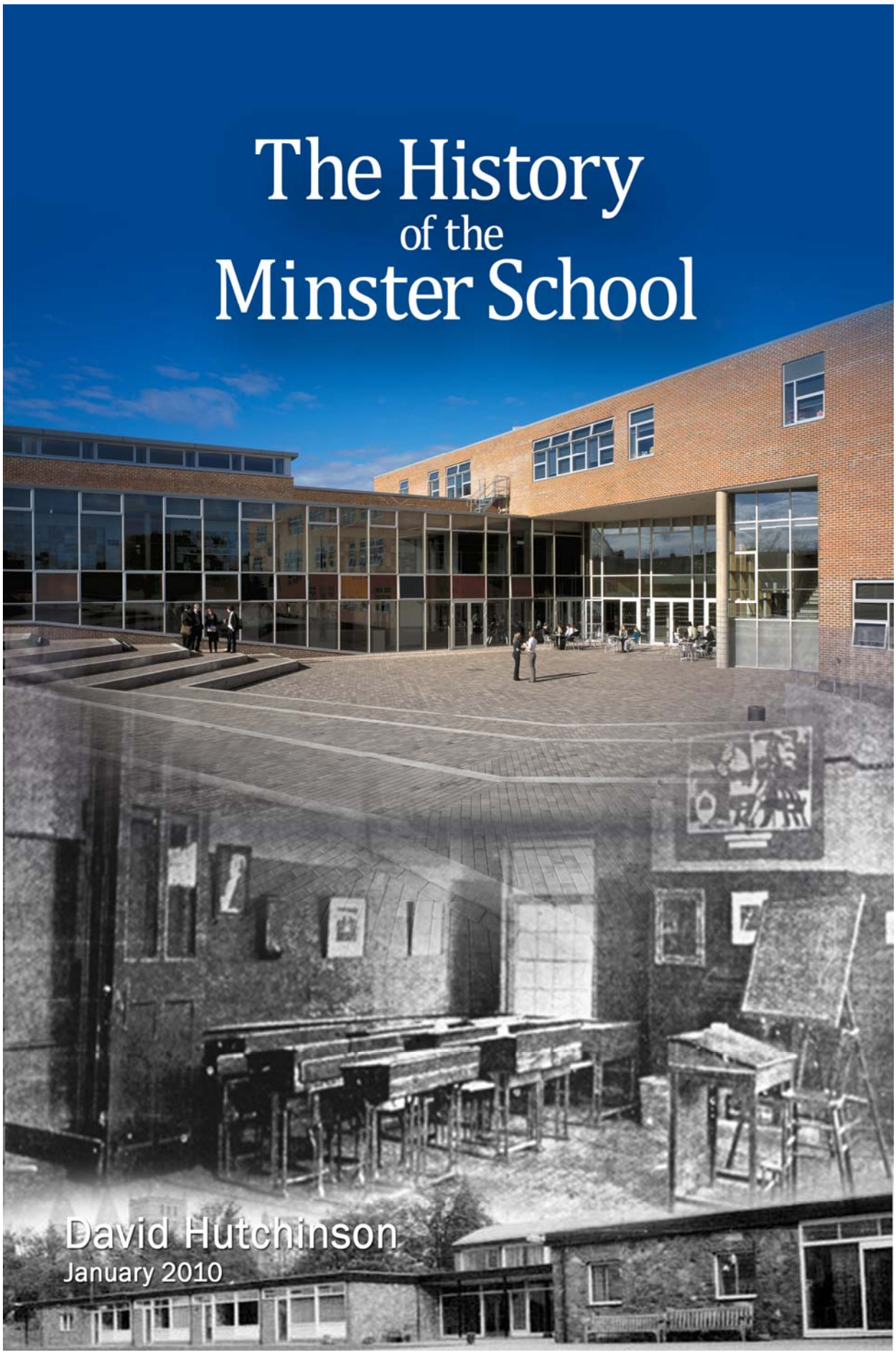
The History of the Minster School



David Hutchinson

January 2010

The History of the Minster School

I. Introduction

The present Southwell Minster School came into being in September 1976 as an 11-18, co-educational comprehensive.

One of its "ancestors" was a grammar school, established in the Middle Ages. No precise date can be given to the grammar school's foundation. It was always a small school - on a number of occasions in danger of ceasing to exist. It did not develop a reputation for producing pupils who became household names, nor did it set any trends in education.

Yet, through descent from the Grammar School, the Minster School is part of a line of development which may go back further than that represented by any other English school now outside the private sector. And, precisely because the Grammar School, and the other ancestors of the modern comprehensive, were not too much out of the ordinary, their story is the more important.

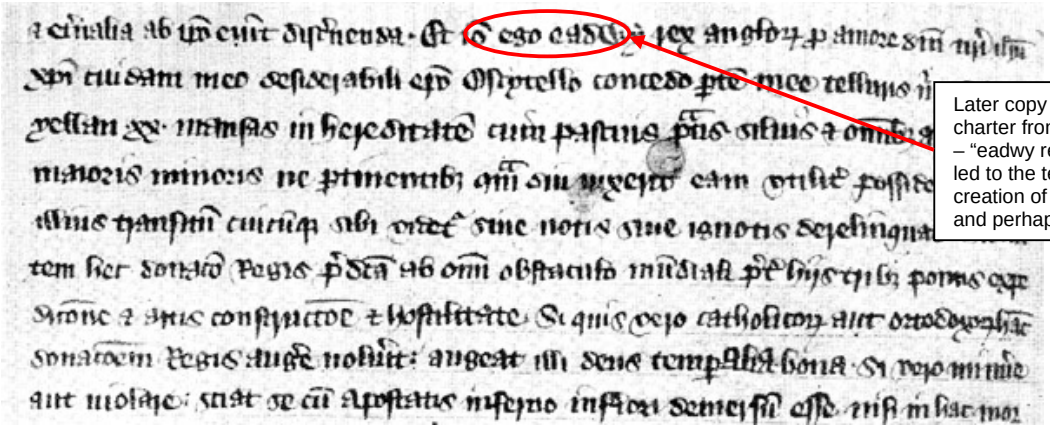
II. The Grammar School

1. The Origins of the Grammar School

The earliest schools were linked to a monastery, cathedral or other large church, such as the Minster at Southwell. Such "grammar" schools were at first very small - made up of perhaps less than twenty boys. Pupils probably started to attend between the ages of nine and twelve.

Southwell's grammar school may have been created at the same time as its Minster - to provide education for Minster choristers. The Minster is thought to have been founded soon after the Saxon King Edwy gave lands in Southwell to Oscetel, Archbishop of York, in a charter dating from between 955 and 959.

> *"…I Edwy, King of the English, for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ concede to my beloved Bishop Oscetel, in inheritance, part of my land at a place called Southwell…"*



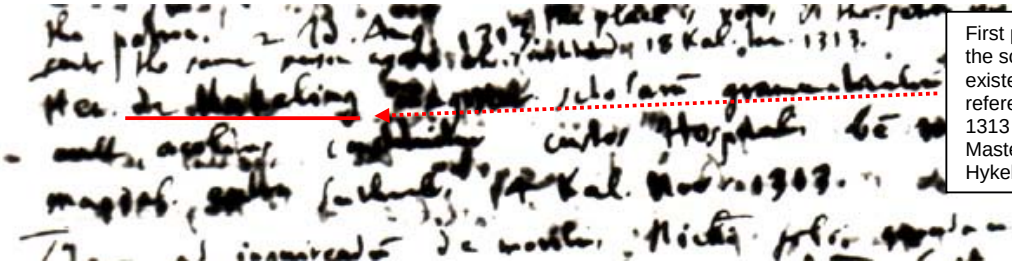
Later copy of part of the charter from King Edwy – "eadwy rex" - which led to the tenth century creation of the Minster – and perhaps the school

The earliest documentary proof of at least the Minster's existence is in the "Liber Vitae" of" Hyde Abbey in about 1014, in a reference to Eadburh, who was Abbess of Repton in the seventh century. She was made a saint of the Saxon Church and her shrine was probably in Southwell:

> *"Then rested Saint Eadburh in the Minster of Southwell near the water called the Trent."*

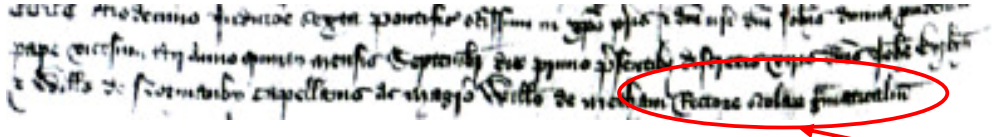
Minster records for 1238 mention the existence of grammar schools in the archdeaconry of Nottingham and state that they were under the authority of "the prebendary of Normanton in the collegiate church of Southwell." The schools are again referred to, in 1248, in an order that they should not be held in the houses of prebendaries unless properly qualified teachers were being employed. (The prebendaries were the "canons", or group of clergy, who formed the “chapter” which ran the Minster).

The earliest documentary confirmation that there was a grammar school in Southwell is in a fourteenth century “register” of the Archbishop of York. Medieval Southwell had one of thirteen “hospitals”, founded to help the sick and poor of Nottinghamshire – the hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, situated, according to royal commissioners in Henry VIII’s time, in “Essthorppefeldes”. In 1313, a new “custos”, or warden, was appointed to take charge of it – Henry de Hykeling, “magister scholarum grammaticalium Suthwell” (master of the Southwell Grammar School).



First proof that the school existed – a reference in 1313 to its Master: Hen. de Hykeling,

There is then no evidence about the school until its first mention in the Southwell archives - in a copy of a charter witnessed "magistro de Metham, rectore scolarum grammaticalium Suthwell", (by Master Metham, Rector of Southwell Grammar School), on September 1st 1413.



Earliest reference to the school in Minster records: Master Metham, Rector of the Grammar School

The first record of the appointment of a new master comes in 1475, and fairly frequent references to the school then follow. The master was nominated by John Danvers, Prebendary of Normanton "ad scolas grammaticales…Suthwell."

> *“To the grammar school of the town of Southwell aforesaid now vacant..., I present to you my beloved in Christ, John Barre...In witness whereof I have set my seal to these presents given at London, 26 November, 1475."*

2. Bequests

Early Grammar schools were fee-paying. Such fees are implied at Southwell in a complaint by the Minster authorities, in 1484, that Barre, the master, "does not attend at the proper hours of

teaching his scholars in school, and often gives remedies [time off] to his scholars on whole school days, so…expending their parents' substance in vain."

In the late Middle Ages, however, a number of wealthy laymen provided endowments for existing or new schools. Such bequests provided some free places. In Southwell there appears to have been financial help for the Grammar School from a Robert Batemanson. In 1512 Batemanson willed "Christover Baynbryg, Archbishop of York…within 4 yers next after my decessse, shall found a free gramer scole in Suthwell…, paying yearly…the said scole…40s".
Then, in 1530, Dr John Keton, canon of Salisbury and a former Southwell chorister, provided funds to create two scholarships at St John's college Cambridge for persons "that bee or have been quiristers of the chapiter of Southwell," and therefore, in practice, pupils of the grammar school.
A small number of pupils took advantage of this. For example, Henry Moore, "head scholemaster", is recorded in St John's College archives as confirming that:

> *"Mathew Silvester, son of Robert Silvester, of Southwell in the County of Nottinghamshire Mercer, was borne in the sayd town and hath beene one of my scholers in the free school here, whereby he is capable of profit, privilege and preferment, thereunto belonging…22 April 1654."*

Sixteenth century buildings at St. John's Cambridge

In later years, it seems St. John's became concerned that the Minster was abusing the Keton bequest and trying to send it students who were not academically suitable and not even bonafide choristers:

> *"The inquiries which we have recently made have led us to believe that the Chapter of Southwell are desirous of attaching the Keton foundation as a benefit to their grammar school, for which as we have shewn it was never designed, and for that purpose it is their custom to elect in a merely formal manner, as choristers having only nominal duties, such scholars of the said school as propose to themselves to come to our university."* (Cambridge, July 1852)

3. The Reformation

Several schools were driven out of existence by the Reformation. Some were affected in the 1530's as Henry VIII broke up monastic communities and seized their property. In 1540, the Minster Chapter "voluntarily" surrendered its property to the King. Henry, however, spared the Chapter, and an Act of Parliament, in 1543, formally re-established it and, therefore, secured the school.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and one of the King's closest advisers, was a Nottinghamshire man and may have helped the school survive. In 1533 he had written to his sister, Dorothy, at Radcliffe on Trent, advising her to set her son "forth to school at Southwell".

There was a still more serious threat to the school in 1547.

Until the Reformation, many English churches had chantry chapels, where clergy were employed to say prayers for the well-being of the souls of the dead. As in many other grammar schools, some of the teachers in Southwell were chantry, or “chauntry” priests. These were drawn from a total of thirteen such priests at the Minster and derived much of their income from chantry endowments. For example, in the late fifteenth century, John Barre’s assistant, or “usher”, was William Barthorp, priest at St. Cuthbert’s altar.
In 1547, the government of Edward VI ordered the “dissolution” of chantry chapels. Some schools certainly closed as a result. In Southwell, the Chapter was now abolished along with the chantry priests, and not legally re-established until 1557. Only a skeleton staff of three priests probably remained at the Minster. This evoked a local petition to the King:

> *“We the poor Inhabitauntes and parishioners, the kinges majesties tennauntes…make our requeste that our Grammar scole maie…stande with such stipende as apperteyneth, wherein our poore youth maie be enstructed.”*

Thus, on July 20th 1548, “An Order made in the Court of Augmentations” (the government department responsible for property seized from the Church) insisted:

> *“And that a grammar Scole hath been countynuallie kept in Southwell aforesaid with the revenues of the late college of Southwell, which Scole is very mete and necessarie to continue, Wee therefore…have assigned and appointed that the said scole shall continue and that the scholemaster there for the tyme being shall yerelie have for his wages £10”.*

4. Civil War

A century later the victory of Parliament in the Civil War led to renewed attacks on the Church. In 1649, the Chapter was again abolished - until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In some parts of the country, the Republic, created in 1649, saw the removal of “malignant” Royalist schoolmasters. The Republic's leaders, however, were relatively sympathetic to the encouragement of education and Southwell's school conformed to the general pattern and survived. A memorandum, drawn up by Edward Cludd and other parliamentary commissioners in the area, may have helped:

> *“Whereas time out of mind there bath been paid yearly by the said Chapter of Southwell to the Schoolmaster there twelve pounds...We thought it our duty to inform you that if there be no care and provision made...the schoolmaster will be unprovided for.”*

In April 1652, the “Trustees for Plundered Ministers and Schoolmasters'” responded:

> *“It is ordered that…yearly stypend of £14 be continued and paid to Mr Henry Moore, Schoolmaster…together with the arrears payable since the 16th of October 1650.”*

5. The Early Grammar School Curriculum

Medieval grammar schools taught Latin, and latterly Greek, in an age which looked back to the Ancient World of Greece and Rome as producing the greatest cultural achievements of mankind. School hours were long and, especially before the development of printing in the late fifteenth century, teaching was largely oral, based on rote learning and the use of severe corporal punishment to maintain discipline.

The Chapter of Southwell, insisting on a practice common in such schools, criticized the master in 1484, because the boys “do not speak Latin in school, but English”. Whilst in 1585, Minster Statutes provide the earliest surviving description of the curriculum:

"In order that respect and reverence for parents and benefactors and those in authority, and learning may flourish, we ordain that some man learned in Latin and Greek, religious, honest, painstaking and apt at teaching... shall be appointed....whose duty it shall be to teach not only Latin and Greek grammar, Latin and Greek authors, poets and orators, but also the Christian Religion."

In 1579 the Chapter had regulated the school's timetable:

"...our scholemaster...shalle hereafter from the feaste of the Annunciation...repayre together with his scholers to the schole, at the howre of sixe of the clocke in the morninge, his scholers continuinge there untyll a leuen of the clocke, and to repayre agayne at one of the clocke, and remayne untille sixe of the clocke untille the feast of St Michaelle, after which...thaie shall keepe theire howre at Seuen of the clocke in the morninge and continewe as afforsaide untille a leuen of the clocke, and come again at one and continewe untyll five…"

It shall not be lawfull for the scholemaster to geve his scholers leave to playe any daye in the weeke, onlye thursdaye in the afternoone, excepte thaie have leave of the residentiarie [prebendary]…Also the said scholemaster shall have his scholers to repaire to the schole everie saturdaie in the afternoone, there to exercise theire writinge and other exercises untyll evyninge prayer".

In 1579, the headmaster, Hugh Baskafeld, was "admonished" for not keeping to these hours and in 1580, dismissed: "for that he had so notoriouslye slacked and neglected his dutie".

A curriculum based on the classics, and long hours, continued at Southwell, as generally elsewhere, into the nineteenth century. Rules of 1716 laid down that:

"Even in the shortest days, the master and scholars be obliged to attend school, at (or about) 8 of ye clock in ye morn, or as soon as they can conveniently see to read; and to stay in ye afternoon till 4 of ye clocke (or about 4) and as long as they can conveniently see to read".

At other times of the year, a 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. day was worked, except for Sundays, Thursdays (from 3.00 p.m.) and Saturday afternoons. There were holidays at Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide.

Long hours did not prevent some problems with discipline. In 1503, when Barre was headmaster, it was complained that the choristers "rave, swear and disturb the priest celebrating our Lady's mass, and want a good whipping". The contemporary writer, Shilton, recorded that in 1792, Thomas Bucklow, a chorister and presumably a Grammar School pupil, "in attempting to climb into the last window on the lower tier on the south side of the choir, next the altar...a very ponderous piece of oaken timber, which he had taken hold upon, gave way, and falling with him to the pavement, killed him on the spot". More mundanely, in 1794 the schoolmaster was "desired to order the Boys of his School not to trespass on the Church Yard but confine their play to Popeleys Piece [so]…preserving the Church Yard and Church from their violence and mischief on pain of prosecution".

A few years earlier, in 1731, it appears Mr. Bugg, the master, had problems that were partly of his own making:

"Whereas Richard Lloyd and Talbot Leybourne were upon some misunderstanding between the school master and their parents taken from the free grammar school and Mr. Bugg having refused to take them into the school…it is hereby ordered that Mr. Bugg shall receive the said children again into the school."

Following that incident, “Mr. Bugg, being charged with indecent behaviour” towards the resident prebendary, “was called in…and upon his promise of future good behaviour he was excused without further censure.”

6. Early Grammar School Buildings

Most grammar schools began life within church buildings. Originally the school at Southwell was probably conducted in the Minster – perhaps at the west end of the south aisle of the nave in the area where Cuthbert's altar stood or the later Booth's Chapel.

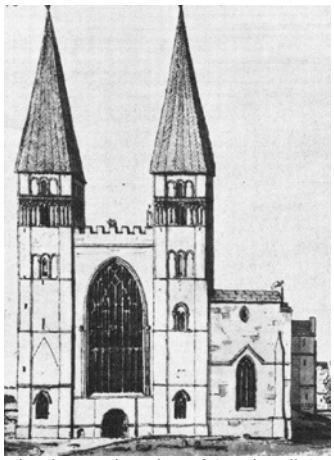
Definite references to a “schoolchamber” appear from the late seventeenth century, including apparently frequent repairs to the school windows:

> *“1699 Paid for the school windows mending 7d.*
> *1700 To John Hawton for repairing the school windows 2s. 2d.*
> *1702 To Francis Ingleman for mending ye school windows 1s. 1d.”*

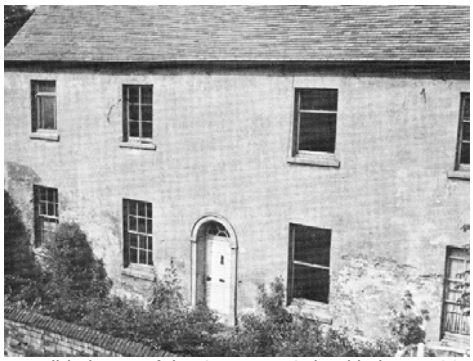
In 1777 it was “decreed that a necessary house be built for the School boys by or near the Palace Wall in the Churchyard”.

However in 1784, Dr. Peckard, prebendary of Rampton, was instructed to ”hire a proper room...for the purpose of a School, also that Mr. Peckard immediately take down the present school and library”. The school may briefly have moved into the Red Prebend, a brick building now demolished, which stood behind The Saracen's Head Hotel. In January 1785, negotiations began to acquire the use of the former chantry priests' house at the west end of Church Street, as both the school and house for the schoolmaster.

Although that soon came into use and for some years continued to provide living accommodation for the master, in 1791 “a very large and commodious room was erected on a piece of ground belonging to the Churchyard, at the south west corner…in the front thereof is placed, over the centre window a square stone, inscribed, “This school erected by the Reverend Magnus Jackson, Master”. (P.S. Shilton: 1818).



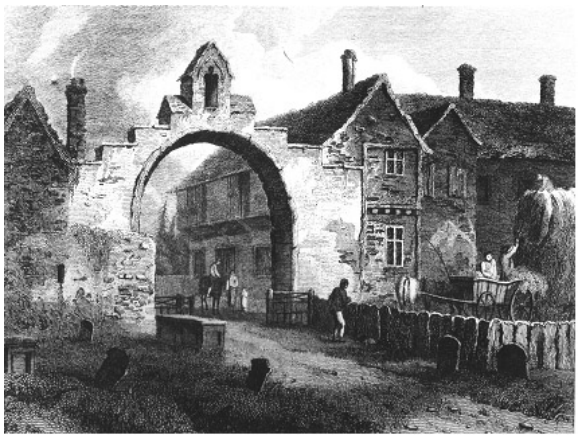
First known location of Southwell Grammar School (shown in an eighteenth century print)



Possible home of the Grammar School in late 1780s

Part of the former Chantry Priests' House, in a sketch of 1773, drawn looking towards Church Street

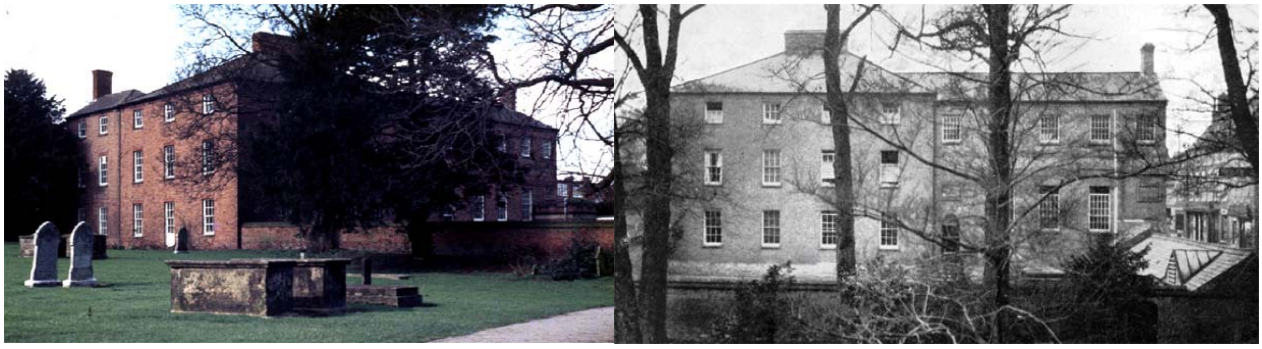
Chantry Priests' House (used by the school in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) shown in black on a plan drawn by the architect, Richard Ingleman, in 1818. The full plan shows buildings on the corner of Church Street and Westgate. (Church Street is to the left of the area on the plan and the Crown Inn is building "10".)



Area in which the school had a building by 1791

Magnus Jackson, Headmaster 1790's

Perhaps because of an "accidental fire" in 1817, it was decided in 1819 to re-develop the whole area around the Chantry Priests' house and transfer the school to a new building erected on the site of the house. Designed by the local architect, Richard Ingleman (whose other commissions included the House of Correction), a brick building was created which housed the school until 1964. Although the Chapter paid much of the cost, the Rev. Foottit, the master, had to provide £600.



The purpose-built Grammar School, 1819

Rev Foottit, an early nineteenth-century Headmaster

7. Nineteenth Century Decline

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw growth for some grammar schools and their success gained them recognition as the “great”” or “public” schools. Some, however, declined in the face of competition from private “academies” with more practical curriculums – until secondary education, for a much larger proportion of the population than ever before, began to be seriously considered near the end of the nineteenth and in the early years of the twentieth centuries.

Southwell’s new building did not signal a period of prosperity. The school had had financial worries even in the previous century. These had included problems over the government’s payment towards the schoolmaster’s income. In 1728 a petition was sent to the Exchequer about arrears in the schoolmaster’s pay since 1724:

> *“since which time the schoolmaster tho he hath often applyed to the proper officers hath not been able to get it paid.”*

Sir Robert Walpole ordered the payment to begin again – but did not pay the arrears.

The school did increase its income through charging fees. Foottit, in the early nineteenth century, advertised fees (which included boarding) as “under the age of twelve – thirty guineas, above twelve – forty”.

A crisis, however, arose in the mid-nineteenth century. Following much criticism of the Church of England’s use of its considerable wealth and the way in which some clergy did little more than pocket the income from their church appointments, the recently elected Whig government created the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1836. Their task was to supervise the church’s finances. Other legislation specifically abolished clerical sinecures. An Act of 1840 provided for posts in the Chapter of Southwell to be left vacant as they became available and for control of Minster finances and property to pass to the Commissioners.

Latterly, the schoolmaster's income from the government (even when paid) had been worth so little that it had had to be supplemented by his holding a variety of posts. Masters had been “vicars choral” (priests conducting services in the Minster for the often absentee prebendaries) and held a number of local livings. Now this would not be possible and the commissioners did not at first see it as their job to finance a school. A petition from the remaining members of the Chapter, in 1850, to increase the master's income seems to have gone unanswered.

Perhaps anticipating the threat to the Grammar School, in 1837 the choristers had been taken away from it and sent to the Easthorpe Endowed School - opened ten years earlier and supported by income from charitable bequests of property. In 1840, the Grammar School master was merely asked to “examine” the choristers quarterly.

Easthorpe Endowed School

In 1854 Reverend Richard Bethell Earle, appointed master of the Grammar School the previous year, was unable to get possession of the school building as the Commissioners were demanding he pay rent for it and the previous master was claiming payment for fixtures left there. His “school” was by then a mere seven day boys.

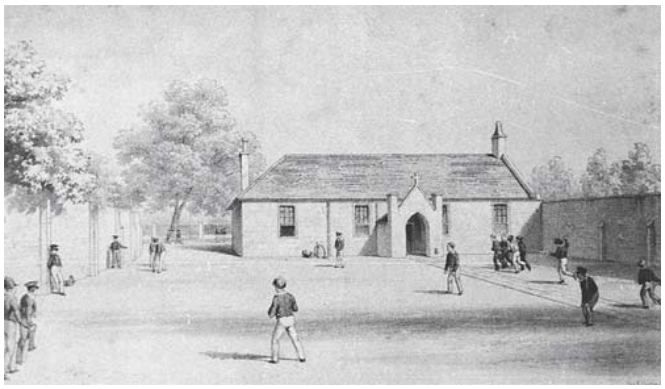
In 1858 the school was closed down. In 1862 the Commissioners gave up any claims to the school building and Reverend Charles Peter Incledon was appointed master - but quit before re-opening the school. It did re-open in 1864, with a salary of £10 for the master provided by the Commissioners, but still with only eleven boys. Numbers failed to rise much during the next few years.
In 1857 another, if minor, blow was struck. A Statute of Cambridge University that year abolished “preference...to any person in respect of such person's place of birth or of his having been a chorister in any capitular or collegiate church”. Thus the Keton scholarships disappeared.

8. Private Academies

Most of the local boys, who would otherwise have gone to the Grammar School, were being sent instead to private schools run partly as business ventures. By the early nineteenth century, there were many such schools in England - but they were mainly small and rarely provided more than a basic education.

Their number in nineteenth century Southwell varied - reaching a peak of sixteen in 1832 (according to White's Nottinghamshire Directory). One of these, Catherine Heathcote’s school, based for most of its time in Elmfield House on the Burgage, may have provided the first formal education in the town for girls.

One of the most effective rivals to a still boys-only Grammar School appears to have been the Rev. C. Fletcher's “'Southwell School”, based at North Muskham Prebend, in Church Street, almost opposite the Grammar School building.



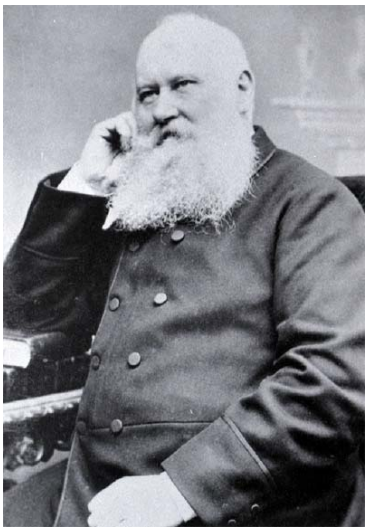
Southwell School

Another rival was the “Southwell Academy”. This was first run by a Mr. Thornhill, in the house which later became the Methodist Manse, in Moor Lane (now Nottingham Road). In 1854 he had an arithmetic textbook published in London – “The Practical Calculator”', “compiled...for his own use among his...pupils”.

A location for the Southwell Academy in “Moor Lane”

In 1856 Thornhill handed his school over to Mr John Wright, who had come from Lincolnshire, where his uncle had been head of Folkingham Grammar School. Under him the Moor Lane School grew in numbers and moved to a new building on the present market place site in King Street. He taught a wide range of subjects - sometimes to girls as well as boys. The school report, of the "Daughter of Peter Maltby of the Castle Inn" in the summer of 1860, "not the result of a casual or half-yearly examination but of each day's observations", lists "Reading (Scripture, Histories, Poetry, etc.), Writing (plain and ornamental), Arithmetic (slate and mental), Dictation, Composition, Situation of Places, Land Surveying, Latin, French, Music, Drawing" and (as evening classes) "Spelling, Grammar, Geography, Tables, Blair's Catechism, Scripture Questions, English History" and "a Class Book". (Miss Maltby came "first" in Writing and Composition but scored only 315 marks for Mental Arithmetic and 1100 for Behaviour - compared with 810 and 1580, respectively, for the top pupils).

In 1877, urged on by Canon R. F. Smith of the Minster, Dr. Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln within whose diocese Southwell then lay, invited Mr. Wright to transfer the fifty boys he was educating to the Grammar School and become its headmaster. He was to begin a transformation in the school's fortunes.



Mr John Wright

9. Foundations of a Modern Grammar School

Under Mr Wright the number of the Grammar School pupils grew. In 1894, when the first school magazine, "The Southwellian", appeared, there were seven staff and sixty nine pupils. These included twelve choristers, whose return from Easthorpe he had negotiated. The Easthorpe School continued into the early part of the twentieth century - but catering only for a few pupils at the lower end of the primary school age range.

Even a link with Cambridge reappeared. Under the will of Reverend James Barrow who died in 1881, a trust was established to pay for the "Barrow" Exhibition for a pupil "native of Southwell or to one whose parents are now residing, or within ten years past have resided at Southwell, or them failing, to the children of a present or late incumbent of" various local parishes. The trust (originally in the shape of preference stock in the L. & N. W. Railway Company) eventually provided exhibitions for Grammar School pupils on twenty three occasions.

The curriculum and organisation of the school also underwent change - although some developments had begun earlier in the nineteenth century. The Reverend Foottit had advertised teaching of "Mathematical and Commercial Learning", as well as the traditional classics and religion. In 1837 the school rules were altered, for the first time since 1716. In part, they redefined hours as "7 to 9...and 10 to 12 in the morning and from 2 to 5 in the afternoon", or "Sunrise [to]...Sunset" from November to February, with Wednesday and Saturday as half days, five-week holidays at Midsummer and Christmas and optional holidays, for part of the day, on Saints' days.

The rules also ordered the master “to instruct in the English Language and Literature, and in Writing and Arithmetic...for...the sum of one pound per Quarter (per boy) and a further sum of one pound per quarter for...Mathematics.” (Latin tuition remained technically free).

Printed school examination papers, for 1845 and '46, refer in addition to History and Geography - although the questions set referred entirely to Ancient Rome. The style of questions also suggests a continuing emphasis on rote learning. The Divinity Paper, for 1845, for example demanded that pupils:

> “Give the doctrine of our church with reference to the Eucharist, prove from Scripture that in order duly to receive it we must examine ourselves, repent of our sins, have faith in Christ, a remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men”.

The religious slant of teaching appears even in exercise books, of about the same period, used for practising handwriting. One, possibly from the Grammar School, includes texts, copied out, such as “Youth guard against Vice and Zealously pursue Virtue” and “Fear accompanies Deceit”:

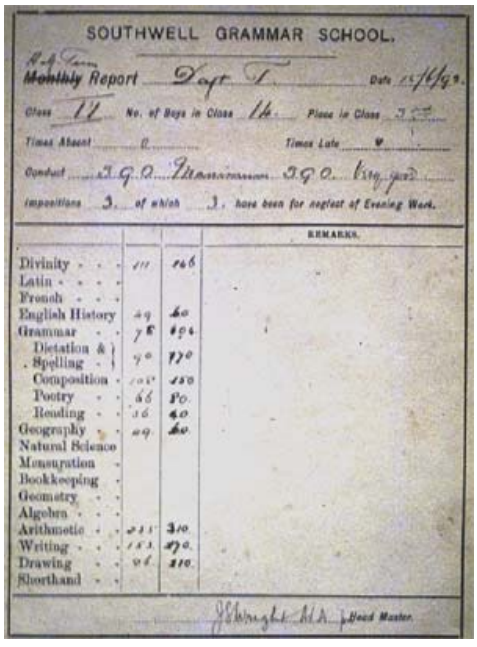
Fear accompanies deceit

Fear accompanies deceit.

Fear accompanies deceit.

Fear accompanies deceit

By the end of the century, the school offered Divinity. Greek, Latin, French. English Grammar and Literature, English History, Geography, Geometry, Algebra, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Shorthand, Drawing, Music and Singing, Natural Science, Agriculture (via a County Council Lecturer), “Designing, Machine Drawing and Construction” and under Sergeant-Instructor Craggs, “Drill and Gymnastics”. In later years shorthand, bookkeeping, drill, machine drawing and agriculture disappeared, woodwork briefly came and went, and German and “General Studies” were introduced, but Mr Wright had established a range of subjects similar to that still being taught in the 1970's.



SOUTHWELL GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Monthly Report Dept. I. Date 15/6/93.

Class II No. of Boys in Class 16. Place in Class 7

Times Absent 0 Times Late 0

Conduct V.G.O. Examination V.G.O. Very good

Impositions 3. of which 3. have been for neglect of Evening Work.

			REMARKS.
Divinity	111	146	
Latin			
French			
English History	49	60	
Grammar	78	104	
Dictation & Spelling	90	120	
Composition	101	130	
Poetry	66	80	
Reading	36	40	
Geography	49	60	
Natural Science			
Mensuration			
Bookkeeping			
Geometry			
Algebra			
Arithmetic	211	310	
Writing	183	270	
Drawing	96	210	
Shorthand			

J. Wright M.A. Head Master.

1890s school report

Mr Wright and his Grammar School

Like many Grammar schools, and in part imitating the public schools, Southwell added several new features to school life in the late nineteenth century or early part of the twentieth.

Team games were established - originally cricket and soccer – as shown in the photographs below. In 1894, J. Cooke was praised as “a brilliant forward, runs up well, and counters well with left-leg screw; should be well fed by halves”'. In the early part of the twentieth century, athletic sports started to be held on the open ground at Lowes Wong.

Items of uniform started to appear - the first compulsory article being a school cap. An “Old Southwellians” Society was created in 1905 and a house system, for competitive purposes, was created in 1907, with houses named after Thomas, Gray, Booth and Aldred, former archbishops of York who were thought to have had connections with the school. 1909 saw the formation of a cadet corps. It included most boys in years 3 to 5 and the small sixth form, until the corps was disbanded in 1922, and, in some respects, replaced by a school scout troop.

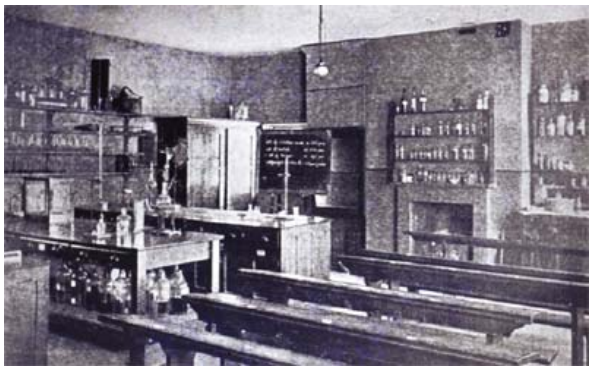
An annual prize-giving appeared. Visiting speakers, about the turn of the century, felt drawn to comment on the affairs of our empire. In 1901, pupils were reminded that holidays had been given to celebrate victories in the Boer War, a Mr. Tingley had presented some relics of the war to form the basis of a school museum, and the war was “promoting the study of geography”. Boys were also urged to persevere in their studies of History “to be citizens and patriots”'. In 1906, Mr. J. Starkey, M.P. praised “the kind of education which made such a hero as General Gordon”. “There is no man whom boys ought to regard more than he”.

Besides the speeches and presentation of prizes on such occasions, entertainment was offered - music and a performance of part of Henry V, for example, in 1901. Between the wars, the school play, involving staff and pupils, also became an important local social event.

Extensions (later the Midland or HSBC Bank), which included the school's first science laboratory, were added to the buildings in 1908. The Reverend J.S. Wright, the previous Headmaster's son, had by then taken over control.

The most important development during his headship had occurred in 1906. In 1902 the Balfour government had, for the first time, authorised the use of money from the rates to help provide secondary education in England - at a time when most people still did not attend a separate secondary school. In some cases, new schools were built by the County Councils, which had been created “Local Education Authorities” - in others they helped finance existing grammar schools. “The Southwellian” recorded that the Grammar School began to receive such assistance on September 16th 1906 when “we began work as a secondary school under the Board of Education. In a Secondary School boys are expected to stay until at least sixteen years of age, and a four years' course of work for the years twelve to sixteen is planned out and receives the approval of the Board”. In 1909 the Board of Education approved a “Scheme” for the “regulation” of the school under a Board of Governors chosen by the Minster, County, Rural District and Parish Councils, Nottingham University College and St. John's College, Cambridge. Most pupils would pay fees of between “£12 and £6 a year, or not more than £50 a year for a boarder”. Provision was made for scholarships, providing a minority of free places. Admission was to be through an entrance examination.

Rev. J.S. Wright’s Grammar School



The 1908 extension (in the 1980s) and early twentieth century photographs of parts of the interior of the Grammar School

10. The Grammar School and the World Wars

Like all schools, Southwell's pattern of life was disrupted by the World Wars, although less than that of some urban ones. 1n 1919 the headmaster reported at speech day:

> *"[During] the war there had been no prizes, but the boys had received Certificates instead…Last year [we] were unable to find sufficient candidates for [external] examinations because the boys were induced by conditions of employment to leave school earlier than they would otherwise have done…One hundred and fifty old scholars had also joined the colours...Twenty-two [out of a total of ninety in the town] had laid down their lives, and their names would be engraved on a marble tablet in the School."*

Looking back on World War Two, in late 1945, Mr. Reginald Matthews, the retiring headmaster, wrote, "At first we never travelled more than a mile…Games suffered from a stoppage of match play…Men [teachers] began to go…Mr. Rose, Mr. Yates, Mr. Ball and the newly joined Mr. G. Thomas…Mr. Eccles…died in action as a bomber pilot…In the Spring of 1941 we were suddenly asked to accept a hundred boys and staff of Worthing High School [as evacuees]. On March 24th we welcomed them and gave them the whole of the ground floor…So it continued until the end of the year…During all this time teams were being drafted to the fields to hoe sugar beet or lift potatoes."

Mr Matthews and his Grammar School

11. An Insecure Future

Despite all the developments at the turn of the century, the school's long term future was not entirely secure. The school's numbers did not grow significantly between the wars. In March 1945 it had 125 boys. Mr Rushby Smith was only offered a temporary contract of employment when appointed as the new headmaster that year. There were fears that the school might eventually have to become an L.E.A. school, and that the County Council would subsequently decide that Southwell was not then big enough to merit the cost of its own grammar school. The school did, however, grow and survive.

12. Growth of Boarding

One post-war development was in provision for boarders. Some pupils had been boarders at least since the time when the master had moved into the Chantry Priests' House, and there was provision for them in the building erected in 1819. The Rev. Foottit, for example, advertised for pupils and reminded parents that boarders required "one pair of sheets and towels". Late in life, one of those pupils, George Denison, who came to the school in 1814, recalled how he once "threw a brass candlestick at the usher's head, and was sent to bed for it, but was hauled out of it in his nightshirt, and taken to by the usher with an ash plant, in the presence of the boys who had witnessed the assault". He also remembered a boarders' feast called "Potation" where boys ate "Plum bun and negus" (a hot mixture of sweetened wine and water).

In 1939, Mr. William Player purchased Sacrista Prebend for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, to house boarders. (Built largely in the eighteenth century, this had once been the residence of the Sacrist, the prebendary whose title indicated responsibility for the books, vestments and ornaments of the Church).

Briefly in the early fifties, West Lodge, at the edge of the Minster Yard, became another boarding house; then in 1954 Hill House replaced it, and the rooms in the Church Street premises, as the main boarding accommodation. Hill House had been built in the early nineteenth century for the Prebendary of South Muskham, (Rev J. T. Becher). "The Southwellian" commented: "The seniors took some time to get used to their quite luxurious common room; no longer could they push their billiard cues through the ceiling after a bad shot or fry their chips on a primus stove for supper".

Sacrista Prebend and Hill House whilst used for boarding

13. Voluntary-Aided Status

By 1957, the headmaster could report that the school catered for 235 boys (79 of them boarders), most of whom, unlike pre-war, stayed on for two years in the sixth form. (The total did not then increase much until 1976).

A vital factor in the school's revival had been an ultimately successful application, submitted in 1946, to become a "Voluntary Aided" school. The 1944 Education Act had laid down the principle that there should be free, separate secondary schools for all children in England for the first time. In practice, in most areas, schools of two types developed - grammar schools, selecting their pupils through an eleven plus examination, from about the top 20% of the ability range, and secondary modern schools taking the remainder.

In most cases the grammar schools were run by the county councils, but it was made possible for existing schools, connected with the churches, to join the scheme and become "voluntary aided". They would retain some independence but receive financial assistance from the L.E.A. The headmaster and governors at Southwell, whilst fearing a County takeover, believed such aid from the L.E.A. was essential.

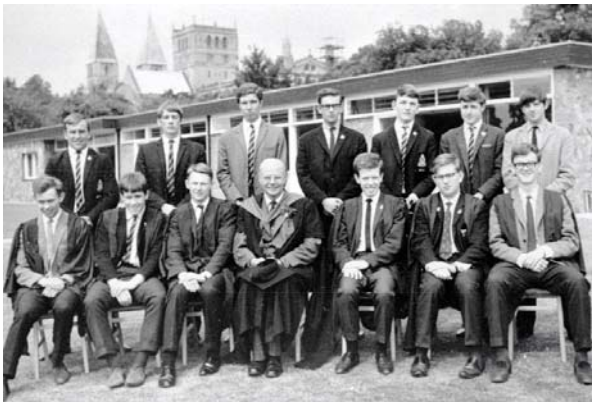
At the same time as they sought to secure voluntary-aided status, the governors began seriously considering the possibility of acquiring new buildings. The move was made in 1964 to a site once occupied by Beckingham Prebend, and, as an archaeological dig in 1959 demonstrated, much earlier by one of the largest Roman villas outside southern England.

> *"The Bishop of Southwell...opened and dedicated [the] new buildings...As...[he] entered the school hall, a fanfare was sounded and boys...shouted a welcome in Latin…It had been hoped to build the school of stone, but the extra money could not be allocated."* ("Guardian Journal")

Mr. Rushby Smith as Headmaster

In the meantime the school had celebrated its "millenary" in 1956.

The new Grammar School



Headmaster & Prefects

1970s: A Cricket 1st XI

14. Going Comprehensive

Hardly had the Grammar School moved into its new premises, than the newly elected Labour Government, in its “Circular 10/65”, asked LEAs for plans to reorganize secondary education on comprehensive lines.

A number of semi-independent grammar schools chose to become wholly independent rather than give up the right to select their intake. The possibility was considered, in Southwell, of opting out of comprehensive reorganization and providing an academic education with special emphasis on musical tuition.

To erect the new buildings had required considerable fund raising, over a long period, by the school's governors. As part of the campaign to justify the school's development, Mr. Rushby Smith had tried to develop the image of the school as one which not only catered for the Minster choristers but had a strong musical bias in its own right. In 1950, he wrote, in `The Nottinghamshire Countryside':

> *“The glories of the...Minster provide a setting of surpassing beauty for music and inspiration to a sensitive boy...The Governors have clearly defined the aim that the school shall [develop]...with its conception of education at all points related to music…Such a school will be unique in English education, [giving an] opportunity...to musical boys throughout the country.”*

He envisaged the school evolving a “special curriculum”'. Moreover, a “Junior Department” had been established in 1946 to take in eight year-old boys who might enter the choir, and, when the new buildings were completed, they included a separate J.D. Unit and a large music block.
Speaking at the school's prize giving in 1965, the chairman of the governors, the Very Reverend H. C. L. Heywood, said Nottinghamshire County Council was being hustled into comprehensive

reorganization and he was concerned that the heritage from the past must not be lightly thrown away. The headmaster wondered whether a comprehensive could maintain the Grammar School's recent record of having one fifth of its pupils in the Sixth Form.

The L.E.A. itself considered the possibility of creating a separate comprehensive in Southwell, based on the town's secondary modern school.

In 1974, however, another Labour Government began efforts to speed up comprehensive reorganization. In 1975 the governors agreed to fall in line – influenced by genuine hopes about what could be achieved in a non-selective school and by the financial problems of becoming independent.

It was decided the school should remain voluntary aided but amalgamate with the local secondary modern, as a split-site school, and admit a co-educational intake. The timing of the amalgamation was fixed, early in 1976, for September the same year.

III. A Wider Inheritance

1. Introduction

If the comprehensive was to a large degree the product of a tradition represented by the boys' Grammar School in Southwell, in a sense it was the heir of several local schools. It accepted pupils who, not long before, would have received their education, beyond the age of eleven, in various all-age village schools and in other grammar schools such as Thomas Magnus and Lilley and Stone's at Newark. Yet, because it was based in Southwell, because it was a Church of England school and because initially it provided most of the pupils and staff of the Minster Comprehensive School, the Edward Cludd Secondary Modern School was the new school's other major forerunner.

Although not comparable with the Grammar School's, it too lay at the end of a considerable line of development of education in the town – one that was in some respects quite different in character, but also reflected significant national trends. This was dominated by the Moor Lane National School.

2. Two Nineteenth Century Elementary Schools

The nineteenth century saw the first major attempt to provide at least some education for all children in England. Previously, only an inadequate number of small, private schools existed in most areas.

The initiative came chiefly from the churches - particularly from the Anglican National Society for the Education of the Poor, established in 1811. From 1833, the major church school societies were given a grant by the government. At first this was to help with the building cost of their new "elementary" schools. By 1870 about one million pupils attended such schools.

Southwell's private schools could not cater for all its child population and, in 1840, the Chapter of the Minster provided land in Moor Lane (later Nottingham Road) and £100 to establish a "National" school there. It was built that year, with a master's house, and intended to take two hundred boys and girls.

The 1870 Education Act, passed by Gladstone's Liberal Government, ordered that there should be sufficient places for all children to attend at least an elementary school. Unless more "voluntary" schools were created within six months, the government would order the election of local "School Boards" to fill the gaps, using money from the rates. In the long run, church schools were to become less important than state ones; but initially most of the elementary education in England continued to come from the churches. Within the specified six months 3,342 applications for building grants were made by the voluntary organizations to meet the challenge of the new Act.

In Southwell a new elementary school was opened in January 1871. At a ceremony held to lay the foundation stone the speakers reflected the arguments that were used nationally to justify the expansion of elementary education - but not necessarily in state schools.

The Reverend J. E. Page believed England was “behind other countries, even some of the islands in the South Seas...The neglect of...education [led to] crime and pauperism. [Moreover]...they might learn several useful lessons from...the recent war which had been carried on in France. The success of the Prussians was owing to the high intellectual training they had received”.

Mr. McArthur declared, “that every man ought to be fitted to take any superior position to which it should please Providence to call him; [but] he was...in favour of instruction which went hand in hand with religion”. (“Newark Advertiser”, April 1871).

Indeed, no “Board School” was built in Southwell, and the Church of England remained dominant in local elementary education. The new school was “Wesleyan”, operating at first in the Wesleyan Chapel and transferring soon afterwards to Kirklington Road. It was to remain smaller than the National School and only came in to being partly because “the Church Party met the Nonconformists in a very liberal spirit, and offered substantial aid in their erection of a new school”. (“Newark Advertiser”).

The National School also expanded, as legislation, beginning in 1876, made school attendance compulsory. Extensions enabling the school to cope with 270 pupils were opened in 1891. Separate facilities for infants had already developed in the Anglican Holy Trinity School in Westgate (1860) and the National Society's own Shepherd's' Row Infants (1885).

Despite the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen by 1947, the Moor Lane buildings continued in use, even for children over the age of eleven, until 1957. The National School catered for juniors until December 1966.

National & Wesleyan buildings (after closure as schools)

Some National School pupils c1909

3. A Workhouse School

In addition to the contribution to education made by the elementary schools, some schooling was provided in nineteenth century Southwell via the Poor Law. At first this was in a building adjoining the workhouse (the modern Baptist Church) in Moor Lane and from 1824 in the new workhouse (now owned by the National Trust). It was provided not only for child inmates but some children of local labourers receiving "outdoor relief". These were "between the ages of five and ten…[and] attended daily, to be schooled and fed, during the winter". (Rev. J.T. Becher).

After the "Poor Law Amendment Act" of 1834, it became compulsory for workhouses to provide education - but only for inmates. The new provision began in Southwell in 1836. At its peak, the Southwell Workhouse was attempting to teach about fifty children. Boys and girls were supposed to be taught Religious Knowledge, Reading, Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic and practical skills - including needlework, cooking, laundry and knitting for girls and gardening, tailoring and shoemaking for boys.

Few pupils attended these classes for any great length of time and staff turnover was high – 11 schoolmistresses stayed for less than two years each. Yet government schools inspectors commented relatively favourably on standards. In 1848, "instruction in the boys' school [was] remarkably good" and, in 1867, "discipline… good and [teaching]…fair".

In 1885 the school closed and the workhouse children were sent to the two local elementary schools.

4. Elementary Problems

A major problem for the nineteenth century elementary teachers was irregular attendance by pupils. The Southwell National School's Log Book (a kind of official diary kept by the head-teacher) makes clear that serious illness was a significant factor behind this:

> *"November 1892: Alfred Cobb returned to school having been absent from diphtheria since August."*
>
> *"March 1893: School closed...there being cases of scarlet fever and measles in the town'."*
>
> *"November 1894: Attendance of both boys and girls below…average, many suffering from mumps."*

The use of children as cheap labour also caused difficulties:

> *"September 1892: Attendance this week below average, some of the boys being in the harvest fields."*
>
> *"October: 2 boys returned...who have been at work all summer."*
>
> *"June 1893: Many boys away haymaking and fruit picking."*

Bad weather was a cause of absence when some children had to walk into school from outlying farms and villages, with not even a school lunch in prospect:

> *"October 1882: Several children unable to attend on account of unfavourable weather."*
>
> *"December 1883: A very shocking day and...children from the villages round all absent."*

Some children missed school because the fees – only a few pence per week – were nevertheless too much for some parents to pay regularly:

> *"May 1863: Found that nearly £l was owing for school fees - caution - send every boy home after Whitsuntide who does not bring his pence on Monday morning."*

> *"February 1864: Falling off in number present. The labourers here have but little work about this season [and cannot afford the fees]."*

The relatively poor circumstances of many families are emphasized for example in September 1882:

> *"The Rector... gave a quantity of clothing to deserving scholars."*

(No attempt was made to enforce a uniform - although girls were expected to wear a pinafore over their dresses.)

Eventually, in 1891, the government abolished elementary school fees and the Southwell Headmaster recorded:

> *"September 1891: The schools have been free from the payment of weekly fees since the holiday…and the parents relieved from payment for the greater part of their children's books."*

To make this possible, all schools had received new grants from the Exchequer. And, in 1902, concerned about voluntary schools finding themselves at a financial disadvantage, LEAs were ordered to pay for all their running costs and salaries.

If there was some sympathy for absence due to parents' financial problems, the headmaster was probably less pleased to note:

> *"May 1863: Waxwork exhibition in the town – thin school…in consequence."*

> *"September 1897: Southwell Cattle Fair: numbers below average."*

Even so, the school sometimes bowed to the inevitable:

> *"Sept. 1863: Grand Wedding at the Minster…Allowed children to leave at 11 o'clock."*

Apart from the holidays, there was also one regular, accepted break from routine – the annual "Tea-Feast" or "Treat". This involved a parade through the town to a service in the Minster, sports and a tea party:

> *"September 1863: This being the week of the Treat, there is a better [attended] school".*

A former pupil, later recalling the school in the Edwardian period, said that "we celebrated…with parades behind banners, and then you had sports…They had races…with little prizes at the end".

Parade as part of National School Annual "Treat"

For truancy and many lesser offences, the cane was frequently used. William George, “Master” at the Wesleyan School, noted on November 15th 1871: “Some severe chastisements administered”. In the 1980s, remembering how boys and girls were taught in separate classes, a former girl pupil claimed that in the early 1900s at the National School:

> *“We had a cane…and a strap with two thongs on it…I always remember…the girls were on one side and the boys were on the other of a partition…Mr Salt was the headmaster and…every day, about ten minutes to twelve, he used to go round – and we knew exactly what was going to happened, because he had a cane in his hand and he went round to each boy – “Whack! Whack! – if he hadn’t done his work…That was part of the fun for the girls!”*

The threat of such punishment, however, did not always prevent even fairly serious trouble:

> *“June 1863: Found some half dozen boys during dinner hour playing on the walls and slates…Complaint made to me about children throwing stones in the street… Inspector of police down in the morning to make enquiries as to who broke a gate leading into the park.”*

5. Elementary Curriculum

As early as 1880, legislation forced many pupils to stay at elementary schools until the age of fourteen. Most of their pupils were within the modern junior school age range, and, particularly at first, they attempted little more than tuition in the “3 Rs” and R.E.. They had few resources – most writing was on slates, with rote learning.

The National School's Logbook, even in the 1860's, mentions only reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, "practising hymns for Sunday", dictation and History, and a minor crisis on November 18th 1863 when "Little Charlie Bosworth swallowed a piece of slate pencil." Local clergy visited the school from time to time to help with the religious education.

Classes were large. Teachers were in short supply and until the early years of the twentieth century, many were trained very differently from today. In 1846 a national scheme was started of five-year apprenticeships beginning at thirteen years of age, enabling young people to stay at school to further their own education whilst also learning and practising some of the skills of teaching as a "pupil teacher", with a small salary. At eighteen, they would compete for Queen's Scholarships at the gradually increasing number of training colleges.

At the Wesleyan School Mr. George noted in 1871:

> *“January 16: A young man, George Wood, commenced to assist [as a pupil teacher]. He gives his services for daily instruction from the master.”*
>
> *“April 10: One boy, F. Mansfield, complained of being hit by pupil teacher. Parents made noise.”*

The National School Head noted, on September 3rd 1863: “Gave the pupil teacher an extra lesson at 6 p.m." He evidently found him less than promising and, on May 4th 1864, recorded, "Marriott [pupil teacher] made his exit from Southwell unknown to anyone. Good Riddance of Bad Rubbish!"

By the end of the nineteenth century, the curricula of elementary schools were widening. In Southwell, geography, some science, poetry, British history, music, drawing and P.E. (at least in the form of "Musical and Military Drills") were taught.

The new century saw an increasingly less formal approach to teaching - including the teaching of boys and girls in the same class.

By the 1920's, the school had country dancing and organized games - ultimately hockey, cricket, soccer and swimming were available.

In 1932 the first edition of a school magazine, "The Saracen", described inter-house sport between Sherwood, Newstead, Trent and Wolsey houses and some outside fixtures. “Football: our best season ever…Individualism has given way to a well balanced side" in matches against Southwell Wesleyan, Gedling, Halam, Newark Wesleyan and Newark Barnby Road elementary schools.

The magazine at least set high goals for its pupils:

> *"We have chosen for our School Motto:- 'To Strive, to seek, to find, and not to Yield'…A National scholar [should be] one who knows how to play the game and who by his or her conduct...indicates the attributes of an English Lady and an English Gentleman".*

From 1949, domestic science classes, for older pupils, from the National and some other local elementary schools, were held on the site of the present Lowes Wong Junior School. The National School itself acquired woodwork facilities - also used by other local schools. And pupils could learn basketry and gain experience of gardening.

Two National School teams from the 1950s

Change was partly encouraged by Her Majesty’s Inspectors. They had been created in the nineteenth century and then produced an annual report on every elementary school. That for the Southwell National, for 1891, noted:

> *"The higher Arithmetic is wanting in accuracy, and Reading of the first Standard should be of better style. Otherwise the standard...is satisfactory...Geography is good and some remarkably accurate and intelligent knowledge of Physiology and Natural History was shown...Recitation and Music were very good."*

From 1861 to 1897, however, such visits by inspectors had sometimes discouraged change. For a Royal Commission had led to the introduction of a system of “payment by results" - the amount of money granted to a school would depend "on the attainment of a certain degree of knowledge by the children...during the year preceding the payment". Thus, for example, following the annual inspection, in May 1894, the Southwell Head noted in his log book: "Grant - £82".

Even in the 1950's the National School's buildings did not provide the space to house much equipment and classes could number over forty. Mrs Metcalfe, recalling in the 1980s her work as a teacher at the National School in the 1920's, stressed the relatively spartan surroundings:

> *"In the winter it was terribly cold...and I had Standard V, and I can always remember it was just like a scene out of Dickens…The boys and girls used to love Friday afternoon....We were not allowed to mend the fires after lunchtime [but] we used to draw the seats up around the fire - as near as we could to what was left of it - and I used to read 'Christmas Carol' to them. It's not often that children of that age like it but the surroundings were such that they loved hearing 'Christmas Carol'."*

6. Secondary Modern Schooling

The 1944 Education Act brought about the gradual disappearance of all-age elementary schools and, in 1957, the Edward Cludd Secondary Modern School was opened in Southwell to take children who did not pass the 11+ examination. It was relatively unusual only in that the Church of England had taken up the option, under the Act, to build a "Voluntary Controlled" school - one heavily subsidized by the L.E.A. but with some control, and financial responsibility, still in Church hands – rather than follow the more common pattern of accepting the creation of a county school in the town.

The school was named after a businessman, "citizen and mercer of Lombard Street, London", whose father had owned land in Arnold. Edward Cludd was also an M.P. for Nottinghamshire, in the 1650's, under the Republic. Tradition has it that he saved the Minster from serious destruction by Parliamentarian or Scots troops. Actual evidence suggests he may have shown concern about the survival of the Grammar School but chiefly reveals him acquiring a large proportion of the local land which had previously belonged to the Minster and the Archbishop of York. (He was only able
The Cludd School was opened in 1957 by the Bishop of Southwell. The Grammar School head, Mr. Rushby Smith, became chairman of the governing body. It was the first "modern" school building in Southwell. The Education Committee proudly noted, in the pamphlet drawn up for the opening ceremony, that "a steel framework provides the basis of the structure…On this are placed light matt fibre slabs,...to form the roof, and concrete slabs...to form the walls", and "the colours used throughout in the decoration have been chosen with the intention of providing a varying and stimulating background to school activities".

Its buildings were later expanded to cater for 750 pupils - including, from 1974, children affected by the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen. It replaced the senior classes of both National and Wesleyan schools in Southwell and, for varying lengths of time, it received children from Averham, Bleasby, Caunton, Edingley, Epperstone, Farnsfield, Fiskerton, Gonalston, Halam, Halloughton, Hockerton, Hoveringham, Kelham, Kirklington, Lowdham, Morton, Normanton, Oxton, Rolleston, Staythorpe, Thurgarton, Upton and Winkburn. It ultimately had a staff of thirty five.

The National School's tradition of fairly strict discipline was at first maintained by its first headmaster, Mr. Wilson, who is recorded using the cane for "sliding down banister on staircase", "swinging on cloakroom hooks" and "sliding across a classroom floor." Use of corporal punishment, however, soon declined.

Though less generously financed than the Grammar School, the Edward Cludd also immediately sought to offer greater educational opportunities than its predecessors to its pupils. Mr. Wilson, at the school's opening, regretted "that many [parents]... considered as a failure a child who had not gained a place in a grammar school…This was an attitude to be deplored for a school such as the Edward Cludd…offered great possibilities to the young people in it". Certainly, provision for craft subjects was much improved and there were science laboratories, a gym, library, hard tennis courts, school pitches for football, hockey and cricket, "an area being developed as an ornamental garden and a watercress bed" and "an outdoor teaching space on the roof" of its three-storey block.

Secondary Modern schools did not, at first, enter pupils for public examinations and were seen as aimed at the pupils interested in "concrete things...essentially practical" - the child whose "career is often in his mind". (Norwood Report, 1943). Thus, in 1957, the Nottinghamshire County Education Committee emphasized that the Cludd “is in a rural area and...the curriculum will have a definite bias towards life and work in the countryside". Yet, latterly, pupils had the chance to take not only the relatively new C.S.E. examination but O-Levels. French appeared - for some pupils. Several of the Cludd's staff, like their Grammar School colleagues, were graduates. And a few pupils transferred to the Grammar School at Sixth Form level.

Part of the Edward Cludd buildings

The Cludd Staff shortly before going comprehensive

Cludd pupils on a visit to Betws-y-coed in the 1950s

IV. A Comprehensive School

1. Amalgamation

As in most other parts of the country, "comprehensivization" was greeted with mixed feelings from secondary modern and grammar school. Hopes of more equality of opportunity and a greater ability to meet the individual needs of children were joined by fears about the size of the new school and the career prospects of individual staff in a hurried amalgamation. Some of those, with misgivings about the future, were tempted to read too much into the fact that, whereas the Grammar School marked its final year with an expensive production of T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" in the Minster, the Cludd hired a special train and the entire school went off for the day, near the end of the summer term, to Skegness!

2. 1976-2007

In practice, the biggest problem for the comprehensive Minster School was lack of funding. The first two head-teachers, George Whitaker and Russell Perry, were provided with little extra funding to modify the former Grammar School and Edward Cludd buildings – or to add to them as the number of pupils steadily grew. One new “permanent” building appeared on the Grammar School (or “Church Street”) site in 1978. The “Eric Roberts Building” provided one laboratory, some classrooms and a sixth-form common room. The dining area, at Church Street, was also extended and a new staffroom created. A technology block eventually followed, in 1997, at the Nottingham Road site (the former Cludd). Both sites, however, came to rely heavily on temporary classrooms which were difficult to heat and ventilate. Extra classrooms and offices were also created, at both

sites, by partitioning corridors or former year-group “social areas”. Even then, the school lacked the space to assign pupils something as basic as an individual locker for storage. Despite being a “Church school”, the buildings made it difficult to comply with the law requiring regular religious assemblies. The inadequacies of the buildings became sometimes alarmingly evident when corridors were packed with staff and pupils moving from one lesson to another. Money for adequate building maintenance was not even always available – and a number of occasions, when the Nottingham Road site was flooded, did not help its condition.

Financial problems also helped lead to the closure of the two boarding houses. This meant that the Minster choir had to rely on recruiting boys purely from the local area. Yet, the reputation of the choir did not suffer and the Junior Department developed, not only catering for potential boy choristers but for girls with musical ability.

The split-site nature of the school was another major handicap. The two main school sites were (according to the L.E.A.) 0.65 miles apart by road – and, for a few years, the school acquired a third base in Dunham House. As a result, some resources had to be duplicated. Pupils and staff regularly had to “change sites” and the need, to allow time for this, dictated the sort of timetable the school could have. In bad weather it was impossible to keep buildings clean as children’s shoes brought in generous quantities of mud. Providing a successful pastoral system, or fully satisfactory staff supervision of pupils at breaks and lunchtime, was very difficult. Even getting a message to a pupil or a member of staff could be a challenge because people spent so much time on the move.

How to organize and manage this school, which soon had about 1,600 pupils, caused much debate among staff and parents. A system of “banding”, by ability, was succeeded by a period in which many classes were taught on a mixed-ability basis, before a mixture of subject setting and some mixed-ability groups won fairly widespread support. Meanwhile, aspects of the management of the school were criticised by a L.E.A. inspection in 1982 and later by OFSTED.

The school’s creation also coincided with the time when politicians, of all major parties, began to claim there was a pressing economic need to improve the levels of attainment reached in English secondary schools. A degree of state intervention, in how schools were run, developed – with precedents in some continental countries but not in Britain. Repeated complaints, amongst Minster School teachers, concerned not only the number of new initiatives but the rushed nature of their introduction. A single system of examinations at age 16 (G.C.S.E.) was introduced, as a replacement for O-levels and C.S.E., with exam boards still leaving some aspects of courses unclear when teaching for it began in 1986. In the 1990’s, the school increasingly took up the option to move from A-Levels which were only assessed by end-of-course exams to “modular” courses – but had hurriedly to implement the national introduction of the “AS/A2” in 2000 which spread a similar system to all subjects. The biggest curriculum change, however, was the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. This set out to determine which subjects would be taught below sixth-form level, how they would be taught and the way children would be assessed (against new “attainment targets”). How to interpret this caused much, sometimes heated, discussion among staff.

Many teachers expressed further recurring unease about the growing amount of time spent on activities other than working with children – including setting targets and evaluating the degree to which staff and pupils had achieved these.

Despite all its difficulties, however, the school was regularly at, or near, the top of county academic league tables, it appeared in national newspaper lists of “top state schools” and usually won praise in external assessments – such as the 2007 OFSTED inspection. The successors of pupils, who in the early 1970’s would have left school with a few not very marketable C.S.E.s, achieved high-grade G.C.S.E. results – with the school, at its best, seeing over 80% of 16 year-olds gaining at least five G.C.S.E.s at the standard intended to equate with an O-Level pass. For the first time, most local children began to stay on into the sixth form and achieve success at A-Level. The range of subjects taught also grew. An early attempt to preserve Classics, in the form of “Classical Studies”, was abandoned and the National Curriculum prevented the continuation of some ”practical” courses for Years 10 and 11, but additional subjects included Drama, Economics, Media Studies, Politics and Psychology at A-level.

Despite being open to all local children, the school managed to maintain links with the Minster, and through a system of chaplains, developed new links with other local churches.

The school offered a wide range of extra-curricular activities – including several forms of sport, drama, field trips, foreign visits and a large Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. "Work experience" for all pupils became the norm. The Grammar School's emphasis on music outside the classroom was greatly extended and in 2005 the school was recognized as a specialist Music and Humanities College.

In 1976, the height of new technology in the school was two slow and unreliable photo-copiers. By the early years of the twenty first century, most classrooms had inter-active whiteboards, pupils had regular access to computers and the school had a reprographics department.

The new century also saw two other major changes. The school led the way locally in taking up the chance to appoint many more support staff to take non-teaching duties away from teachers. Departmental Assistants, a Finance Officer, Exam Officers and several other clerical / secretarial members of staff succeeded a total of three secretaries in 1976.

More importantly, the L.E.A. gave strong backing for an end to the split site. At first, it seemed that the school might acquire new buildings on a single site through becoming part of a consortium involving other church schools. After the government changed its mind about supporting that scheme, the governors had to start again – to plan, and raise money on their own, for a new school. The comprehensive school's third head-teacher, Phil Blinston, was, however, able to preside over the opening of the new buildings in September 2007.

A former Provost of Southwell, in 1976, expressed fears that the Minster School faced changes which might be "drastic, unwanted and dishonest". Drastic change did become part of school life in the following thirty years, but the comprehensive school offered local children more educational opportunities, and from 2007 had better buildings, than any of its predecessors.

Minster School Staff, 2001

Removal of resources from the old buildings in 2007

Demolition of the Nottingham Road site begins, 2007

Sources:

This account was originally produced in 1984 for a booklet to coincide with the centenary of the Minster as a cathedral – and an exhibition, staged that year in the Minster, about the history of the School. It has been revised in 2009 (particularly including more illustrations than was possible then) pending possible further work on the school's history.

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"The Southwellian", 1894-1976
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David Hutchison, May 2009