

The Tickhill Psalter

The Priory was famous for its treasures including sumptuously illuminated manuscripts. One of which still exists. It is known as the Tickhill Psalter, so called because it was

produced by John de Tickhill who was Prior from 1303-14. It is one of the finest of all English medieval manuscripts. Today it is kept safely in the New York Public Library. Sadly, few people in Nottinghamshire are aware of this wonderful part of our Christian heritage.

The Psalter, or book of Psalms is richly decorated with wonderfully colourful capitals and borders with scenes from the life of King David. The psalter was never finished and contains neither calendar or litany, both of which would normally be present.

Monastic buildings

Little remains today of the monastic buildings but a wall running north retains an entrance doorway and several windows of the *cellarium*, above which would have been the dormitory.

When the nearby school was built many animal bones were excavated indicating that this area may have been the kitchen. A well was discovered and evidence for the Chapter House.



Gatehouse

The early 14th century gatehouse was constructed in the main to accommodate travellers. The ground floor is divided by what was once a public road. The ceiling above the archway has original medieval timbers and the upper room is accessed via a stone stairway added in the 15th century. The original access to the upper floor was by a staircase on the exterior north-east corner. A chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and shrine were added at the south-east corner later in the 14th century. Guests were accommodated in the upper chamber where they were allowed to stay for three days. To one side of this chamber is a room for the brother guestmaster.

Welcome to Worksop Priory of Our Lady & St Cuthbert

In 1103 the Priory of Our Lady and St Cuthbert was founded by the Canons of St Augustine, the first 18 of whom are believed to have come from Huntingdon. At that time the Lovetots were the local landowners, living at Worksop Manor. Their descendents, the Furnivals, Talbots, and Howards, rose to become one of the most powerful family dynasties in England and the fortunes of the Priory rose with them. Worksop Priory (formerly also known as Radford Priory) became a centre of learning and piety, always moderately well provided for—in 1291 its taxable income amounted to £167 making it the third

wealthiest monastic house in the county.

Church and Monastery

The original church on the site would have been a small Norman parish church subsequently rebuilt for use by the canons. In about 1140 the present nave was commenced at the east end and the subsequent nine bays of the aisle arcades, dating from c.1170, have impressive carvings and alternating round and octagonal piers. The first master mason was almost certainly recruited from Southwell Minster which was being built at the same time. The twin west towers also belong to the 12th century, except for their



tops which are of the 15th century. The Lady Chapel dates from the 13th century and is of fine design and beauty.

On the north side of the great church were the cloisters and living accommodation (unusual as they were normally to the south in monastic layouts). The mill and kitchens (where the church hall now stands) were served with water from the river Ryton. There were farm buildings, barns and stores, splendid rooms for the Prior, a place for writing and a library.

The fine gatehouse was built in the early 14th century, permission being granted in 1314 by the Archbishop of York to fell 200 oaks for its construction.

The Dissolution

Through centuries of war and peace, the Canons



Continued on page 2



Are you fascinated by church history? Could you help us bring church heritage to life? The Southwell & Nottingham Diocese Church History Project would like to hear from you. For more information please see www.nottsopenchurches.org.uk





3 West doorway

The details of both the south and west doorways show links with Lincoln and with contemporary churches in Yorkshire. There are dragons heads and 'saw-tooth' chevron just like that found at Lincoln Cathedral and the same type of chevron appears at Selby Abbey. The date of the west doorway is around 1180 and was completed under the patronage of William de Lovetot.

Continued from page 1

continued their daily round of work and prayer until changes in English religious life under Henry VIII brought all this to an end.

On November 15th 1538, the King's Commissioner demanded entry to the Priory at the Gatehouse. He had brought the order for closure. The Prior, William Stokes and sixteen Canons were to be pensioned off, the last in a series of 19 priors over 436 years. Over two thousand acres of land, the buildings and the treasures were to be seized by the Crown. All the fine buildings were to be dismantled.

Much of the land and treasures went to the Earl of Shrewsbury on condition that he and his successors as Lords of the Manor of Worksop provided a fine glove for the right hand of the Sovereign at the Coronation – an obligation still in force today.

The townspeople were determined that at least part of the church should remain. Eventually, they

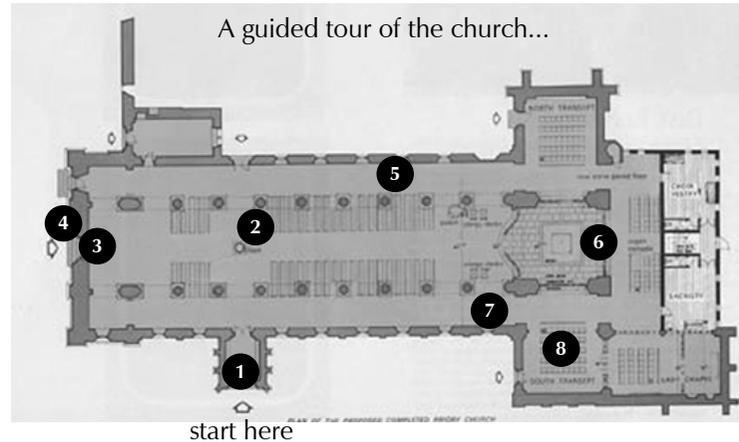
were allowed to keep the nave as the parish church, and the gatehouse as the vicarage (later this was to become the first elementary school in England). Eventually, all the monastic buildings were plundered for stone and lead, and collapsed into ruin, and the east end was lost. The nave was re-designed with large Perpendicular windows and pinnacles in an attempt to make it more fashionable in the 15th century.

The Revd George Appleton became Vicar of Worksop in 1847 and recognised the importance of the surviving buildings. He eventually raised the money to restore the nave - the pillars, windows, roofs and doors of which are in the Romanesque (Norman) style. A new altar and reredos by Gilbert Scott was placed at the east end of the nave under a new stained glass window.

The present central tower and choir, designed by Laurence King were completed in 1974.

2 Font

There are two fountains, the earlier is of 1857, with an octagonal main shaft and a panelled square bowl, and the second dates from 1974.



1 South Door

Look closely and see if you can make out the many crosses engraved into the stone. It is thought these were cut by crusaders as votive marks. The front of the door is medieval with decorative iron scroll work dating from 1325-50, the loop of the scroll ends resembling Iris flowers.



4 West window

By Helen Whittaker in 2003 the window depicts St. Cuthbert, his right hand raised in blessing and in his left the crowned head of King Oswald that was buried with him for safe keeping. He has otters at his feet; their presence relates to the story of a monk who saw the otters restoring warmth to Cuthbert's numb feet, after St Cuthbert had been partially immersed in the sea at night chanting in praise of God.

5 Skull

A small glass-covered opening, in the north wall of the priory interior, houses part of an ancient skull with an arrowhead embedded in it. This is locally reputed to be that of a Sherwood Forester.

6 Organ

The case has a tonal function as well as an architectural one, mixing the sound of the 1634 pipes, then projecting it forwards as a blended whole.



8 Lady Chapel

In memory of Sir Gerard Furnival, who is buried in St Peter's chapel (east end of the south choir aisle), Lady Maud Furnival had the Lady Chapel built. Notice the fine early English lancet windows.

Fortunately, unlike much of the church at the time, the Lady Chapel escaped the damage wreaked in the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Today the chapel houses oak panels with the names of those who fell in the two world wars. You may like to pause here for a while and take some time to pray or be silent.

7 Alabaster Effigies

From left to right the three effigies are of: Thomas Lord Furnival ("the hasty") d.1366; Lady Joan, his niece, who is shown with a lion at her feet; and her husband Sir Thomas Nevil who was High Treasurer of England. It is said that the legs were cut off the effigies by an over-zealous Verger so that they could be stood up at the end of the church.

