**Chantries and communities in the Archdeaconry of Nottingham**

[SLIDE 1: Intro slide]

Hello and welcome to this online session, produced by The Northern Way, a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council which aims to make the administrative records of, and relating to, the archbishops of York between 1304 and 1405 more accessible. My name is Dr Marianne Wilson and I am one of the research assistants on the project. My area of expertise lies with records of later medieval religious communities. This session will explore the theme of: ‘Chantries and Communities in the Archdeaconry of Nottingham’. The Archdeaconry of Nottingham was one of the administrative districts that formed part of the diocese of York, so the Archbishop of York oversaw religious matters relating to the Church there. You can find out more about the administration of the medieval Church by watching the session presented by my colleague Helen Watt, accessible from this page. This session is going to consider the chantries related to one particular community in the Archdeaconry: the community of the church of St Mary Magdalene in Newark. We will explore how the records in the Archbishops’ registers, alongside the physical church fabric, reflect the identities and intentions of the late medieval community of St Mary Magdalene.

[SLIDE 2: Exterior image]

This is an image of the church as it stands today: the distinctive west tower dates from about 1220, and the fourteenth-century spire is octagonal and rises to 72 m, making it reputedly the fifth tallest in the UK. Newark church was built in the late twelfth century, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene in the thirteenth and by the early sixteenth century had been home to at least twenty-two perpetual chantry foundations. The majority of these chantries were established during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the period that forms the focus of our Northern Way study. Even in the fourteenth century, which was the most popular period of chantry foundations, Newark must have been considered exceptional locally, as Nottingham only had one chantry, Grantham had eight and Boston twelve.

[SLIDE 3: Dance of Death image]

A chantry referred to an arrangement whereby a person would make an endowment, usually of land, property or money, to an ecclesiastical institution to employ one or more priests to pray for themselves and their family during life, and for their souls after death, in the belief that this would help to atone for sins committed during life and enable their souls to reach heaven. Both clergy and lay people of certain means were keen to establish a chantry, and they would often request that their chantry masses should take place at a particular altar or chapel, perhaps dedicated to a saint with whom they had a special affinity. Certain altars which were popular might serve several chantries and would need agreement between the chaplains over what time the daily mass would be celebrated. Over time, the funding for some chantries dwindled, so sometimes they were amalgamated with other chantries.

[SLIDE 4: Expansion of church/Church images]

The Newark Corporation records indicate that the fourteenth century was an important period of expansion for St Mary Magdalene, including the building of the south aisle, and at least part of the north aisle, also possibly the choir aisles. In the fifteenth century the nave and aisles were completed and the chancel was also rebuilt. The re-formation of this sacred space necessitated permission from the Archbishop, as it involved the demolition of one of the oldest of St Mary Magdalene’s chantries, that which was founded by Henry de Newark, formerly Dean of York and later Archbishop 1298-1299, which had been established in 1293.

[SLIDE 5: Licence to demolish chantry chapel: Reg 8, f. 186v, entry 7)

Archbishop William Greenfield granted a licence to the parishioners of St Mary Magdalene in February 1313 to remove Henry de Newark’s chantry chapel from the church yard and to use its stone, timber, lead and glass for the building of a new aisle of the church. Archbishop Greenfield’s licence also ordered that a new chantry should be established in new aisle of the church to remember his predecessor, as well as the cheeky addition of himself, Archbishop Greenfield, among those who were to be remembered at the new chantry.

[SLIDE 6: Alan Fleming, monumental brass]

The fact that this licence was requested by and granted to the parishioners of St Mary Magdalene highlights that communal work to expand the parish church was an important priority for the community of St Mary Magdalene. Many of the townsmen were involved in the lucrative wool and cloth trade and these were the principal benefactors of the church, as they returned thanks to God for their success. An important fourteenth-century merchant, Alan Fleming, who contributed much to the church building project, is commemorated in an extraordinary monumental brass which was originally in the south transept but was later moved to the north aisle.

[SLIDE 7: Nave, wide angle/Church plan]

The parish church was an important focus for late medieval communities. It was the place where people received grace from attending the divine offices and the holy sacrament of the mass. It played an important part at key points in a person’s lifecycle, serving as the setting for services relating to births, marriages and deaths. Paying for the renovation of their church would have been seen as a pious work for the greater glory of God and to enhance the worship experience of their community.

[SLIDE 8: Commission to dedicate altars, Reg 8, f. 270r, entry 6.]

This expansion meant that the space could be re-formed to allow the parishioners an opportunity to influence the sacred landscape of the church. The parishioners had clearly been appealing to the Archbishop again for his permission to make alterations. In 1315, Archbishop Greenfield commissioned the Archbishop of Armagh to dedicate three altars in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Leonard and St Katherine, in St Mary Magdalene, within the chapel of the Hospital of St Leonard next to Newark.

[SLIDE 9: List of chantries]

You can see from this list that some of these altars became homes for chantries established during the fourteenth century. The chantry founded by William and Beatrice Wanesley in 1351 was established at the altar of St Katherine and one of Simon Surfleet’s chantries was held at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The list also gives you an idea of how the late medieval church was organised.

By the late fifteenth century, the church would have been filled with at least fourteen chapels containing at least one altar, each altar furnished with a coloured frontal and a linen altar cloth, with a crucifix and candlesticks atop, likely with an image of a saint in close proximity. It is difficult to determine the exact locations of all of the medieval chapels and altars, some of which might also have altered position over time. Only two chantry chapels, founded in the fifteenth century by Thomas Meryng and Robert Markham, are still extant, but sometimes clues left in chantry documents, guild records, wills and the church fabric can help with making informed suggestions.

[SLIDE 10: Mary Magdalene chapel space]

The oldest chantry in the church was endowed by William de Newark in 1286 at the altar of St Mary Magdalene and later joined by another chantry, endowed by John Asseballock, in 1335. Brenda Pask has suggested that there are good grounds for believing that the east wall of the church was where it is now and that there would have been space for chapels behind the high altar. By the fifteenth century, the chapel behind the high altar had received a sedilia of thirteen stone seats for the chantry priests, and above the centre one there is a carved figure of Mary Magdalene with her perfume box. Could this suggest that by the fifteenth century that Mary Magdalene’s altar and guild chapel were positioned there?

[SLIDE 11: South transept]

One of the most influential guilds in late medieval Newark was the Holy Trinity guild. A religious guild was an important form of communal piety. Identification with a medieval guild not only joined an individual to an important collective association but also allowed an individual to mark themselves out as having a devotion to a specific

saint. Medieval guilds were voluntary associations, which were primarily formed for the mutual aid and protection of their members, providing pious and charitable support for members of the community, both in life and death. Formed in 1305, this guild was one of several religious guilds patronised by the well-to-do merchants of Newark that had a chapel in St Mary Magdalene. The altar was located somewhere in the south transept and supported the chantries of Simon de Botelsford from 1327, Robert de Caldewell from 1379 and Thomas Ferror from 1402.

[SLIDE 12: Register 16, f.87v, entry 1, Chantry foundation deed].

This last chantry, founded almost at the end of the Northern Way’s remit, was endowed by a group of guild members, John Leek, knight, Richard Sayvill, Thomas de Ferror and Roger del Chamber. The foundation deed for this chantry is in Archbishop Richard Scrope’s Register and it is clear from the list of those who were to be prayed for that Thomas Ferror was the leading founder. The daily services were instructed to be celebrated for the health of Richard le Scrope, archbishop of York, the founders while they lived and thereafter their souls, especially the health of Thomas Ferror and Beatrice, his wife and the souls of Matilda, Ferror’s late wife, Margaret his late daughter and his parents, brothers, sisters and benefactors and all faithful departed. This naming of specific individuals in chantry foundation deeds was important because by the later medieval period it was almost universally accepted that it was more efficacious to pray for people individually rather than collectively. This was especially true for those who had died. The naming of the dead in a liturgical context played an important role in preserving the memory of dead individuals in the minds of

communities entrusted to pray for them.

[SLIDE 13: Further reading]

I hope that this short presentation has given you an insight into how chantries in parish churches reflected the late medieval communities that established them as well as their commemorative priorities. And I also hope that this will encourage you to visit the beautiful St Mary Magdalene’s in all its glory. If you are interested in exploring this further, then I would recommend:

B. M. Pask, *Newark Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene* (Newark, 2000) – This is a well-rounded history of the church and its functions through the ages.

J. Lee, ‘ “Tis the sheep have paid for all”: Merchant Commemoration in Late Medieval Newark’ *Monumental Brass Society Transactions*, 19 (2017), 301–27. This recent article from John Lee, University of York, explores the links of the Newark merchant community with the parish churches of Newark and beyond.

For published material from the Archbishops’ Registers relating to the Archdeaconry of Nottingham, see:

W. Brown and A. Hamilton Thompson. (eds.), *The Register of William Greenfield Lord Archbishop of York 1306-1315 Part IV*, Surtees Society 152 (1938).

R. N. Swanson (ed.), *A Calendar of the Register of Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, 1398-1405, 2 parts. Part I*, Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 8, York: University of York (1981).

R. N. Swanson (ed.), *A Calendar of the Register of Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, 1398-1405, 2 parts. Part II,* Borthwick Texts and Calendars: Records of the Northern Province 11, York: University of York (1985).

R. Brocklesby (ed.), *The Register of William Melton, Archbishop of York, 1317-1340. IV*, Canterbury and York Society 85 (1997).

A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The Chantry Certificate Rolls for the County of Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, volumes 16-18 (1912-1914). The chantry certificates are the sixteenth century returns for chantries still extant in the 1540s, prior to their dissolution. They often contain much information about who founded the chantries, the current chantry priests and the value of their endowments.

For more detailed information on chantries in Britain and in other religious institutions, see:

K. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965).

M. Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London,* *Perpetual Chantries at St Paul’s Cathedral c.1200-1548* (Farnham, 2011).

[SLIDE 14]