



## Chairman's Welcome



In this 'Lockdown Newsletter' we hope to spread a little lightness as well as to keep in touch. But first, like most of us I guess, I am looking forward to the time when we can once again visit our wonderful church buildings. Particularly at a time like this, they give a context and sense of history which can be somehow reassuring. Covid-19 is not the first 'plague' our country has seen and many of our churches bear reminders of how life ultimately continues despite the hardship caused by those events.

When things get back to whatever the "new normal" will be, the Trust's funds will be needed more than ever to make sure that this century's events do not lead to a lack of maintenance causing lasting damage, and that restoration and renewal projects are not put on hold indefinitely. Like all charities, raising funds by holding events is not going to be possible for some time to come, and our annual Summer Party has of course had to be cancelled. However, there is still much we can do. Positively, we are racking our collective brain to come up with ideas for the Ride+Stride event on the second Saturday in September. It may take a rather different form this year, but we are hoping that across the country, churches will again be open and some form of fundraising activity will be possible. We would welcome any ideas as we continue to plan for less restricted times generally.

In the short term, Dr Chris Brooke's quiz later in this Newsletter could give you much fun looking for the answers on the Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project website. The site is a mine of information and I guarantee you will find something fascinating even if you don't get the answers!

I am grateful to the trustees who are maintaining communication and support as they are able, and to Maureen Hallam whose fundraising from charitable trusts and other donors is continuing, despite other forms of fundraising activity being on 'pause'. Without our annual Summer Party, at which I am always pleased to have the opportunity to thank you for your support for the Trust, I would like to assure you here that this support is hugely valuable and will be appreciated more than ever in the times to come.

**Richard Brackenbury - NHCT Chairman**

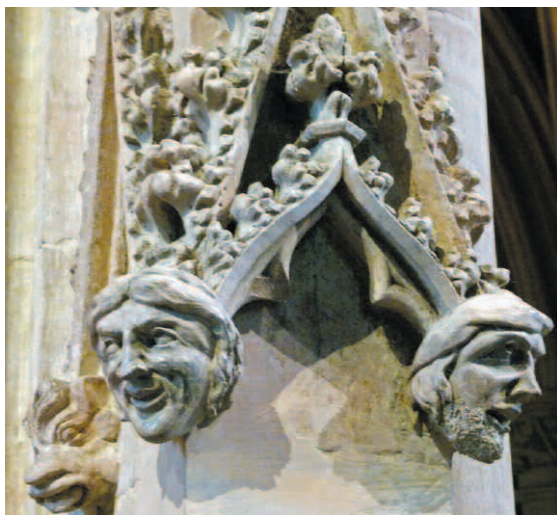
## Out of the Darkness... The rise of "Perpendicular Gothic"



*Decorated Gothic - The Leaves of Southwell  
circa 1280 -1300*

We are undoubtedly living through the greatest pandemic crisis in living history; these are very challenging times for us all. It could be argued that society has been changed – certainly our patterns of behaviour are currently different: working from home, self-isolation for many, and social distancing for all. As we emerge from this crisis what will be the new normal?

Previous pandemics in history suggest that perhaps there could be fundamental ongoing changes in many aspects of society. The world was certainly different after the 1918-19 influenza epidemic, but many of these changes could also be attributed to the aftermath of the First World War. One aspect of society that was most strikingly changed by the Black Death in the fourteenth century was church architecture.



*Detail from Southwell's choir screen  
Decorated Gothic - circa 1340*

From the Norman Romanesque style of the twelfth century with its sturdy pillars and round-headed arches, church architectural style had developed into the Early Gothic of the thirteenth century. Arches became pointed or lancet-headed in shape, windows became larger and walls and columns thinner as building techniques became more sophisticated. By the end of the thirteenth century church architecture had become highly decorative with complex carvings and detailed decorative stonework – often referred to as “Decorated Gothic”. Good examples of this style can be seen at Southwell Minster in the fluid carvings of plants, animals and green men found within the Chapter House – known collectively as ‘The Leaves of Southwell’. These are of quite exceptional quality and are regarded as the best example of thirteenth century naturalistic carving in the United Kingdom. The Minster’s choir screen, of around 1320-40, is decorated with carvings of numerous heads and caricatures. Such highly decorative stone carving required many skilled craftsmen and rich patrons or wealthy congregations to pay for such specialized work.

The bubonic plague pandemic, Black Death, swept through Britain in 1348 – 1349. It is estimated that it killed 30 – 40% of the country’s population, although some historians maintain that the figure was more likely to have been 60 – 70%. All sections of society and all trades were affected, and many of the skilled masons capable of executing the fine work and the figure sculpture of the Decorated period would have been victims of the plague. Those who were left were too much in demand, too pressed for time to be able to use their talents to the full. The new generation of masons, artisans rather than artists, were affected by the new mobility of labour which was so marked a feature of the post-plague period. Forced to work in a variety of stones, most of them unfamiliar, it was inevitable that the workmen should opt for less complicated and less ornamented techniques.

Highly carved decorated stonework became much rarer and a simpler less ornate style emerged. Perpendicular Gothic was the architectural style that dominated the late fourteenth century immediately after the plague. As its name suggests, the chief characteristic of Perpendicular architecture is the emphasis on strong vertical lines, seen most markedly in window tracery and wall panelling. Roof vaulting became elaborate and ornate, with a multitude of vaulting ribs spreading outwards in a fan shape, ornamented with pendants and cross-ribs that served a purely decorative function. Window area was maximised while wall area was minimised. The result is lofty, open interiors of extraordinary lightness and delicacy. With decreased congregations there was no longer a need to focus on expanding the body of the church, but rather to build with a concentration on height and space, maybe in order to accommodate great monuments, house chantries and effigies which became popular after the Black Death.



*Perpendicular Gothic west window  
Winchester Cathedral  
circa 1370 onwards*



*King's College Chapel, Cambridge  
circa 1520 onwards*

The west window at Southwell Minster is a good example of the Perpendicular style; King’s College chapel at Cambridge and the nave at Winchester cathedral are wonderful examples too.

We are currently going through difficult times and although fortunately there is no comparison between the fatal nature of bubonic plague and Covid-19 we are still facing many challenges. In history the plagues of the fourteenth century drastically changed many aspects of medieval society, but out of that terrible darkness arose the wonderful Perpendicular Gothic buildings so much admired and loved today. We can hope that out of our present dark times as we as a society build a new future, something positive and even as beautiful as King’s College chapel will arise.

**Andrew Paris - NHCT Trustee**

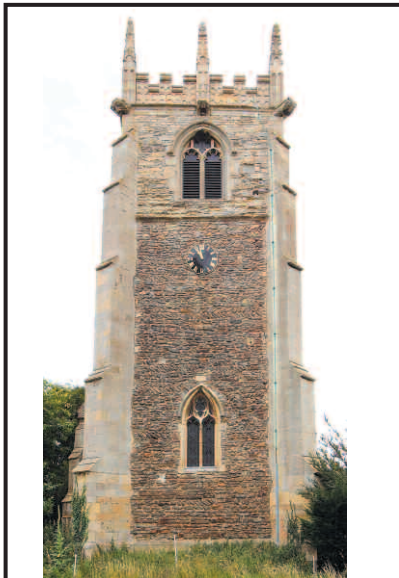
# Church Picture Quiz

Where is this? (Just for fun!)

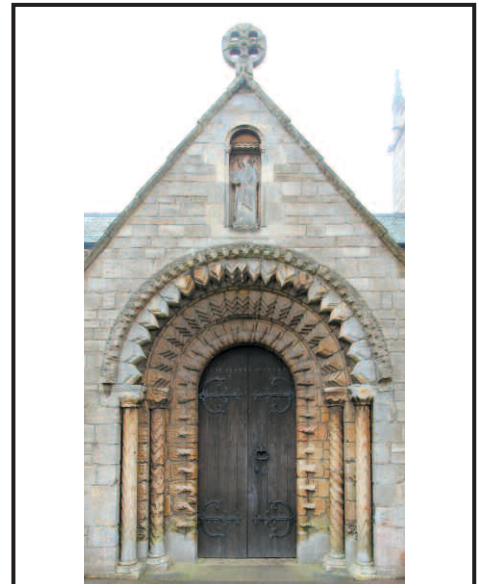
All these pictures are of Nottinghamshire churches and their unique features. Every church features on the Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project website - [southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk](http://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk)  
The clues with each picture should help you work out where the photos were taken. There are no prizes, but good luck in your searching! (Answers will be on the NHCT website shortly and in the next newsletter).  
*Many thanks to Dr Chris Brooke for the pictures and clues.*



*'Pillar Capital' - south aisle arcade depicting a bishop*



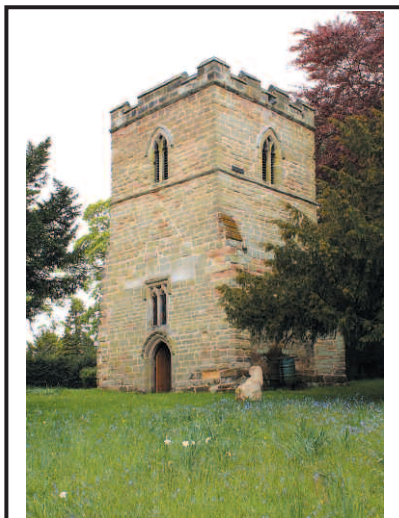
*A rare Anglo-Saxon tower from a rare view*



*An unusual Norman porch doorway; behind the Blessed Virgin guards*



*This is where you end up in C15th England if you don't go to Mass*



*Just the tower remains, but down the road a new church*



*A Norman yeoman warms his feet in winter, high in the tower watched over by St Wilfrid*



*The only Norman bell in the county*



*Forlorn little church that once fell out with Welbeck*



*A simple Tudor chapel now serves to worship the Norse god*



*The British Museum architect created this neo-Greek masterpiece for the Duke*



*Joshua found ease here in 1829*



*The last remaining Rood Loft*



*When Adam delved and Eve span*



*Louis Ambler worked through the war to finish this for the Duke*



*Sadly redundant, a splendid medieval church restored by Scott in 1855*

## Friends of NHCT - Help Support the Work of the Trust

The Friends of Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust have been cruelly deprived of at least two events by the effects of Covid-19, but we will be resurrecting plans as soon as we are allowed to meet together again. Our county's churches will still be there for us to visit, as they have been throughout the centuries, living witnesses to these major events in history. The work of the Trust will go on, helping to fund repairs and restoration, making sure these handsome landmarks of places and times continue to remind us that we are not the first generation to go through a pandemic and come out the other side. New Friends are most welcome, and as well as the church visits, we are making plans for a series of church concerts as soon as we are able to gather together again.

**Anthea Moat - NHCT Secretary**

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**[www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk](http://www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk)**

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