

## CHANGES IN THE MINSTER AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE PEOPLE.

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What were the effects on the ordinary people of Southwell when changes took place in their Church?

### **Back to the Beginning:**

What was the beginning? We know very little about the earliest years but we do know: Paulinus preached in Lindsey and baptised in the Trent north of here. Did he visit Southwell? King Peada of Mercia converted in 655 and Christianity spread in the Midlands.

Was a church founded here?

Soon afterwards a religious house was founded at Repton . Eadburga, daughter of the King of the East Angles, became its Abbess. After her death, she was regarded as a saint; a list compiled in 1014 states that her body "rested in Southwell Minster ". In 874 the Danes raided Repton, so her body was probably brought here then or soon afterwards. Was there a Minster here already or was one founded to provide Eadburga with a shrine?

*Effects: Southwell became a place of local pilgrimage. Probable increase in prosperity. A new faith brought many changes to people's lives.*

### **10th. Century Church:**

956 King Edwy's Charter to Archbishop Oskytel led to building of a Church for which we have evidence in physical remains, and which was built of stone, not a usual Saxon building material, and probably the largest local building. Also provided was a college for the clergy to live in, and there was probably a hall for the Archbishop to stay in. These would be the largest and principal buildings in the town.

Archbishop Cynesig gave the Church two bells, which would add to its importance and help people to come to services promptly. Archbishop Aldred built the clergy a refectory. Southwell was probably a prosperous little place.

### **The Norman Church:**

1066 a watershed with drastic effects. Most Saxon nobility were dead, the rest dispossessed. Even those living on Church lands became underdogs. Archbishop Aldred died 1069 and was succeeded by a Norman, Thomas of Bayeux.

Most collegiate foundations turned into monasteries, but not Southwell.

1108 Archbishop Thomas II began building new church, much bigger than the old.

*Effects: Local people asked to help with building by giving alms, goods and labour—became involved. New Church awesome: expressed Norman power.*

*Became Mother Church of Notts.: Church dues brought here not to York. This was a bonus, saving a long journey.*

*Curiosity at building methods and lodges. Did children play on the masonry? At Troyes, masons had to cover unfinished masonry with briars to keep children off in the evenings and on holy days). Successive building, Quire, Chapter House etc. would have similar effects. Endowment of*

*Chantries C13 on showed increased prosperity and involvement. Ultimately about 55 staff employed: prebendaries, vicars choral, chantry priests, singing men and vergers.*

### **Reformation:**

Another great watershed... and not just in Southwell. Main changes and their effects:

*Henry VIII: Break with Rome. Little effect here. Dissolution of the Monasteries.*

*Bible in every church: enormous effect, but not immediate. Abolition of our chantries. Changed church.*

*Edward VI: Rest of chantries closed: no more prayers for the dead. A big culture shock.*

Services in English. Was this popular? Or not?

*Clergy allowed to marry, and many did. The vicar's wife enters the scene, and plays her part.*

*Mary: Tried to put the clock back. John Adams, our parish vicar, lost the living because he would not put away his wife.*

Elizabeth I: Protestantism restored. Final effects:

1. *Appearance: walls whitewashed, paintings And statues gone; altars all gone, replaced with a table with east-west orientation. All church plate confiscated except one Communion cup Probably pews as sermons very long.*
2. *Services: Morning and Evening Prayer in English. Holy Communion only 3 times a year.*
3. *Clergy: Chapter survived, but numbers far fewer. Many prebendaries still absentee.*
4. *Ceremonies: traditional ones all swept away.*

During Elizabeth's reign, Puritanism developed in England. We have no means of knowing whether it existed in Southwell; but eventually it led to the Civil War and the rupture of religious and political unity.

### **James 1 (1603) to the outbreak of Civil War (1642):**

1. General impression: Southwell a pleasant place in which to live: A/B Sandys and Prebendary Lancelot Andrewes were both happy to live here.

Although inhabitants now accustomed to C/E services, we have no evidence about whether Puritanism was increasing its influence on the people, as in some other parts of England.

2. Minster Staff (Statutes 1585) were: Minimum of 6 Vicars-Choral ( 1 the Parish Vicar, 1 the Schoolmaster): Vicar-General i/c business; a Residentiary i/c Services; an Auditor; a Receiver- General ; a Registrar ; a Custos Fabria.

3. 1621 Unlawful seizure of dues by the laity since Edward VI's reign (1547-1553) to be repaid. We do not know whether the parishes of Notts. had to pay arrears of the Pentecostal offering (Gate to Southwell) because accounts are missing. But if they did, we can imagine their reaction.

**Civil War and its aftermath ( 1642- 1660)** brought far-reaching changes which would affect everyone in an 100% church-going community . 1646 Episcopacy abolished. Southwell Chapter replaced by Commissioners. Chapter property sold. Prebendaries dismissed.

Many parish priests were dismissed. Those remaining, if convicted of non-Puritan practices, were dismissed and their property confiscated, eg. Priest at Retford for playing cards with his wife in the evenings.

*This suggests 2 effects on ordinary people:*

- a) Religious services must have changed to satisfy Puritan requirements (cf reactions to A.S.B. in C20<sup>th</sup>)*
- b) There must have been informers reporting on non-P activity, even in the privacy of one's home, engendering an atmosphere of distrust and insecurity.*

All Church music was banned . Choir disbanded . Organ smashed. Font disappeared . Minster used as storehouse by Parliamentary forces. Lead seized from roof of A/B's Palace.

Some at least, of the local people profited from the situation :

- 1. Locals pillaged the Palace for stone and timber, either for personal use or profit by sale. Mr. Clay, Clerk to the new Commissioners , admitted this when he was arrested for doing this in 1660; his defence was that he only did so after most of the parish had done so!*
- 2. Some laity built seats for themselves in the Quire (Puritan sermons were long).*

### **1660 Restoration.**

1. Minster in bad state of repair: not wind- or water-proof; lead and wood removed; windows damaged; furniture stolen; fabric in poor state.
2. Five men were employed full-time for 3 yrs. to effect repairs; also craftsmen and labourers. Most materials were purchased within about a 12 mile radius. Good for Southwell.
3. Anglican Prayer Book reinstated. Choir re-formed. Boys particularly had to learn from scratch. Many anthems written for male solos with short boy's choruses, eg. Purcell and Blow. Organ purchased from London. Organist's seat made locally.
4. Furnishings: Church Plate either given (eg. Verger's Mace by Prebendary Doctor Thomas Wren) or purchased. Acquired Communion Table, Pulpit, Font (made in Southwell for £5.5.0d), Altar Cloths and Vestments.

### **Glorious Revolution 1688-89:**

Nationally, Protestants feared a counter-revolution promoted by Roman Catholics. This affected the Minster: anyone admitted to the Chapter had to swear that " no foreign Prince, Person etc. hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power, superiority. Pre-eminence or authority ecclesiastical or spiritual within this realm."

Established religion in Southwell remained extremely Protestant for the following 150 years.

C18: " A Hundred Years of Stagnation and Lethargy".

1. Since the Reformation it had been customary for only certain canons to be in residence leading to some neglect of duties. eg. there were two years when only one prebendary was in residence.  
  
1690, a Provincial Injunction required all canons to be in residence; difficult to enforce as 3 prebends were derelict and, contrary to 1636 regulations, others were leased out.
2. Vicars Choral were often unsatisfactory:
  - a) Not always up to the job apparently! In 1691 applicants for Vicar Choral or Singing Man were henceforth required to perform satisfactorily before the Chapter or the Canon Residentiary.
  - b) Some were not residentiary or were out late at night! Mr. Bugg cut a door directly on to the street to evade restrictions. How local tongues must have wagged! Mr. Bugg was accused, disappeared and the door was bricked up.
  - c) Absenteeism was another problem: Vicars Choral were paid £25 p.a. only, and needed another appointment as well, preferably with accommodation. If received, they could

resign from VC, keep the other job and house, and so make the appointment of a replacement VC difficult. Jobs could be far apart: Mr. Talbot lived and worked in Yorkshire and neglected Morton and Edingley.

The situation improved after the building of Vicars' Court, and by requiring Vicars Choral to deposit £500, forfeit if he resigned but retained another preferment.

Later in the C18 subscriptions raised £1,000 for the Chapter. But the Chapter continued in debt and little was done to keep the Minster in a satisfactory state of repair.

### **C19<sup>th</sup> Congregations : about 500 attended a service.**

1835 Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England and Wales were appointed, and in 1841 the Southwell Chapter was abolished, its property and lands went to the Eccles. Comms., who were to maintain the Minster and provide for its services. The Minster itself therefore had no income. It and its jurisdiction was transferred to Lincoln, and the Province of Canterbury.

*Local businesses suffered: the Eccles.Comm. delayed paying bills for c. 12months!*

Problems faced by the mid-century congregations: No satisfactory lighting; no heating; the curtain over the Quire entrance to prevent draughts from the Quire into the Nave, was in tatters, and many of the congregation refused to attend until it was replaced; the organ was poor; no proper seating; people had to bring their own chairs; the Nave floor was covered in damp rotten coconut matting; lower walls and adjacent floor of Nave were green with damp because of piled earth and debris against outside walls; clock unreliable; no water supply; sheep, kept to browse the grass outside, wandered into the Church through open doors.

1876 Frustrated congregation sent a determined Petition from the People of Southwell to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (worth a read; see Closed for Business by H.Brooke P 65-66).

Major refurbishment began: including the Quire; new Quire stalls; Sanctuary level raised; new Nave roof; additional Gurney stoves (although their fumes caused stone erosion) etc. Minster closed during this time, but opened for the day for the enthronement of the first Bishop in 1888. First time in 400 yrs. the whole of Minster was available for worship.

### **C20<sup>th</sup> Extending outwards:**

1920's saw the installation of the boiler house and the hot water heating system and 1929-35 the installation of electricity. Since then, a gradual but steady development of modern comfort and efficiency, for which we today are surely thankful.

Our generation, in its turn, has beautified the Minster with works of art; sculptures; stained glass; tapestry ; we have stalls and chairs to sit ( even if we grumble about them ).We have turned our attention to other projects, fitting for the fast-forward age in which we live: a bookshop; a refectory; an education centre; a retreat house .....where will the next century take us?

*Do you notice the change? Today, we, the congregation, feel we should have our opinions and voice them. We like to play a part in bringing change about. We want to help. We tread the way first laid down for us by that valiant congregation of 1876, who sent a very forceful petition up to London. We, like them, want to keep faith with all the generations who have gone before, who in the way of their time have kept the Minster for the future.*