

## **THE VISIT TO ALL SAINTS' CHURCH MADE BY THE ARCHDEACON OF NORWICH IN THE SUMMER OF 1368**

When I was writing the last article, which involved some hypotheses regarding the state of the church building at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, I remembered that, ages ago, I had come across a paper in the *Proceeding of the Norfolk Record Society* which covered the visitation which the Archdeacon of Norwich made to the church in 1368. I realised then that this meant that he would have visited the church not long after the spire of Norwich Cathedral collapsed and during the time when work on our nave was suspended. I thought therefore, that you might find it interesting to see what he reported, although he made no mention of the state of the fabric of the building, because that was not his main function.

It was the task of the archdeacon to make a yearly visitation of the parishes within his jurisdiction during which, among other duties, he was to:

Enquire whether the divine office was carried out in worthy fashion  
Ascertain if the sacraments were being given to the faithful  
Inspect the furnishings of the altar, the linen and the vestments  
Make certain that the Eucharist and holy oils were under lock and key.

Now there were thirteen deaneries in the archdeaconry of Norwich, and Swanton Morley was in the Deanery of Brisle(y). The archdeacon who made this particular visitation was William Swynflete. He made separate entries for Worthing, Hoo, and Swanton, but I shall only cover the entry for Swanton here. It was, of course, all in Latin and a number of abbreviations were used.

### **Income and fees**

The entry starts with the important matter of money. It quotes a combined valuation for Swanton Morley together with the Chapel of Worthing of 50 marks, or £33 - 6s - 4d (a mark is two-thirds of £1, or 13s. - 4d.) This is an assessment of the average annual income accruing to the benefice from all sources. This sum varied quite widely from wealthy benefices like Tilney, All Saints, receiving 120 marks, and East Dereham 110 marks, all the way down to several churches in Thetford that only received half a mark. So Swanton was doing quite well.

Then were listed five payments that had been made:

|                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Procuration fee                     | 7s. - 7d. |
| Proportion to the Priory of Norwich | 40s.      |
| Michaelmas Synodal                  | 12d.      |
| Peter's Pence                       | 12d.      |
| Easter Synodal                      | 12d.      |

Procuration fees were monies that were paid by each benefice in lieu of the hospitality that was formerly given to the archdeacon when on visitation. The synodal fees were originally actually paid at each of the two synods but, like the procuration fees, they had become a fixed payment made at the time of the visitation.

Peter's Pence was a yearly financial tribute to the Pope that had its origin in Saxon England, when it was a tax of a penny on each household. However, by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century it had crystallised into a fixed sum paid for the whole of the country. This was levied on individual benefices on some sort of proportional basis. It should perhaps be noted that it was frequently withheld as a political weapon against Rome, and it was formally abolished in 1366, but as you can see it was still being collected in 1368, so one wonders who was getting it!

## The list of valuable items

The archdeacon required to have available in writing a list of all:

“the ornaments and utensils of the churches, the vesture also and the books, which objects he shall cause to be produced each year for his inspection, so that he can see what things have been added by the diligence of the parishioners and what have perished in the meantime by their malice or carelessness.”

Thus, this section starts with a detailed inventory. The first items are books, which are listed in various categories such as antiphonals (containing the anthems), psalters (containing psalms) and graduals (with music for the choir). It continues with various vestments and altar dressings, and concludes with a few items of hardware such as two silver chalices and four cruets containing wine and water. Mention is also made of the Lenten Veil; this was a curtain which was hung between the altar and the congregation from the eve of the first Sunday of Lent, until the Wednesday of Holy Week. The last item consists of three gilded silk cloths, one of which came from the collection of Alan Grene, the chaplain.

At the bottom of the list are what look like four later additions to the inventory, identified as B to E

B Two: silver chalices

C One: missal from the collection of John Payne, former rector (1333- 49).

D One: Golden Legend (a popular book of the lives of saints)

One: Raymundus (this was probably a book by Raymundus Lullus, a Franciscan monk who wrote major works on Christian theology - mostly on ways to convert Muslims to Christianity)

E One: silk cape

Notice that there would have been no mention in the above inventory of the silver gilt cup that Sir William de Morley left to the church in his will, because he did not die until 1379. Incidentally, by 1368 the term “Swanton Morley” was coming into use, although the archdeacon did not use it.

The final item in the entry is what I think means total sum procured: £9 - 2s. -7d.

I am not sure how to interpret this, but it looks as though this might be the actual income, as opposed to the estimated valuation of £33 - 6s.- 4d. Could this discrepancy perhaps be connected to the fact that the Black Death of 1348 had resulted in an all round reduction in income?

## Conclusion

We can see that, at this time, Swanton was quite a wealthy benefice, and it was certainly in possession of a range of valuable items. It was also equipped to perform liturgy involving processions although, if I am correct and the nave was indeed out of action, then the size of the old chancel would have restricted this activity considerably. The rector (or his representative) would therefore presumably have been very keen to see the completion of the building of the large new nave with its side aisles, which would have permitted a variety of processions.

However, a new rector was inducted in 1368, the year of the visitation, so we do not know who the incumbent was at the time of the visitation. William Peele was replaced by Robert de Congham. I know nothing about the former, but the latter was almost certainly an absentee rector for he had a record of exchanging benefices and prebends to further his career. At one time he was clerk and secretary to the formidable Queen Isabella, wife of Edward III, and she assisted him in his career, even petitioning the Pope on his behalf.