SOUTHWELL MINSTER

Collegiate church of St Mary

County of Nottinghamshire : Diocese of York

The manor of Southwell was given to Archbishop Oscytel by King Eadwig in 956, according to a diploma (S 659), copied in York Minster Archives, D&C, MS L2/1, Magnum Registrum Album (s. xiv), pt 1, fols. 58r–59r; Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters, i. 5–10 (no. 2), now re-edited with commentary by Woodman, Northern Houses, 97–110 (no. 2). An Anglo-Saxon saint Eadburh is said to have been venerated here, giving rise to debate about the antiquity of the minster itself. By the eleventh century Southwell minster along with the ancient minsters of Beverley and Ripon were three major collegiate churches held by the archbishop of York. This may explain why, when Nottinghamshire became a shire, it was included in the diocese of York. The archbishops acquired other lands in the county over time, and these were in some cases used to build up prebends for the canons of Southwell, as we see from the documents printed here. Southwell minster came to represent the cathedral to the men of Nottinghamshire, and in the time of Archbishop Thomas II they were allowed by the archbishop to make their processions (a custom at Whitsuntide) to the church of Southwell instead of to York (Burton, EEA 5 York, 1070–1154, 22–3, no. 22, from the Liber Albus).

The history of the archbishops from 1066 to 1127, composed by Hugh the Chanter, records that Archbishop Thomas II ‘obtained from King Henry the same liberty for the prebends of the canons of St Mary’,
Southwell, as our prebends and those of St John of Beverley and St Wilfrid of Ripon have, and (what lay in his own power) granted and confirmed that they should be free and quit of episcopal custom and exaction in their churches and lands’ (Hugh the Chanter, 52). No act of King Henry supports this statement, though York Minster has preserved a writ that extends to Archbishop Thomas and the churches of York, Beverley, Ripon, Southwell, and the archbishop’s church at Hexham in Northumberland exemption from fyrd service and from castlework ‘as they were in my father’s time and my brother’s’ (0000, Regesta 1382). None the less Hugh’s statement implies the existence of prebends already in Southwell. The anonymous twelfth-century account of the archbishops down to the end of Thurstan’s time claims that some prebends dated back to Archbishop Ealdred, ‘Terras multas de suo proprio emit et eas ecclesiis suis adiecit et de quibusdam prebendas apud Suthwellam fecit’ (Raine, Historians of the Chuch of York, ii. 353). This supposes that Ealdred was adding to prebends at Southwell a generation before they were created in his own church at York. Discussed in the headnote to William II’s acts for York minster, this source must be judged unreliable.

Domesday Book shows that the canons had a little property under the archbishop but they must still have depended on him for support. The archbishop’s manor of Southwell was worth more than £40 p.a. in 1086, and a small part of it, 1½ carucates, was held by three clerici (likely to be supporting clergy rather than canons), of which 2 bovates are said to be held ‘in prebenda’ (DB, i. 283a; § 5. 1); the use of this Latin word need not indicate individual prebends.¹ In three other manors the canonici held lands, Cropwell, Norwell, and Woodborough (§§ 5. 3, 13, 18–19), and all of them were certainly prebends at a later date. Robert Thoroton, History of Nottinghamshire, republished with large additions by John Throsby (Nottingham, 1790), iii. 72–3, surmised that the survey referred to the canons of Southwell and drew the inference that prebends already existed. Yet there is no good evidence for an endowed chapter at Southwell in the eleventh century. In Domesday Book Southwell resembles Ripon, a minster belonging to the archbishop, with very limited resources tied to canonici, very different from the richly endowed canons of St Peter or those of St John of Beverley. At both York and Beverley the ample revenues of their common fund were divided into individual prebends by Archbishop Thomas, c. 1090–92.

¹ Compare the canons of St Martin’s, Dover, whose ‘prebendae communes’ in 1066 were ‘modo diuisae per singulos per episcopum Baiocensem’ (DB, i. 1c; Kent § M1).
With lands provided by the archbishop, Southwell may have been reorganized in the same way by Thomas himself or by Gerard, who died at Southwell in 1108, or by Thomas II, who (as we have seen) gave their prebends the same liberty as those in the minsters at Beverley and Ripon. The two acts printed below consent to Archbishop Thurstan’s transfer of benefices to support further prebends. Mr Roger de Capella, clerk, obtained a writ of Henry II ordering the archbishop’s bailiffs at Southwell to allow him the liberties and customs his predecessor had enjoyed in Henry I’s time (H2/507 from the Liber Albus); and he was presumably a prebendary in the church of Southwell.

The Liber Albus of Southwell Minster is the chief evidence for its medieval archive. This was begun in the late fourteenth century and augmented in the fifteenth century. It has preserved the two acts of King Henry, one of them expressly in favour of Archbishop Thurstan of York and both concerned directly with his creating new prebends in Southwell minster. One act of King Stephen (Ste/831) and one of King Henry II (H2/2520) have survived by the same route. The first of these allows each canon the custody of the woods in his own prebend, free from the interference of the king’s forester, though in simpler terms than Stephen’s act to the same purpose for the canons of York (Ste/977). The other is a writ to protect the canons’ lands and customs, forbidding the sheriff, ‘quod neque pro custodia uiarum neque pro aliqua alia iniusta occasione eos grauetis neque iniuste in placitum ponatis’. In addition two earlier acts of King Henry I in favour of Archbishop Gerard of York are directly relevant, touching on the archbishop’s rights and revenues in Nottinghamshire (0000, 0000, Regesta 870, 922). These survive through copies from York, Beverley, and Southwell, and were presented for inspection and confirmation in 1381 by the canons of Southwell.

See also BEVERLEY MINSTER, RIPON MINSTER, and YORK MINSTER.


00 Writ-charter confirming the gift by Archbishop Thurstan of the churches of [North] Leverton and Beckingham (Notts) to the church of Southwell for a prebend. 1114 × 1133

*CARTULARY COPY:* Southwell Minster, D&C, deposited in Nottinghamshire RO, SC7/1/1, Liber Alb (ss. xiv–xv), p. 13 (no. 17) (‘Carta regis Henrici de prebenda de Bekingham’) [B], p. 21 (no. 33) (‘Carta regis Henrici de prebenda de Bekingham’) [C].

*LOCAL COPY:* Nottinghamshire RO, SC7/1/5 (s. xv), fol. 8v, a single quire of transcripts of charters, mainly concerning a chantry in the minster but perhaps made by one of the scribes who augmented the Liber Alb.


*CALENDAR:* Regesta 1871.

H(enricus) rex Angl<orum>a archiepiscopo Ebor(acensi) et iustic(ie) et uicec(omiti) et omnibus baronibus b<et> fidelibus suis b de Notingh(am) sira salutem. Sciatis quod c concessi pro dei amore donationem illam quam Turstinus d archiepiscopus Ebor(acensis) dedit et concessit ecclesie sancte Marie de Suthwellae e in prebendam, uidelicet ecclesiam de manerio suo de Legreton et ecclesiam de manerio suo <de>f Bechingehamg, sicut idem archiepiscopus predicte ecclesie in prebendam dedit et concessit. Et uolo et precipio ut bene et in pace et honorifice teneat. T(estibus) Rogero episcopo Sar’ et Eustac(io) filio Iohannis. Apud Winton(iam).

\[\text{Henry king of the English to the archbishop of York and the justice and sheriff and all his barons <and> sworn men of Nottinghamshire greeting. Know that I have granted for the love of God the gift which Thurstan archbishop of York gave and granted to the church of St Mary of Southwell for a prebend, namely the church of his manor of}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \textit{a} Anglie BC \quad b\text{-}\textit{b} fidelibus suis C suis fidelibus B \quad c quia B \quad d Thurstinus B}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \textit{e} Suwell B \quad \textit{f} om. BC \quad \textit{g} Bethingeham B, oddly }\text{ Bekingham C}\]
Leverton and the church of his manor of Beckingham, just as the same archbishop gave and granted them to the foresaid church for a prebend. And I will and command that he shall hold well and in peace and honourably. Witness Roger bishop of Salisbury and Eustace fitz John. At Winchester.

DATE: After Thurstan was nominated archbishop, 15 August 1114; and before the king left England for the last time, July 1133.
ADDRESS: The shire court of Nottingham.
WITNESS: Roger, bishop of Salisbury; Eustace fitz John.
PLACE: Winchester.
CONTEXT: The charter of Archbishop Thurstan concerning this gift was also copied in the Liber Albus, p. 21 (no. 34) (Monasticon, vi. 1313, no. ii; Burton, EEA 5 York 1070–1154, 55, no. 65, 1119 × 1133). This refers also to a house in Southwell that had belonged to Gilbert the precentor and various tithes. Gilbert is known as precentor of York minster in 1093 (Hugh the Chanter, 12), who remained in office in the time of Archbishops Gerard and Thomas II (Fasti, vi. 13). His successor is not attested at any date that helps to narrow the possible date-range of this act. North Leverton and Beckingham appear as berewicks in the archiepiscopal manor of Laneham (Notts) in Domesday Book (DB, i. 283a; § 5. 4), but both are now described as manors and both have acquired churches since 1086.

00 Writ-charter licensing Archbishop Thurstan to give the church of Dunham (Notts), which the king had given to him, to the church of Southwell for a prebend. 1114 × 1133

CARTULARY COPY: Southwell Minster, D&C, deposited in Nottinghamshire RO, SC7/1/1, Liber Albus (s. xiv/xv), p. 13 (no. 18) (‘Carta regis H. de prebenda de Dunham’) [B], p. 21 (no. 31) (‘Carta regis H. de prebenda de Dunham’) [C].
PRINTED: Dugdale, iii, pt 2, 12a ['ex quodam registro penes capitulum de Suthwell', from B], repr. Monasticon, vi. 1314 (no. vi); W. Dickinson Rastall, A History of the Antiquities of the town and church of Southwell (London, 1787), 183 [from Dugdale]; J. S. Barrow & others, The White Book of Southwell (forthcoming), nos. 18, 31 [from BC].
CALENDAR: Regesta 1870.

H(enricus) rex Angl<orum>a archiepiscopo Ebor(acensi) et iustic(ie) et uicec(omiti) et omnibus baronibus et fidelibus suis b de Notinghamsira b salutem. Sciatis quod c concessi Turstino archiepiscopo Ebor(acensi) ut ponat ad ecclesiam sancte Marie de Suthwella d in prebendam ecclesiam e de Duneham e, quam prius dederam ipsi archiepiscopo, sicut idem archiepiscopus
eam predicte ecclesie concessit et posuit. Et uolo et precipio ut bene et in pace et honorificeteneat. T(estibus) episcopo Sar(um) et Eustac(io) filio Iohannis. Apud Winton(iam).

Henry king of the English to the archbishop of York and the justice and sheriff and all his barons and sworn men of Nottinghamshire greeting. Know that I have granted to Thurstan archbishop of York that he shall put to the church of St Mary of Southwell for a prebend the church of Dunham, which I had previously given to the archbishop himself, just as the same archbishop granted and put it to the foresaid church. And I will and command that he shall hold well and in peace and honourably. Witness the bishop of Salisbury and Eustace fitz John. At Winchester.

DATE: Same occasion as previous document.
ADDRESS: The shire court of Nottingham, as previous document.
WITNESS: As previous document.
PLACE: As previous document.
CONTEXT: Dunham on Trent (Notts) was the king’s leading manor in Nottinghamshire in 1086 (DB, i. 281a; § 1. 1). It is not apparent at what date King Henry had given it to Archbishop Thurstan.