wand lay by him. On his breast lay something like the cover of a silver cup, sex or oct, [hexagon or octagon] —angular, It had something like an acorn with leaves round it on the top of it, but the hollow side was uppermost. By letting the moulds fall on his face, they could make no farther discovery of his head, only that the skull was small and very thin, even transparent. His teeth were all very sound, and taken away by the spectators.'

The body was believed to have been 12th or 13th century. This account is given some credence by the entry in the Register of Burials

1717 7 Mar
William son of Mr John Andrews

Register of Burials, Southwell Minster.
trans WA James

In the rest of the Diocese discovery of human remains is a common practice during work and renovations. It is rare for such a find, as above, in the Minster as the floor is rarely raised, but various bones have been found under the choir aisles when ashes have been deposited. Although the popularity of the practice did not wane, the Burial Act of 1857 saw the end of internal church burials, due to rising awareness of public health concerns. The law is slightly different for crypts, but that is not applicable here due to the height of the water table. Even the first bishop of Southwell, George Ridding, who died in 1904, is buried in the churchyard (though he has a fine monument inside). One of the last burials in the Minster was near the south door; when the electric automatic door-opening mechanism was being installed some fifteen years ago, a Victorian coffin was discovered under the floor. How many more burials remain, partially or intact, is a mystery that we are unlikely to discover.

Many thanks to Dr Chris Brooke for his help with this article.



A medieval stone coffin similar to one in the North Nave Triforium of the Minster.

Wooden coffins, or plain shrouds, were also used according to the means of the deceased.

In Francis Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*, (1799) is the following account of a body and the coffin in which it was enclosed:

'A remarkable account of the body of some great personage, dug up at Southwell, the same was then communicated by a gentleman on the spot...

On the 17th March, 1717, as the sexton was digging Mr. William Andrews grave, in the south aisle of Southwell Minster, he, with his spade, broke off the end of a stone coffin; and, seeing it hollow, put in a measure, and found it longer, by a foot, than the usual length of a grave: and, opening it, found the body of a man, lying in his boots. The leather was fresh, and to all appearance, sound; till on trial it tore like London brown paper. The stitches were plainly to be seen. The shape of the boot toe was made to the foot. He was dressed in cloth of tissue; which plainly shewed the silver, by waving it in the sun, or against a candle.



Pepperpots is the magazine of The Friends of Southwell Cathedral

The Friends of Southwell Cathedral exist to bind together all who love the Cathedral Church and who desire to help in preserving for posterity the fabric of this building; in maintaining daily worship therein; and in enhancing its adornment.

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