

Researching our Churches: the Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project

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Accurate, detailed descriptions of parish churches outside of academic publications are rare. Since 2000, a small team from the diocese of Southwell and Nottingham and the University of Nottingham, backed by volunteers and students, has been researching and web-publishing detailed descriptions of the history, archaeology, and fittings of churches in the diocese. Aided by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project now has details of 384 churches and church sites in varying stages of completeness. The project has demonstrated the value of a flexible, internet-based approach for publishing church histories, and the techniques by which volunteers may be trained and managed to achieve a high quality product. It has also produced a great deal of new research, and some unexpected findings. Finally, it has provided the basis for comparative studies.

Parish churches form a considerable slice of our national heritage, and yet accurate, detailed descriptions of them, outside of academic publications, are rare. In many, if not most cases, local enthusiasts are left to produce guidebooks, with no obvious quality control and with – hardly surprisingly – varying value. By contrast with National Trust properties, for example, with their detailed guide books including plans and pictures, many medieval churches have little or no researched past, and urban Victorian churches have in many cases come and gone and their documentation has been lost. This scattergun approach to the history of our churches contrasts unfavourably with the care and attention to history and archaeology paid to many other areas of our national heritage. This is perhaps surprising given that through the study of the history and archaeology of individual churches it ought, in theory, to be possible to produce a research approach which should help us to describe common features, and to look for local, regional and even national trends in the construction and subsequent alteration of church buildings.

By recording and studying churches to a template, both in terms of the sources used (historical and archaeological), and the outputs sought, it should be possible to present at one level an accurate narrative relating to any particular church. In addition, it would enable the churches, as well their related aspects, such as graveyards and monuments, to be studied at a comparative level. Ideally, this would be undertaken on a national basis, and the Church of England has recently launched a ‘Church Heritage Record’, devised by Dr Joseph Elders of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division. The national database is still to be populated, and it is hoped that the regional survey described here will be integrated with it as the national project develops. This paper reports on a project undertaken in the midland diocese of Southwell and Nottingham – in essence, and with a few exceptions, the modern county of Nottinghamshire and the historic archdeaconry of Nottingham. The idea of the project, from the outset, was to provide accurate, fully researched histories of each church building (in practice Anglican parish churches and chapels of

ease), which would also allow us to point to unique features of particular buildings, and to trends across the geography, and through time, of the study area.

Given that even in a relatively small diocese such as Southwell and Nottingham there were well over 300 churches and, as it transpired, many more lost churches than we had anticipated, this was a project which required a team rather than an individual to undertake the work. Our approach can be defined under four headings:

1. Defining templates for research and presentation, which were the responsibility of the authors, as co-editors of the project. We also needed to define these templates in such a way that information could be collected in a standard form which would work for the majority of the churches in our (eventual) database.
2. Recruiting and training volunteers, thus engaging local communities at relatively low cost. Funding from the diocese and a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled us to pay for their training and their expenses.
3. From the outset, it was decided that the material collected during the course of the project would be presented in a web-based form. The coming of the internet, even when we started work in 2000, was obviously going to change the way in which a project of this magnitude could function. It meant we would not be inundated with paper, that we could link individual sections of the project together, and that we could also provide our volunteers with the growing array of digital resources which have become available over the past 15 or so years.
4. Finally, we were responsible for editorial control. Any work undertaken with volunteers has to be strictly managed for content and interpretation. This is not because volunteers are unreliable; indeed, most of our volunteers were enthusiastic, knowledgeable and only too keen to learn as well as to contribute. However, as editors we were the only people with an overview of the whole project, and we needed to check for consistency and accuracy.

The rest of this paper reports on the findings of the project to date, and highlights how it has contributed to our broader knowledge of churches and to public engagement. In passing, we shall also raise issues relating to methodology, interdisciplinarity, and the challenges involved when academic work is undertaken via public input. The challenges involved are mainly those of organisation: accurate records of research in

progress, of completed work, and of amendments have to be kept, and volunteers need to be fully briefed, trained, and monitored throughout the project.

Editorial challenges entailed ensuring factual accuracy and consistency of style. It has also meant being aware of omissions and adding relevant data where necessary without substantially detracting from the volunteer researchers' input.

Methodology

Church guidebooks and leaflets are of variable quality. They range between those which are factually accurate and properly researched, to others which are highly speculative with numerous inconsistencies and errors. Any attempt to achieve consistency would require both a template and also an acceptance across a whole diocese of the need for such standardisation. Our initial thinking, in the 1990s, was that one person, or a small team working with that person, using a number of standard sources, could put together a consistent history for each church across the diocese. The idea was mainly associated with John Severn, a local conservation architect and long-serving member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). Severn put his ideas to the DAC in terms of a project which would be valuable for those with a responsibility for looking after and developing church buildings while respecting their history, such as the DAC. He also thought it would better help church members to appreciate their buildings and provide accurate information for visitors and for educational purposes.¹ By 1999, the project had become a joint enterprise involving both the Southwell DAC and also the Department of History at the University of Nottingham, and the plan was to create an internet-based resource containing information for each church and church site (Fig 1). A template was devised and guidelines produced, the project was named the Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project (CHP), and it was officially launched at St Helen's Church, Burton Joyce on 18 February 2000.

The project made good progress. A steering committee was set up, and volunteers were recruited and issued with a Briefing Paper which set out how best to research and write the history of 'their' church. A website was established, hosted by the University of Nottingham and run by a local clergyman and DAC member, Rev Dr David Harper (WS1). Volunteers were invited to regular training days, at which different aspects of church buildings were examined,

Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project

Search

Home Index About People Revisions Resources

Main Index of Churches

Select a church using either the [Alphabetical Index](#) or the [Geographical Index](#).

Alphabetical Index

Churches are listed alphabetically by place name. Select the initial letter of a church, and then select the church itself from the list that appears.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Many churches have complete entries on this site. These are shown in **bold** in the list. For some, however, the entries are incomplete and these appear in normal type, while for others there are only introductory entries as yet and these appear in (brackets). A few churches do not yet have an entry, and these are shown without links and in [square brackets]. Most entries are for active churches, but some are for former churches or sites, and these appear in *italics*.

Geographical Index

Move the mouse over a marker to identify a church. Click the marker or the information box to select it.

No church currently selected

Churches in the Diocese

Nottingham Churches

Legend

- Church with full entry
- Partially completed entry
- Introduction only
- No entry as yet

There are currently details on this site of 151 churches. These are 120 active churches and 31 former churches or sites. In addition there are partially completed entries for another 36 churches and sites, plus introductory entries for further 165. There are still 26 churches and sites which do not yet have an entry. Some of these are currently being researched.

If you can help complete the work on any church, please contact our Research Manager.

Site last updated 26 September 2014

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

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Fig 1
Screen shot of the main project website

in order to help them with their research. Digital resources were added to the website, and links created to other websites, such as British History Online. Among those added to the site were downloadable documents such the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1341 for Nottinghamshire, the 1428 subsidy of Henry VI, and an index to Sir Stephen Glynne's notebooks of the mid-19th century, as well as archbishops' visitations, and the 1851 religious census. The Briefing Paper, subsequently updated and published as 'How to Write the History of Your Church', provided researchers with detailed instructions for accessing these resources, and for writing up their material.

The project received a major boost in 2007 when the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded the diocese a grant of nearly £250,000 to help to drive forward the research, and also to broaden its scope into education and tourism. In this phase, resources were developed to assist with education at Key Stages 1 to 3 of the National Curriculum. Downloadable information sheets were made available and the site hosted text and images, an architectural timeline and history resources.

A DVD was produced and distributed to schools along with a booklet. Fifty churches were identified as having particularly unusual features suitable for specific educational activities. The HLF funding also made it possible to increase the level of interest in church buildings through a related project called 'open churches'. This provided resources to encourage churches to be open for tourism on 'open churches weekends'. Completed church histories were made available to churches in paper copies so that they would be available to visitors, and a handbook was distributed to all churches in the diocese (Sirrell and Smith 2013).

The churches of Nottinghamshire

The aim from the outset was to focus primarily on standing churches, particularly those which remain consecrated and have an active community life. In most cases these can be defined simply as parish churches, and with documentary sources, the evidence of the building, and the enthusiasm of the churchgoers, these were the easiest to research. Where feasible, material was collected for standing buildings which are no longer in use as churches, including those converted to other uses, and those in the ownership of the Churches Conservation Trust. As the project has proceeded, it has also proved possible to write the history of lost churches, including those with known sites, and those for which the site is no longer known but for which documentary evidence can be located. We interpreted 'lost' in terms ranging from medieval buildings demolished at a point in the past we can no longer identify, to more recent cases in which new churches have replaced older buildings (as, for example, at Kinoulton), to urban Victorian churches which have mostly been demolished. Entries have also been compiled for former religious houses and monastic sites, but only in respect to the buildings, not the life of the community (Marcombe and Hamilton 1998).

The principal aims of the project were to compile an accurate narrative for each Anglican church and chapel of ease (but excluding nonconformist chapels) and to make a record of the artefacts. Initially, the steering committee had to establish the size of the task. Until 1836 the county of Nottinghamshire was the archdeaconry of Nottingham within the Diocese of York. In 1836, as part of the major diocesan reforms of that year, it was detached from York and added to Lincoln (Hill 1900; Beckett 2012). In turn it was separated from Lincoln in 1884 and added to the newly created diocese of Southwell, comprising the counties

of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Derbyshire was separated out in 1927.

For the purposes of the project the study area comprised Nottinghamshire, together with four parishes now in South Yorkshire (Finningley, Austerfield, Bawtry, and Rossington), and one site now in Lincolnshire (Broadholme Priory). In total there are 314 extant churches and chapels. They are either in use, managed by the Churches Conservation Trust, converted to private dwellings (three), or ruined. The one exception is Bramcote old church, managed by an independent charity. There are two intact medieval hospital chapels (Bawtry and Blyth) and one late medieval almshouse chapel (Newark). Three major monastic buildings are included in the active parish churches (Blyth, Thurgarton, and Worksop), and an additional 15 monastic sites are in a variety of states and ownership. Dates range from pre-Conquest to 1993, although some churches obviously have more recent additions to their earlier fabric.

All medieval churches, including sites of now-demolished churches and monastic churches, have been considered, and all Anglican churches and chapels up to the present day are included in the project. Many churches have been lost, perhaps around 25% of the total number that have ever existed in the county. The position is particularly complicated in the towns,

especially in Nottingham, where Victorian parishes, each with their own church, were carved out of the existing parish of St Mary. Subsequently the Victorian churches have mostly been demolished and the parishes reinstated within the older parochial structure, largely because of population movement away from the city centre into suburbs and overspill villages. Some lost churches can be documented and a relatively full entry mounted on the website, including medieval desertions such as Thorpe in the Glebe, Flawford (in the 18th century), and various Victorian town churches.

As of May 2015, we had located a further 99 lost medieval sites. Examples include the church of Rufford, which pre-dated Rufford Abbey (founded 1146) and which probably lay some distance away in the former village of Rufford, previously identified as a deserted medieval village (Barley 1957; Beresford and Hurst 1971). One instance in the Rufford Charters (Holdsworth 1972–1981), dated 1159, reveals that the abbot and brethren of Rufford agreed to pay Thomas, son of Paulinus, the sum of one mark for the tithes of Rufford church. This record proves its existence 13 years after the foundation of the abbey despite the supposed suppression of the village by the Cistercian monks; it was still extant as a parish church in 1308 (Brown and Thompson 1940). In other instances, considerably more historic detail has survived, as in the

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project. The header includes the project name and a search bar. A navigation menu contains links for Home, Index, About, People, Revisions, and Resources. The main content area is titled 'Caunton St Andrew' and identifies it as being in the Newark Archdeaconry and Newark and Southwell Deanery. A sidebar on the left lists various sections for this church, such as Introduction, Location, History, Archaeology, and Contacts. The main text provides an introduction to the church, describing its classic plan, historical mentions in the Domesday Book, and architectural details like the tower and chancel. It also includes acknowledgments and a footer with a comprehensive list of navigation links.

Fig 2

Screen shot of the introductory page for a typical complete entry (Caunton). Each subsection is selectable from the sidebar.

cases of former churches at Adbolton, Danethorpe, and Saxondale, and the hospital chapel of East Stoke.

In other instances, documentary evidence supports the existence of a church or chapel, but its exact location is unknown. At the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fiskerton, which belonged to Thurgarton Priory, Nottinghamshire, fieldwalking by researchers for the project has revealed medieval carved architectural fragments, and mapping studies are being employed to narrow down the likely site. Given the methodology which is being developed in relation to tracking these entirely lost churches, it is hoped that the sites of the majority of the county's lost medieval churches will be located using a combined archaeological and historical methodology.

The template for each entry on the CHP website includes major sections on the history and archaeology of the church. These are followed by detailed descriptions of the internal fittings, glass, organ, bells and frame, clock, stonework, monuments, war memorial(s), and churchyard (Fig 2). Where it can be established with certainty, a list of incumbents and, where relevant, prebend holders is provided. In addition, a selection of key photographs, plans, and historic artwork are included, as well as the official listing or scheduling entry where applicable. Each entry follows a similar pattern, even if for some sections (eg the clock) there is no evidence.

Key findings

History

The major part of each entry entails detailed documentary research, commencing in most cases with Domesday. In only a few cases does pre-Conquest charter evidence survive. In some cases, good accounts of a church are available for the late 19th century, written up following visits by the Thoroton Society and the Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society. As a rule of thumb, however, researchers have needed to work forwards in time employing 'standard' sources, including the *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291 (WS2), bishops' and archbishops' registers, and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII's reign, through to published archbishops' visitation records in the 18th to 20th centuries and modern faculty papers. Churchwardens' presentations of the late 16th and 17th centuries provide a fascinating, and often humorous, insight into church and parish life of the time. At Epperstone in 1625, Elizabeth, the wife of one Robert Mettam, was reported

as '*a common disturber of her neighbours with her scolding, railing, reproachful, slanderous and backbiting speeches*'. When admonished by the churchwardens she refused to accept their advice, making many irreverent speeches and, referring to the minister, said '*the devils turd in his teeth*' and stated that she cared not for him and '*bade him do his worst*'.

Later sources include the comprehensive Visitation records of Archbishop Herring in 1743 (Ollard and Walker 1930), and Drummond in 1764 (Fisher 2012), contemporary descriptions such as those found in John Throsby's late 18th-century update of the great antiquarian study of the county by Dr Robert Thoroton in 1677, the 1851 religious census returns, and the church notes of Sir Stephen Glynne, which will be published separately as one of several spin-offs from this project.

Researchers have been encouraged to visit the county archives office to study deposited papers from the church they are researching, as well as the county local studies library which has a box file on every village in the county and also has available many trade directories from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nottinghamshire is also fortunate to have an online county bibliography which includes details of all published information on individual churches (WS3). Volunteers have also been prepared to go further afield, including to the Borthwick Institute, York (for material relating to churches in the diocese pre-1836), Lincolnshire Archives (for material between 1836 and 1884 when the archdeaconry was in the diocese of Lincoln), the Church of England Record Office (via Lambeth Palace Library), and The National Archives at Kew. In some cases this has produced extremely detailed histories (see, for example, Norwell St Laurence (WS1)). Entries are not formally footnoted because of the need to balance academic content with public accessibility, but each entry has a reference section listing the source materials used.

Inevitably, some researchers miss sources, or cannot gain access to them for one reason or another. As editors, it is our task wherever possible to add in missing material. In 2012, Dr Brooke was able to develop a digital research tool to mine information we would not normally expect volunteer researchers to be able to access. SAPPHERE (Searchable Archive of Printed Primary Historical Resources) is able to comb through some 900 texts using advanced text processing techniques (WS4). These include sets of Pipe, *Curia Regis*, *Liberate*, Charter, Patent, and Close Rolls, Papal Letters, and the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, and

Testamenta Eboracensia. Other, more obscure sources, include comparatively modern material. At the time of writing, these additional sources are being applied to incoming research entries but will, in time, be used to edit those texts published prior to 2012.

Archaeology

The archaeology section is intended to be as detailed as the history. Here, the editors encountered some difficulty, as the majority of volunteers, while familiar with historical research, were much less comfortable with trying to interpret the archaeology of the building or site, both for the standing fabric and below-ground material. For this reason, several of the otherwise completed entries still await a detailed archaeological description. These will be provided in due course by the editorial team and will include specialist excavation reports and investigation of the fabric. Where material has been provided it is normally in summary form, using published information and visual descriptors to identify the principal architectural evolution of each building with important sub-features included, for example wall paintings and texts, *ex situ* pre-Conquest material and later medieval cross slabs, medieval ironwork, and discrete anomalies in the fabric.

Editing of this section for each entry is ongoing. Where detailed analytical work on the archaeology of the standing fabric has been possible, it has added considerable knowledge to the evolution of individual churches. It has also resulted in a more comprehensive picture of the dating evidence available to build up a typology across the county. Some potentially pre-Conquest structures have been identified that require further investigation, for example the towers at Averham, Clayworth, and South Leverton, as well as a greater distribution of 12th-century fabric than was previously thought. The tower at Averham has a blocked upper doorway, apparently of pre-Conquest date set within unusually complex fabric, and is the subject of detailed investigation at the time of writing.

Stratigraphic evidence has been found that clearly pre-dates the commonly assumed date for sections of buildings that have been phased by architectural features alone. An example occurs at Halam St Michael, where a complex area of multiphase fabric lies below a blocked low-side window in the north wall of the chancel, where the wall was assumed to have a uniform 14th-century date. This feature probably represents remnant 12th-century fabric along with alterations of an unknown period, but pre-dating the 14th century.

In addition to the archaeological and architectural

descriptions provided by each volunteer researcher, the archaeology editor has added a technical template to each entry that comprises a summary of principal roofs and timbers, details of the bell frame including both its Elphick and Pickford classification (Elphick 1970; Pickford 1993), and the covering of the walls and likelihood of survival of wall paintings. Brief details of any known excavation work are given and where summary reports exist these are either referenced or made available as PDF downloads. Following these summaries is an assessment of archaeological potential, intended to inform all interested parties of the likely survival of archaeological stratigraphy and features both below and above ground. This information is summarised from field survey and technical documentation by the DAC archaeological advisers and is subject to ongoing revision as new material comes to light.

Two linked projects have been undertaken with HLF funding. The first has been to identify key bellframes that are either typical in style for the county or which are clearly of early date, and then to date these using dendrochronology. The principal aim of this work has been to produce an accurate stylistic chronology that may be applied to the majority of bellframes in Nottinghamshire, backed by solid dating evidence (Brooke 1983). To date, 18 frames from 1475 to 1750 have been dated (Fig 3), with several additional 19th-century examples being datable by carved inscriptions and documentary evidence, to yield a total range of datable styles from c1475–1910.

The second sub-project, also ongoing, involves the



Fig 3
Tree-ring dating being carried out on the late 17th-century bellframe at Kirklington St Swithin
(Photo: CJ Brooke)

identification and measured recording of later medieval cross slabs. To date this work has roughly doubled the number of known examples in the county from those previously published (Butler 1952; Butler 1964). Measured drawings with accompanying description will eventually be included on the CHP website under the archaeological section for each appropriate church and will be published as a *corpus* (Fig 4). The work will complement the Corpus of Anglo Saxon Stone Sculpture for the county (Everson and Stocker, forthcoming), the authors of which have kindly provided advanced information to help us to populate several of the website entries.

Fixtures and fittings

The remaining sections for each church are largely descriptive. Fittings include all major objects inside the building, for example the font, screens, pews, pulpit, reading desks, and so forth. Information is garnered from a combination of visual examination and documentary evidence, and archaeological details are included where relevant, eg where an object has been retooled or restored, or otherwise brought from another location. Details of inscriptions, transcribed in full where legible, are given. The only exceptions are where the editorial team has felt that the inclusion of an object may constitute a security risk, for example for objects made of precious metals or of unusual rarity, or where a parish has specifically requested that items be withheld. In these cases the descriptive details have been retained but are not shown on the website.

Amongst researched examples are the outstanding 14th-century ornamentation at Hawton including the nationally renowned Easter Sepulchre (Sheingorn 1974) (Fig 5), and the rare survival of a Lenten veil mechanism at Laxton. Nottinghamshire's one remaining rood loft, at Sutton-on-Trent, and the incomparable rood screen, loft, and organ case by Sir Ninian Comper at Egmanton, have been fully researched. Fittings commemorating coal mining in a number of West Nottinghamshire churches such as St Mark, Bestwood Village (1887), were researched for a tourism leaflet (Brooke 2013).

Important discoveries made during investigations include the reused medieval ironwork on the west door at Halam, which appears to comprise strapwork and hinges from two dates of the 12th and 13th centuries, probably from doors lost during Ewan Christian's restoration in 1884 (Jane Geddes pers comm 2011). Also of great significance is the ironwork on the

Fig 4
Scale drawing of a medieval cross slab reconstructed from two parts at Edwinstowe (Illustration: PF Ryder)



Fig 5
The Easter Sepulchre, tomb recess, and doorway of c1320 at Hawton, All Saints (Photo: CJ Brooke)

medieval door at West Markham, which also dates from the 12th century and which was previously unrecorded (Fig 6).

Stained glass

Nottinghamshire has no remarkable collections of medieval glass with the exception of the rare 12th-century fragments at Fledborough. Each entry includes details of all decorative window glass regardless of age, and in some instances tinted plain glass has been included. An account of most of the medieval glass was published in many parts by Neville Truman between 1939 and 1956 (eg Truman 1946), which has both provided a detailed description and a useful check for the present survey. A small amount of additional medieval glass has also come to light as part of the project. Post-medieval glass is largely of the 19th century, with a few slightly earlier pieces and some fine 20th-century work.

Thoroton, the Nottinghamshire antiquary, noted numerous examples of heraldic glass that existed in the 17th century (Thoroton 1677), but which have now been lost. At Nottingham St Mary he commented: *'The*

painted glass that formerly adorned the windows is now chiefly gone. The figure of St Andrew, however, still remains perfect, in a north window', and at Norwell three windows were observed in the north aisle having: *'Azure Semy de Lis Or, and England; England, with a File of three Labels, az; and England, quartering Az, Semy de Lis Or'*; all are now lost. Other examples include the collection of medieval and early post-medieval glass at Holme-by-Newark, a similar assemblage at Newark St Mary, many 19th-century windows by Hardman, Powell, Kempe and their contemporaries, and one example by Christopher Whall, the Magnificat window at Blesby of 1910.

Organs

The majority of churches, and even minor chapels, have some form of organ. They range from grand instruments such as the John Snetzler case of c1770, formerly in York Minster and now in St Peter, Nottingham, and the rare 1836 barrel organ at Ossington, through 'standard' church organs. The latter include those by Brindley & Foster, of Sheffield, and Groves of Nottingham. Several less affluent parishes



Fig 6
The south doorway at West Markham, All Saints, with 12th-century ironwork on a probably contemporary door (Photo: CJ Brooke)

have survived with just a small harmonium. A few high quality modern instruments appear, such as the Groves organ at Halam of 2009, which replaced one by Bevington of London made in about 1870-1880.

Details of the more significant instruments have been extracted from the National Pipe Organ Register (WS5), whilst others have been researched from archival sources and from details on the organs themselves. In some churches there is evidence of several organs at different dates. These include St Mary, Newark, and St Mary, Nottingham. Full accounts of the various generations of organ have been given for these churches. Elsewhere, organs have been moved, either when a church was closing, or when a church was building a new organ and offered its old instrument for sale or for the cost of dismantling and rebuilding. For example, the organ from St Matthew, Nottingham (1856-1956) was moved to St Matthew, Bestwood Park. The organ at SS Peter and Paul, Mansfield, was brought in 1971 from Clare College,

Cambridge, to replace an earlier instrument first recorded in the church in 1794.

Bells

An exceptionally thorough account of all Nottinghamshire's bells existed prior to the commencement of the project. The comparatively recent survey by George Dawson (Dawson 1994-5) and his ongoing amendments and updates has allowed researchers to record exhaustive details of church bells, including historical information referred to by Dawson. The level of detail includes not only dates, inscriptions, founders, and physical characteristics of each bell, but also provenance where translocation has occurred.

The oldest bells include a late 12th-century example at Littleborough, two mid-13th-century bells at Moorhouse and at Halam (Fig 7), and a number of 14th- and 15th-century specimens, the majority still in use, such as the 2nd at Hawton by Richard Mellours, dated to c1480 and contemporary with the present tower. A great number of 17th-century pieces are by the Oldfield foundry of Nottingham, and later examples are often by their successors.

Research has traced 'lost' bells, for example a medieval bell from Carburton that was probably formerly at the now-demolished church of Budby and is presently in the Taylor Museum at the Loughborough



Fig 7
The medieval bell, stylistically dated to the mid-13th century, at Halam, St Michael (Photo: CJ Brooke)

foundry. A few bells are by unknown or rare founders such as the mid-15th-century *sanctus* at Maplebeck, which is perhaps by John Hoton of York (Dawson 1994–5), and the 3rd at Shelford dated to the 14th century and whose lettering appears to be unique in the county. This latter bell may possibly have come from the former priory which lay a short distance from the parish church.

Clocks

The county is fortunate in having a small number of late 17th- and early 18th-century clocks by the local maker Richard Roe of Epperstone (Beeson 1971). There was formerly a one-handed example at Shelford that existed until 1880 and Epperstone itself had a Roe clock until 1854. Surviving examples include a dial-less example of 1686 from Plumtree, now in the British Horological Institute museum at Upton. The clock at Wellow dates from 1699, and at Owthorpe from 1705. A mechanism with an inscribed frame at Staunton states ‘*Rich Roe Fecit in Eperston 1707*’, and a possible later example exists at Barton-in-Fabis of 1735.

Details of several turret clocks are recorded, many of which are by Smith and Sons of Derby, Cope of Nottingham (Fig 8), and Joyce of Whitchurch, with a few by Bosworth of Nottingham, and Potts and Sons of Leeds. Some churches, such as Stapleford St Helen, no longer have a clock and record, as in this instance, the demise of an early mechanism. The churchwardens of Stapleford in 1719 presented that:

We the churchwardens have had our locks and doors of steeple belonging to our church of Stableford (sic) broke open and our clock spoiled and put out of order several times by John Ouldershaw and his son Isaac (not withstanding they have been discharged from meddling with them) and they [are] still continuing to meddle with our clock and door, we do hereby present them the said John Ouldershaw and Isaac Ouldershaw for the said crime.

(WS6)

Clocks could also be moved. The clock at St Helen’s, Trowell was transferred from the Old Nottingham Exchange Building when it was demolished in 1927. The clock at St Peter, Nottingham, installed in the 1970s, replaced a large weight-driven Cope clock installed in the 1850s, which required winding three times a day.

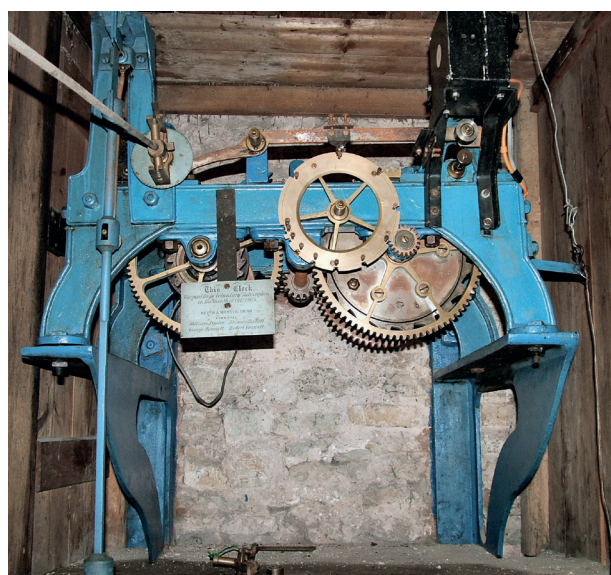


Fig 8
The clock mechanism at Laxton by G&W Cope of Nottingham, dated 1865 with contemporary information plaque attached (Photo: CJ Brooke)

Stonework

The sections on the stonework of churches in the project have so far been little populated, mainly due to the lack of expertise amongst volunteer researchers. The British Geological Survey is currently compiling an analysis of building stones throughout Nottinghamshire and will, in due course, complete the required details (Parry and Lott 2013). This is already revealing interesting trends with many churches in the east of the county being constructed largely of dolomitic sandstone, Magnesian Limestone, and Lincolnshire Limestone. In the centre and west of the county Mansfield sandstone is common, and throughout the region higher quality dressings are often composed of Mansfield Stone or Ancaster Limestone.

Some 18th-century churches, including Kinoulton and Ossington, were built in brick, which became both fashionable and widespread through the county from about 1700. Victorian churches were often in brick with stone facings, while the more recent churches in the diocese (particularly post-World War 2) have been built in various styles and from numerous different materials.

Monuments

Most of the larger churches and many smaller ones have significant collections of wall plaques, brasses, memorial tablets, and internal ledger slabs. This section of the research deals with the transcriptions

(and, where applicable, translations) of each of these monuments, which range in scale from the Edward Mellish monument of c1703 at Blyth to the numerous diminutive brass plaques such as that to Lt Col Henry Pelham of 1864 at Shireoaks, which mentions a mysterious fresco otherwise unknown and undocumented.

Figurative monuments are also numerous. They include the important effigial slabs of the early 12th century at South Leverton, and a grandiose and exceptional monument to the famous wrestler Sir Thomas Parkyns of c1741 at Bunny.

Other monuments take many forms, such as the canopied Samon tomb of the 15th century at St Mary, Nottingham, and the impressive Babbington monument at Kingston-on-Soar (Fig 9), erected by Thomas Babbington in the 1540s as a burial vault for his family but never used as such.



Fig 9
Kingston-on-Soar, the Babbington monument of the 1540s (Photo: CJ Brooke)

War memorials

Almost every church and chapel contains a war memorial commemorating the two World Wars and sometimes also a Roll of Honour detailing those who served, as at Norwell. A handful of villages nationwide, the so called 'thankful' villages, lost nobody through fighting and so never had a war memorial; in Nottinghamshire all safely returned to the villages of Cromwell, Maplebeck, Wigsley, and Wysall. A plaque near the door of Wysall church acknowledges the fact that it had no fatalities, and names those who served.

Details of the nature and material of each war memorial are recorded, as well as a transcription of the

names. In a small number of instances, for example at Thurgarton, only a village or town memorial exists, in which case this is described. However, the entry normally excludes memorials outside the church or churchyard unless there is some important additional information relating to the church. At some sites there has been an attempt to combine the idea of church and village memorial, for example at Hoveringham, where a red granite panel is set on the top of the northern boundary wall of the churchyard facing the village main street.

The types of memorial vary hugely in nature, size, position, and material. At Halam, where only one person lost their life, the war memorial is in the form of a stained glass window by Morris and Co. At Retford St Saviour, the memorial for the fallen of the Second World War is a choir vestry built in 1957. At Nottingham St Mary there are plaques in the churchyard recording the total number of lives lost from each parish in the county as well as members of St Mary's parish who fell; the originals became very weathered (Brooke 1994) and were replaced in 2008. Many of Nottinghamshire's fallen are recorded in the Imperial War Museum's digital programme (WS7). In addition to the two World Wars, memorials to the Boer War exist at Basford St Augustine (church now demolished), Mansfield SS Peter and Paul, and Nottingham St Mary. Other churches record individual losses from this conflict. Even earlier, in the churchyard of Beeston St John the Baptist, there is a stone obelisk to those who died in the Crimean War (Fig 10). A more recent conflict, the Falklands War, is commemorated at Mansfield Woodhouse.

Churchyard

The section on churchyards is not intended to be a fully comprehensive description of every monument and grave-marker, but rather a summary of the nature, shape, boundaries, and burial pattern. Researchers are asked to locate the earliest visible grave-markers and their positions as well as any unusual monuments, such as those separately listed. The nature of the boundaries, any later extensions, and the shape and position of the churchyard are detailed.

Using a combination of Google Earth imagery and field investigation, a number of potentially early churchyards have been identified, such as the previously unrecorded circular boundaries at Kneeton and West Markham. In addition, the development of many churchyards can be traced through studying the

on the nature of the churchyard. For example, at Lambley in 1998 an evaluation excavation revealed late 12th-century domestic pottery and useful palaeoenvironmental evidence; close to the present north wall of the church, the structural remains of a probable former north aisle, pre-dating the 15th century, were located.

List of incumbents

Each entry contains as complete a list of incumbents as can be found. Though many churches present this information on a board or in guidebooks, researchers are asked to check carefully in published sources to ensure accuracy, as printed lists in churches can be flawed. For Nottinghamshire, some detailed research on incumbents is available (eg Train 1953, 1961) and also for prebendary holders (eg Le Neve 1963, 1975, 1999), but primary source documents also need to be consulted, especially for medieval appointments which can appear as passing references, and are often difficult to find. The editorial team have used SAPPHIRE to find many additional post-holders who were previously unrecorded. Researchers are also encouraged to use the Church of England clergy database (WS8), as well as Crockford's Directories.

Significant discoveries

Considerable new information has come to light during the course of research. A substantial body of knowledge has been added to the history and, in many cases, archaeology of every church and chapel so far researched. Bellframes and cross slabs, both substantially unrecorded, have already been mentioned, and in a few instances the historical and archaeological evidence have combined to provide significant new findings, relating both to individual churches as well as to trends across the diocese. These discoveries, combined with the regional scope of the project, have allowed us to draw a number of unexpected, and exciting, new conclusions about Nottinghamshire's churches. Several examples are given here:

Screveton, St Wilfrid

The tower of this church (Fig 11) dates from the 13th to the 15th centuries, but with a clear rebuilding of the belfry stage, which is traditionally ascribed to the late 16th century or to the 'Elizabethan' period

*Fig 10
The Crimean War memorial in the churchyard at
Beeston St John the Baptist (Photo: G Buxton)*

position of the church within its boundaries and the shape and extent of the current space (Rodwell 2012). At a few sites, such as Screveton, it may be possible to identify the position of early secular buildings, in this case a potential priest's house to the east of the church.

Churchyard excavations are commonplace, though normally a response to mitigating service trenches, septic tanks, or drainage. However, at a few locations, where church extensions have either been built or proposed, it has been possible to glean more information about the archaeological nature of the churchyard. These details are presented under the archaeology section for each entry but have a bearing

(Anon 1897; Pevsner 1979), including in the official List description (WS9). The bellframe in the tower is an unusually high-sided form of Elphick ‘V’ trusses, Pickford Group 6.B (Pickford 1993), and was selected as a suitable candidate for the project’s bellframes dendrochronology programme (Fig 12). Results show an estimated felling date of 1624 for this frame (Arnold *et al* 2015), a date that accords well with the treble bell, which is dated to 1639 and inscribed ‘EX DONI RICARDVS HALL’ with badge and mark of George I Oldfield, bellfounder of Nottingham. The second bell is much earlier, c1500 and the tenor is of the 18th century.

Earlier tree-ring-dating work revealed that some boards lower in the tower also have a felling date of 1624. A ladder, formerly used to give access between the silence chamber and the belfry, is clearly late medieval in form, though unfortunately it will not accurately date. Turning to the historical records, it was found that the churchwardens’ presentations for this same period are unusually rich and give a precise account of the work to the tower.

Problems started in 1596 when they reported that ‘our church steeple is in decay’, and by 1603 they stated

that: ‘we are busy about the repair of our church and steeple, and have been both this year and last year, and trust to finish in the next year’. However, things did not go smoothly, as the accounts of 1620 record:

Our steeple is at this time under the hands of the workmen; we trust, if God permits, to finish it before Lammas; the churchyard cannot be fenced until the steeple is finished; our bells cannot be in good repair before the steeple is finished.

Two years later and the presentation reads: ‘we and the whole town desire some time for the repairing of our steeple and other things about our church, which we are doing as fast as we can.’ In fact, it was not until April 1626 that the churchwardens reported that ‘our bells are not as well hung up as we intend they shall be, but we are carefully about it to have them done before August’. Following this, all is quiet and we can assume that the work was completed, and it certainly was by 1639, when Richard Hall donated a new bell (WS6). The combined evidence provides us with a refined date for the rebuilding of the belfry of 1603–1639, with the majority of the internal work being from 1624–1639.



Fig 11
Screveton, St Wilfrid, church and tower from the south-east (Photo: CJ Brooke)



Fig 12
Screveton, St Wilfrid, bellframe of c1624 (Photo: CJ Brooke)

Ossington, Holy Rood

The church of Ossington was entirely rebuilt in 1782–5 by John Carr of York, funded by Robert Denison as a memorial to his brother William. Though impressive and valuable as an example of late 18th-century architecture in its own right, the site and its history have been revealed to be highly complex. The earlier church is depicted in an engraving of 1676 and shows a curious structure, almost square and surmounted by an enclosed bellcote, lying south of the hall (WS1).

The diminutive size and the round-headed windows in the illustration are suggestive of its origins as a small church or seigneurial chapel of the Anglo-Norman period. Examination of the churchyard reveals a pattern of marked, *in situ* burials that pre-date 1782, and further examination of the site of the hall demonstrates that the present church must lie almost exactly on the site of its predecessor, as the hall lay immediately adjacent to the present churchyard and its site now presents a seamless boundary with it.

Historical research yields a first mention in 1144, when Hugh de Burun granted the church of Ossington

to Lenton priory by a charter drawn up in the chapter house of the priory where he eventually expected to be buried, so ‘*that God might avert the scourge of his wrath from him, due to the very great multitude of his sins*’ (Godfrey 1884). However, about the same time, Archbishop William FitzHerbert of York made a counter-grant of the church of Ossington to the newly-founded knightly Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. These competing donations sparked a complicated dispute over possession of the church that continued until the early 13th century, but fostered a *camera* at nearby Winkburn, which in turn appropriated the church of Maplebeck, and gave rise to estate ownership at Danethorpe (WS1). The church also contains monuments pre-dating the neo-Classical building and, despite the excavation of a large mausoleum vault (the mausoleum itself was demolished in 1838) to the east of the church, pre-18th-century archaeological stratigraphy is expected to survive below the present structure.

Modern churches

A third discovery, which has less to do with the archaeology of buildings than Screveton and Ossington, is that the diocese contains many churches which are relatively modern. Something like one-fifth of all churches in Nottinghamshire were built during the 20th century. These are not village churches, which usually have medieval cores. In the majority of cases they are suburban churches, built to reflect the movement of population out of town centres and into suburbs and estates, which have then been supplied with shops, community venues, and churches. Some of these suburban communities are private housing developments, while others are council-house estates, in both cases built between the wars.

With estates which were centred on particular villages, the existing parish church has simply become the church for the whole area, as at Keyworth in south Nottinghamshire, and Burton Joyce to the east of the city. In other cases, a new or additional church has been added, such as at Wollaton Park, on the west side of Nottingham, or Ravenshead St Peter. New builds on council estates include St Barnabas, Lenton Abbey, St John, Bilborough, St Matthew on the Hill, Bestwood Park, and St Barnabas, Inham Nook. Although some of these churches were built to a high standard, others are little more than Nissan huts. Almost all were built on green field sites, without archaeological investigation. Their life expectancy as useable buildings is not great and therefore the archaeological study of their fabric is of considerable importance. Some churches have been even more transient, built as mission rooms, or even rented as iron churches. A county-wide survey such as this throws up some unexpected conclusions, one of which is that the stability of the village church in the landscape is not matched in towns.

Conclusions

In its inception, the project was intended to facilitate access to information for the DAC and to provide a source of accurate detail for the writers of church guides, parishes, and for academic researchers. In the event, it has turned out to be a far more detailed task than first envisaged. At the time of writing, there are details of 241 churches (including 43 former churches) on the project website, although some still require input in specific areas. A further 138 churches have introductory entries but little other information and are currently either being researched or are awaiting a

volunteer assignment. Details for the majority of the monastic houses and lost medieval churches will be completed towards the conclusion of the project.

Much additional material in the form of exploratory excursus will be applicable to many of the topics presented, and it is envisaged that in the future these will be forthcoming from individual researchers. Likewise, the material offers a rich resource for further academic study, particularly as a result of the structure of each entry taking the same form. Anyone wanting to study clocks, or organs, or glass, to name just three of the topic areas, can build up a corpus of material simply by searching by keywords.

To give an example, most churches have an organ. To find all the references, anyone interested in organs can type the following into the Google search box: site: southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk intitle: organ. This search limits the results to pages on the website where the term 'organ' appears in the page title. Anyone interested in 'glass' or 'monuments', for example, can substitute either term for organ. An advanced search engine for the site is being developed to make this task easier.

The process of research, and particularly the process of building up a guide to writing a church history, is also one which can be developed further, into other dioceses and other parts of the country. But there is a caveat to this proposal. Rev Dr John Charles Cox, the Victorian church history scholar, warned against deriving common assumptions from a single case study. He wrote what became the first book on writing a parish history (published in 1879) because he felt that his extended notes on Derbyshire churches were in no way an accurate guide to researching and writing on the churches of Lincolnshire (Cox 1879, vii–viii).

Whilst the editorial team have been thorough in their task, errors do exist and as these are brought to light they are corrected – one of the great advantages of website publication. Additional information has been and will continue to be found, and this too can be added to existing church entries. As churches and chapels evolve, details of reordering, extensions, losses, redundancy, and disasters can be added and updated as required. The advantages of internet publication over paper are clearly demonstrable.

At the same time, many of the completed entries have been downloaded and printed by individual churches, or in some cases by the project on their behalf, in order to act as 'guidebooks'. The entire process of compiling an acceptable template, working with and training volunteers, and putting into place a rigorous editorial policy, has made this project an exemplar for

similar church heritage projects elsewhere. The benefits of having open and accessible information that is factually accurate, and capable of being updated as new information comes to light, make this scheme a model for the presentation of church archaeology and history.

Christopher Brooke and John Beckett are editors for the Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project. Chris is joint diocesan archaeological advisor and is honorary Associate Professor in medieval church history and archaeology, and John is Professor of English Regional History, both at the University of Nottingham.

Notes

¹ Chris Brooke is a member of the Southwell DAC, and this account is based on his recollection of the discussions at the time. Sadly, John Severn died before the project began.

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