

Fact Sheet No 291

Guide to the Cathedral of St. Mary's, Southwell

By Mary Trebeck, *Pictorial Southwell. From photographs by A J Loughton, (1900)*

SOUTHWELL MINSTER existed long before the Norman Conquest, and we know that it possessed the shrine of a Saxon saint and princess. There were only four Saxon saints enshrined north of the Trent, i.e., St. Wilfred at Ripon, St. John at Beverley, St. Cuthbert at Durham, and St. Eadburh at Southwell, such was its importance in ancient times. For the history of this Minster, and the scientific details of its architecture, we must refer our readers to more learned works. To the experienced eye Mr. Loughton's photographs speak for themselves, and the stones will go far to tell their own story.



Southwell Cathedral from North-West.

As you stand at the north-west corner of the churchyard this is the picture you see before you, and no better general view can be obtained unless it is from the Western Gateway, looking down the long straight path. Here you might almost fancy yourself in Normandy, so perfectly pure in style are the Norman capped towers (total height 114ft., date 1100 to 1150), though the large Perpendicular west window and battlements rather spoil the effect. The whole mass of building is well grouped from this point—the Palace to the south, and the Chapter-house to the north-east. But we must not linger here, for there is much to see inside. As it is, we shall not have space to describe the tenth part of this interesting Cathedral.

We now enter the Church by the west door, and looking down the NAVE (date 1110—1150, length 178ft.) we cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the massive appearance of the interior. The solid circular piers, very like Durham and Chichester, are 9ft. high and 16ft. in circumference. There are six on each side, they have square bases and round capitals, supporting the principal nave arches; above are large triforium arches, each with three curious little projections, nodes, or notches, intended possibly for smaller intervening arches, a design which was happily never carried into effect. You will recognise several Norman mouldings, zigzag, billet, hatchet, etc.

The plain circular windows in the Clerestory are quite unique, as no other church in England possesses them. The timber barrel roof was put up in 1881, each of the wooden girders weighs two tons, and the whole is of the finest oak.

THE FONT was destroyed in the general pillage that took place in Cromwell's time, and was replaced by this very poor specimen in 1661. The Puritans specially directed their fury against the fonts, many of them being Anabaptists.

THE PULPIT (1898), given by Miss Gordon, of Southwell, is from a very handsome design of Bodley's. The figures represent King Edwin, who accompanied Paulinus (the reputed founder of this Church, A.D. 630) when he baptised the Mercians in the Trent, next Queen Ethelburga his wife. The central group is the Virgin and Child (to whom the Church is dedicated), and on either side of them are the Bishops Augustine and Paulinus.



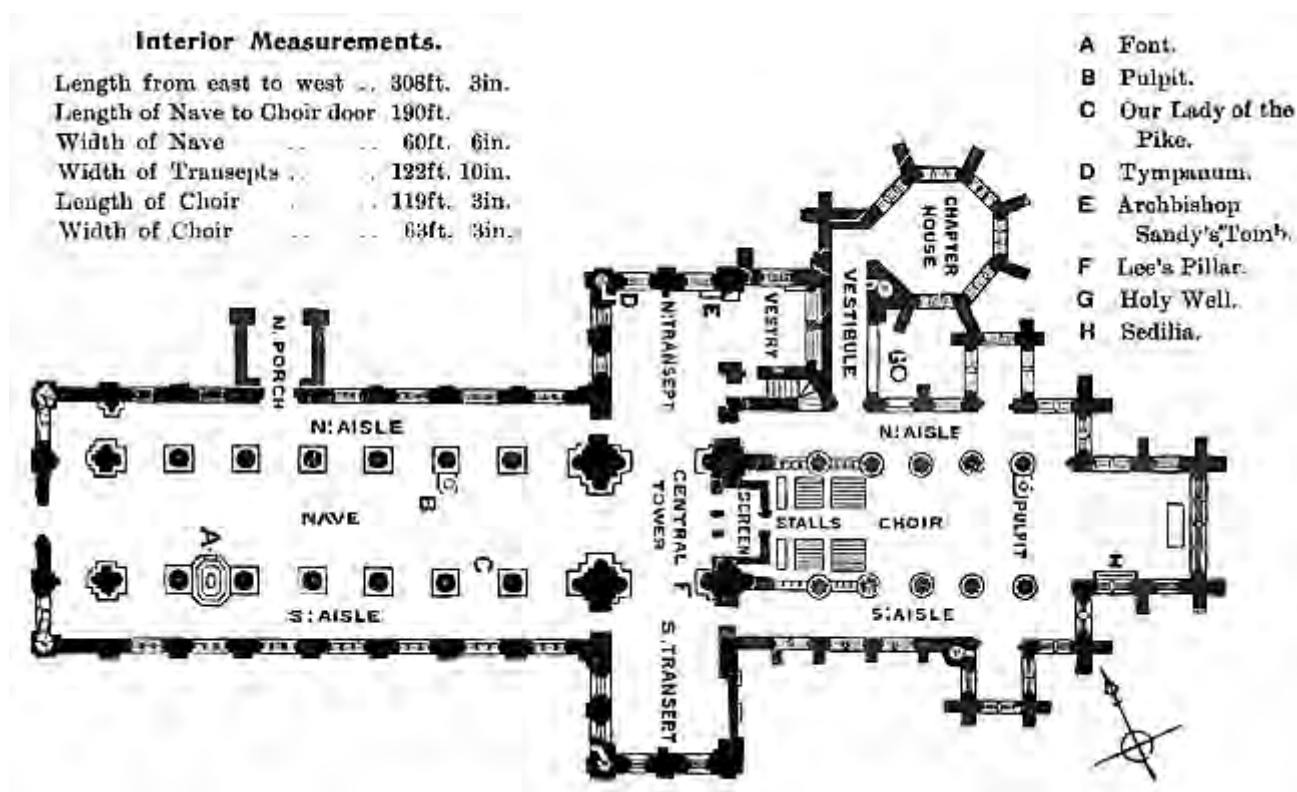
Our Lady of the Pike. The above sketch is exactly the outline, only the faces have been filled in, and part of the angel added.

On one of the nave piers, called "Pike's Pillar," the second bay from the east on the south side, there has been an ancient mural painting of the Annunciation; the old people used to call it OUR LADY OF THE PIKE"—Pike being a Saxon word for pillar—and this painting was probably as early as the pillar itself. You can just see the outline of the Blessed Virgin standing with a lily in a pot beside her, and the rude form of an angel with nimbus and wings, and a scroll coming out of his mouth, with, I should suppose, the salutation "Ave Maria" on it, all very faint and primitive; but this is doubtless the site of an altar to the Virgin. Later on the pillar was plastered over, and probably an image of the Virgin erected in front of it, for you can see where the pillar is plugged for supporting it, and the iron fastenings still remain. At the same time a canopy would be placed over it. Look above the picture, and it speaks for itself how cruelly this has been torn away. The traces of the painting were discovered in 1850. The following extract from an old will bears out this history: "8th Sept., 1476, Margaret Fisher gave her soul to be buried in the Collegiate Church of Southwell before the image of St. Mary called the Pyke." Was it to this Margaret Fisher's parents that Archbishop Arundel, of York, gave the Saracen's Head by will in 1396? "There is in Southwell a chief inn, now and long since called the Saracen's Head, which Archbishop Arundel gave to John Fisher and Margaret his wife, and their heirs."—Thoroton.

The CENTRAL TOWER (1150) is both a lantern and a campanile. It contains a fine peal of eight bells. The tunes which they play every four hours are the "National Anthem" and "Bedford," "O help us Lord each hour of need." The chimes were given in 1693 by Thos. Wymondesold. Notice the bold conical mouldings (each composed of two sections of a cone) round the four large

arches of the great Central Tower, so much richer than the ordinary cable, and very much more uncommon.

THE ORGAN, replacing one by Father Smith (1660), which was nearly worn out (the best parts of it were, however, carefully preserved), was built in 1892 by Bishop & Son at the cost of £2,700.



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Mary Trebeck [1845-1926] was the daughter of Christopher Wordsworth, headmaster of Harrow School, who was consecrated appointed Bishop of Lincoln in 1869. In 1874 Mary married Canon James Trebeck who was to become Rector of Southwell Minster and a Rural Dean.

Alfred Loughton [1865-1953] was a long-time resident of Southwell at 4, Market Place. He was a man of many interests - a cycle maker, violin maker, bell-hanger and gas-fitter. But he is probably best known for his architectural and other photographs, largely of the Minster. On his death, his family donated his collection of photographs and photographic plates to the Minster Library which includes over 1700 items.