Researchers' Training Day, Saturday 17 November

The latest researchers' training day took place in the Great Hall, Southwell, when over forty people attended. Project Manager Nick Harding opened the event by welcoming research volunteers and members of the Research Team, and explaining how the original remit of the project, i.e. cataloguing the history and archaeology of all the churches and church sites in the diocese, had led to its expansion into other areas, particularly education and tourism.

John Beckett opened the first session, on identifying and looking at internet source materials. He said that when the project was in its early stages there was little information available via the internet, but over the last ten years available resources have increased to such an extent that now it is possible to do a major part of research simply by consulting the internet. He gave two examples which he and Chris Brooke had researched totally via the internet – Treswell and Kneeton – but he stressed that the first thing volunteers should do is visit the church they are researching, in order to get a feel for the building and it surroundings.
He reminded volunteers to check the Resources section on the project's website, which is updated as and when new resources are discovered. Further information is outlined in the document 'How to write a History of your Church'. It is hoped to digitize a number of other sources in the near future. If researchers know of any other useful resources which are not listed, they were asked to let the Team know.

Chris Brooke said resources will lead to either an original or transcribed document or a database, and then went on to mention various useful websites, using Treswell as an example. He noted the differences in spelling over the years – it appears variously as Tyreswell, Tyreswelle, and Tireswelle. Domesday entries can be accessed via the **National Archives** website – though at a cost (the Local Studies Library also has a copy). If there is no mention of a church or priest, it does not mean that there wasn't one, since many are not listed in Domesday.

If a church is known to have been apportioned to a monastic establishment, the **Monastic Database** should be searched, which can lead to other resources. A check should be made of the foundation charter via the **British Archaeological Association**'s website. Another useful site is **British History Online**. The **1291 Taxation Returns** should be consulted – every church above a particular value was taxed in an attempt to raise revenue for the Crusades. Chris demonstrated that Treswell church's income was split between two people at the end of the 13th century, which showed the value of the church. Fifty years later many churches appear in the **Nonarium Inquisitiones** (although the entries are in Latin, the wording tends to be in a standard format and can be fairly easily interpreted).
From the 13th century onwards the **Calendar of Patent Rolls** was compiled which can be searched online, and in 1294 Edmund had the moiety of Tyreswell church. In 1304 a licence to buy in a priest is recorded, and in 1318 John de Malton had a moiety of the church. The **Registers of the Archbishops of York** are very useful; mostly confirming whether someone had a right/apportion to a living. **Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum** is a site which is currently not operating, but should be restored soon. There is much useful information, such as what was happening to a church's building, in the **Churchwardens' Returns and Visitations. Nottingham University Manuscripts and Special Collections** have a search catalogue. The **National Archives** provide information as to what is held and where the information can be found. Chris said a good starting point is the listing description, which could be used to draw up a sketch plan – but the listing should not be taken as read, and should be used in conjunction with **Pevsner** and other reliable sources. **Google Earth** can indicate the shape and boundaries of churchyards. **Old.maps.co.uk** is a useful resource, as is **Edina,** which has the earliest

Ordnance Survey maps. (Researchers should ask Chris or John Beckett to access Edina if they wish, since it is not open to the general public.) Other sites mentioned included **Crockford's Directories** (there are on-site costs for accessing). Records between 1830-1880 are available at **Lincolnshire Archives Office,** St Rumbold Street, Lincoln. Some websites are poorly maintained, such as trade directories, and John Beckett recommended using **Google Books Search Engine.**

There followed a Question-and-Answer session, then a short break, and afterwards Chris Brooke spoke about understanding church bells and bellframes. By the ninth century bells were in common use in churches, but they tended to be small – originally hand bells were used at various points in the medieval liturgy. They played a significant ceremonial role and were used to ring the canonical hours, to announce the time and a call to worship. They were also used to announce commencement of the Mass and tolling for the dead. Bells also had a secular use, being rung as warning signals for invasion. They were also traditionally used to ward off evil spirits.
The earliest known bell in Nottinghamshire is at Littleborough, the bell dating from $c.$1180 Norman) and dedicated to a saint, as medieval bells often were. The next earliest is at Moorhouse ($c.$1240) which is uninscribed. Both are long thin bells. The third earliest is at Halam ($c.$1250) which is also uninscribed. By the 17th century bells took on a more traditional shape, ie smaller and fatter, as a result of being easier to manufacture and less likely to crack.

Originally bells were almost always cast in situ, either in the church in a casting pit or just outside. They generally gave the founder's marks and date, but as they were not always named, the style of lettering can help with identification. Bellframes were poorly understood and poorly researched nationally, mainly as access in the past was limited. Their evolution has in recent years been better understood, although there are only a few firm dates available. Originally bells were hung on a beam, then on a series of short headed frames; Chris showed examples from Lambley, dated to 1475, and Carlton-on-Trent, dated to 1547. Long headed frames followed, these allowed for more stability. Eventually metal frames were used, which were much more stable, and they are used today.

George Elphick produced a classification of bellframes in 1945, which was used for many years until in 1993 Chris Pickford reclassified them, his volume showing various topologies and more variants. As examples of early bellframes Chris mentioned Bleasby, with two oak timbers suspended on window sills tree-ring dated to 1476, and Halam, where two original beams survive. A very rare and probably early medieval frame is the Elphick H frame, consisting of a beam suspended right across the belfry supported on a gantry and Chris showed an example from Heapham, Lincolnshire, as we have none identified in Nottinghamshire.

After the Reformation 'change-ringing' was introduced – that is, full circle ringing – which originated in the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. This type of ringing gave more control over the bell, but created more strain on the bellframe, so that a more substantial design was needed.

Improved casting techniques and more foundries meant the quality of casting was enhanced. The only two foundries still in existence are Taylors of Loughborough and Whitechapel, London.

George Dawson is the local bell expert, and has constructed a profile of differing shapes through various eras. He has some references recording the movement of bells – this could happen if they became cracked, and therefore non-ringable, and they had to be replaced. Sometimes the number of bells was added to. After a long period in use, bells are quarter-turned to even out the stresses. Chris advised researchers to look at all the equipment surrounding the bells, such as

hoist pulleys used to lower or raise them for tuning or maintenance. He stressed, though, that if researchers are going to get a closer look at the bells, they must ensure it is safe to do so.

David Harper than spoke about the website; currently there are 117 full entries on the site, eight awaiting adding to the site, and twelve being edited. There are a large number of introductory pages on the site, which consist of a short summary of the church and a photograph. Researchers were asked to look at the 'work in progress' section to check on the churches and sites not currently under research, and to urge anyone they know interested in the project to contact Heather Sirrel. He said the Research Team has just organized some additional help in getting entries onto the site. John Beckett added that David was doing an excellent job of getting entries and introductory pages onto the site. Many introductions have been submitted by Terry Fry, who was given particular thanks.

During an excellent lunch provided by Southwell Minster Refectory, attenders were able to pose any further questions to the various Team members, and the event closed at ... ? (didn't look at my watch!!)
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Janice Avery
November 2012