

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
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(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXXIII

for 1984

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THE CHURCHES OF ASHLEY AND SILVERLEY

ROBERT HALLIDAY

INTRODUCTION

Ashley-cum-Silverley, commonly known as Ashley, is a medium-sized Cambridgeshire parish of 2,225 acres, with a population of 494 (1981 census), in Cheveley Hundred in the south-east of the county, three miles to the east of Newmarket (Figure 1).

The location of the original settlements of Ashley and Silverley is uncertain, for they have merged into one village community, situated centrally within the parish and grouped around a green (which was built over in the late nineteenth century) and a pond. However, remains of the medieval churches of Ashley and Silverley are still visible.

The tower of All Saints' Church, Silverley stands in a small wood at a road junction about a mile to the south of the village (O.S. grid ref. TL 7045 6022).

The site of the church of St Mary, Ashley is represented by an overgrown and neglected churchyard standing in isolation approximately one mile to the east of the village (O.S. grid ref. TL 7113 6156).

By the start of the nineteenth century both of these churches had fallen into ruin and the villagers were using a parochial chapel as their place of worship. Traditionally known as 'The Old Chapel', this was a small timber-framed building, standing by the village green to the south east of Ashley Hall (O.S. grid ref. TL 6885 6154).

In the Victorian period a new parish church was built (O.S.-grid ref. TL 7003 6165). The chapel subsequently fell into decay, eventually being demolished.

None of the four places of worship in this little-known parish has been studied before, and this paper will attempt to examine their history.

HISTORY

The Anglo-Saxon period

Evidence suggests that the forest cover of the East Anglian boulder-clay belt in the south-east Cambridgeshire hundreds of Cheveley and Radfield was not cleared before the middle Anglo-Saxon period. The nuclei of village settlements lie at the junction of the boulder-clay deposits and the chalk downlands, which would have made practical bases for forest clearance, while parish boundaries follow a strip-like pattern, allocating each settlement a share of both soils.¹ Place names also suggest that settlement in this area originated from Anglo-Saxon forest clearance.²

Ashley-cum-Silverley is the northernmost parish in Cheveley Hundred. The river Kennett runs through Dalham to the east, where it has cut a valley into the chalk. The medieval parish church of Ashley lies at the top of a chalk ridge against the boulder-clay deposits; Silverley church lies further south on the edge of the exposed chalk soils of the Kennett valley. These two sites could mark the location of the Anglo-Saxon settlements of Ashley and Silverley, but this should be investigated by fieldwalking.

The Middle Ages

Ashley and Silverley appeared in the Domesday survey as manors on the estates of the De Vere family. Silverley was a Cambridgeshire community of somewhat less than average value and importance, while Ashley was one of the smallest manors in the county.³

But, as is usual with the Domesday record of Cambridgeshire, there is nothing in either entry that

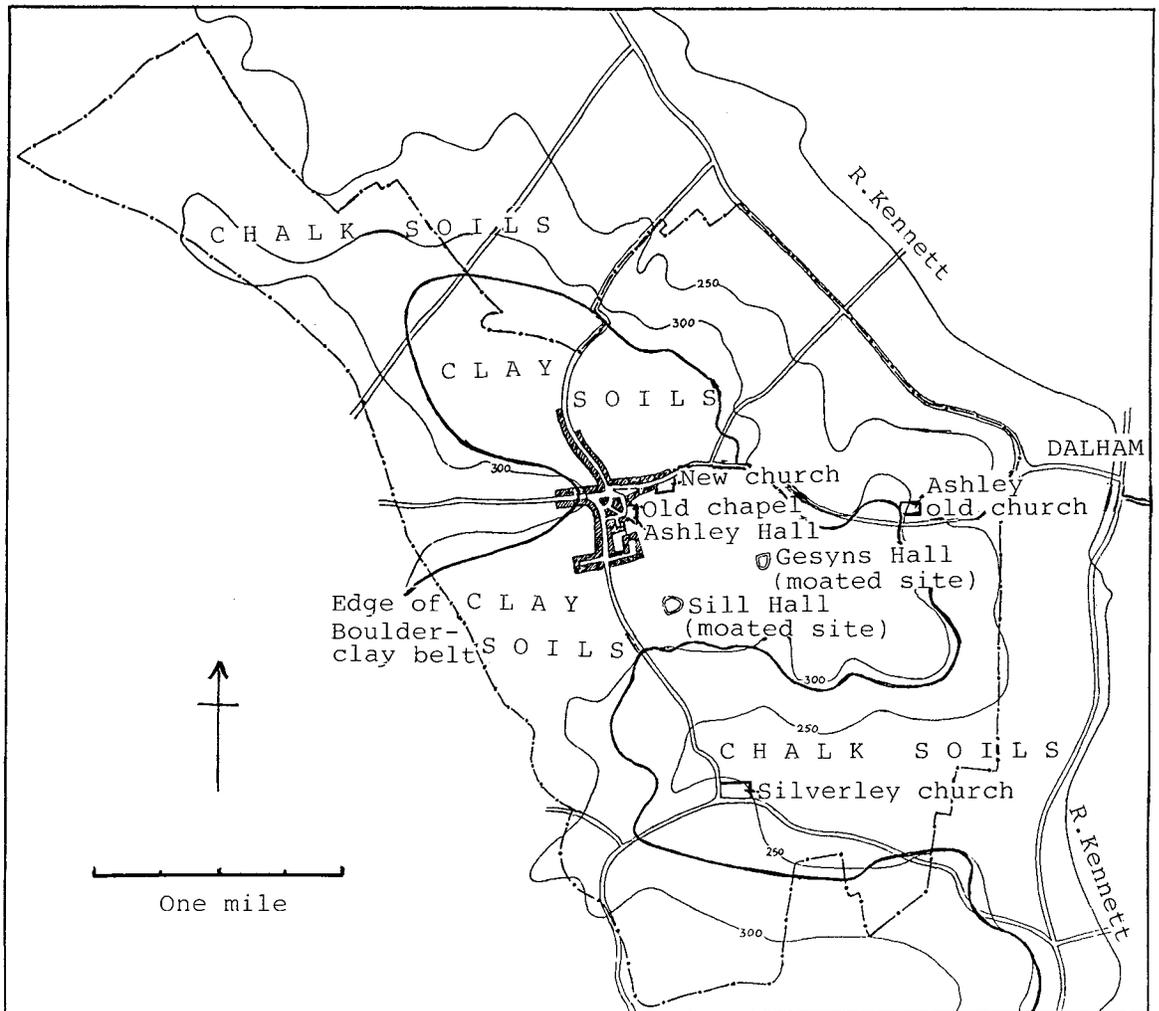


Figure 1. Ashley-cum-Silverley, Cambridgeshire.

would indicate the presence or absence of a church, and documentary evidence for churches in the two villages comes later.

The rectory of Silverley became a possession of Hatfield Regis priory in Essex, a Benedictine house founded by the De Veres in 1135. Although no contemporary record of the endowment has survived, the institution registers of the diocese of Norwich contain a short entry concerning a vacancy in the living of Silverley in 1475, which states that the advowson had been presented to the priory in 1177.⁴ This could be the earliest evidence for the presence of a church at Silverley.

In 1229 Robert de Guisnes, the De Veres' mesne tenant of Ashley, acknowledged his knight's fee there to belong to Thomas de Lavenham and John Beecham, two other mesne tenants of the same family, with the specific exception of the advowson of the church.⁵

The first source to provide certain proof for the presence of churches at Ashley and Silverley is the Norwich Valuation of 1254, which recorded both villages as separate parishes. Silverley was considered to have been worth £10 6s 8d, an average amount for a Cambridgeshire parish, although £5 of this was due from the prior of Hatfield Regis as rector. Ashley was valued at twenty shillings, one of the lowest assessments in the county.⁶

The two villages were also recorded in the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291. Silverley was valued at £17 6s 8d, again an average sum for a Cambridgeshire parish, although £6 13s 4d of this was due from the prior of Hatfield Regis. Ashley was assessed at £4 6s 8d, a remarkably low figure considering that benefices valued at less than £4 were exempt from the taxation.⁷

During the thirteenth century the Knights Hospitallers of Chippenham accumulated property in

Ashley and Silverley, and eventually half of their demesne came to lie in these two villages.⁸ One of their greatest benefactors was William Ranulph who, shortly before the enactment of the Statute of Mortmain, established a chantry for himself and his family at Ashley to be maintained by the order, endowing it with sixty-five acres of land.⁹

In 1338 the Hospitallers' estates in Ashley and Silverley were considered to form a separate Camera of their order, and a chaplain was kept there with an annual stipend of five marks to pray for the souls of the Camera's benefactors, probably at William Ranulph's chantry.¹⁰

Ashley and Silverley must have begun to merge into a single community towards the end of the thirteenth century, for at a Quo Warranto enquiry in 1300 the jurors of Cheveley Hundred declared that Silverley was a hamlet and that Ashley and Silverley formed one gelding and one tithing.¹¹

Fourteenth-century tax returns therefore record the two villages as 'Ashley-cum-Silverley'.¹² Yet the Poll Tax of 1377 recorded 116 taxpayers in the two communities, and there is no evidence for depopulation.¹³ Instead it seems that settlement contracted and shifted to its present site in the process.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Little material concerning Ashley and Silverley survives from the later middle ages, but the sixteenth century is reasonably well documented.

The population of the two communities can be estimated from the lay subsidy of 1522–4, which recorded thirty-six heads of households;¹⁴ the Bishop's return of 1603, which recorded 120 communicants;¹⁵ and the hearth tax returns of 1666 and 1674, which recorded forty-three householders and forty-one householders respectively;¹⁶ suggesting an average of between 150 and 200 inhabitants.

Testamentary evidence shows that both parish churches were in use between 1516 and 1564. Nine parishioners asked to be buried at Ashley church, while five asked to be buried at Silverley, and of these fourteen, five left money to both churches and a further five left money to Ashley church alone. But the only testator to provide information on the plan of a church was Thomas Lancaster, who in 1516 asked to be buried in Ashley church 'In the aisle before the Trinity altar', implying the presence of several altars in the church, and the possibility that there were side aisles.¹⁷

In 1553 the Council of Regency that was governing England for the adolescent Edward VI ordered the confiscation of the remaining movable church fittings and ornaments considered superfluous to the new Protestant ritual. Silverley church was found to possess two silver chalices, two copes, two tunicles, one copper cross and three bells that were hung in the steeple, all of which were taken except for one chalice and one cope. Ashley church possessed three sets of vestments, two copes, one copper cross and four bells, which were all removed apart from one set of vestments, one cope and one of the bells.¹⁸

There is evidence that there was also a chapel dedicated to St John at Ashley in the early sixteenth century. In 1517 Thomas Smyth, who farmed the hospitallers' estates in Ashley and Silverley and resided in their manor farmhouse there, left land in Newmarket in feoffment to pay for masses in 'The chapel of St John in the Hallyard' at Ashley Hall.¹⁹

Eleven years later his son John Smyth renewed this feoffment to pay for masses 'In the chapel of St John at Ashley', and left eight marks to 'Sir William Shakilton, priest' to hold memorial services there.²⁰

The probate at the foot of the will of William Goddarde of Ashley states that it was proved by the archdeaconry officials 'In the chapel of St John the Baptist of Silverley' in 1519.²¹ This was probably the same chapel, the location being confused because of the contraction of settlement in the two parishes.

Since this chapel was located at the Hospitallers' manor farmhouse and dedicated to their patron saint it would appear that it was maintained by that order, possibly housing William Ranulph's chantry, while William Shakilton may have been a chaplain attached to the foundation.

There is no evidence that there was any great devotion to this chapel. Of those villagers whose wills have survived, only Thomas and John Smyth expressed any interest in this foundation, and this might only have been because of their position as tenants of the Hospitallers.

When the preceptory of Chippenham was dissolved in 1540 its property was granted to Sir Edward North (later Baron North), of Kirtling. The establishment's possessions in Ashley included a silver gilt chalice and paten, a super altar, a missal, two sets of vestments, two altar cloths, one cruet, a brass

stoup, a sacring bell and a corporal with a total value of £4 0s 8d, together with a parcel of twenty acres of land.²² These items probably belonged to St John's chapel, and being the barest essentials necessary for the maintenance of Christian worship, they suggest that the chapel was a small foundation, where only the simplest services were conducted.

Edward North also purchased the patronage of Ashley from the De Veres in 1540.²³ The rectory of Silverley came into his possession as well, and when the living became vacant in 1554 he appointed Geoffrey Jones, then rector of Ashley, to the office.²⁴ This effectively united the two parishes, and in 1555 the Bishop of Norwich sanctioned this unification.²⁵

Silverley church evidently continued in use until 1562, when Thomas Parker of Ashley left 3s 6d for the upkeep of the building,²⁶ and it may still have been in use two years later when John Colet of Ashley requested to be buried in Silverley churchyard.²⁷

After this there is a gap in village records. No parishioners' wills have survived from the subsequent twenty years, and other documents say nothing about the state of the two churches. But when William Harrison produced the second edition of his description of England for Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle of Great Britain* in 1586 he supplemented a description of the diocese of Norwich with a paragraph written in his usual awkward style.

In the same jurisdiction also there were once 1,563 parish churches and 88 religious houses, but in our days I can not hear of more churches than 1,200, and yet of these I know one converted into a barn, whilst the people hear service further off upon a green, their bell also when I heard a sermon there preached in the green hanged in an oak for want of a steeple. But now I understand that the oak likewise is gone. There is, nevertheless, a little chapellet hard by on that common, but nothing capable of the multitude of Ashley town that should come to the same in such wise if they did repair thither as they ought.²⁸

This makes it clear that the chapel on the village green had come into use before 1586 and that one of the medieval parish churches had passed out of use by that date, and implies that settlement in Ashley and Silverley had moved to its present site by then. (It also suggests that the parishioners cared little for their spiritual wellbeing.)

William Harrison confessed that, excepting visits to fellow antiquaries in London, Cambridge and Oxford, he had never in his adult life travelled more than twenty miles from Radwinter near Saffron Walden in Essex where he was rector.²⁹ But Ashley and Radwinter are only twenty miles apart, and though there is no evidence that William Harrison had any connection with Ashley, nothing need have prevented him from visiting the village. It may seem strange that he interpolated this passage into his work, but his entire text is interspersed with such digressions. Yet if his narrative rambled, he showed no sign of dishonesty.³⁰

Although William Harrison did not say which one of the parish churches had been turned into a barn, he must have meant Silverley, for villagers asked to be buried in Ashley churchyard in 1588, 1591 and 1600,³¹ and in Ashley church itself in 1602 and 1604,³² but no will mentioned Silverley church.

The fate of Silverley church is not without parallel, for in 1578 it was reported that the Bacon family had turned the parish church at Egmere near Walsingham in Norfolk into a barn (although continuing to draw the tithes there).³³

There is a strong possibility that the chapel at Ashley, having come into use so soon after the Reformation, was the Hospitallers' chapel. This is also suggested by its situation within the grounds of the modern Ashley Hall, for there is reason to believe that this house occupies the site of the Hospitallers' manor farmhouse.

John Smyth bequeathed his lease of the Hospitallers' estates and manor farmhouse to his brothers-in-law, Henry and Stephen Norwich.³⁴ These latter appeared as tenants of the Hospitallers at the dissolution of the order,³⁵ and their descendants continued as tenants of the manor under the North family until the end of the sixteenth century.³⁶

The present Ashley Hall, which was the North family's estate farmhouse until 1943,³⁷ is mostly late Victorian, bearing the date 1893 on a gable end. But some rooms at the rear of the house contain earlier lath-and-plaster work, and the six-inch Ordnance survey map of 1884 shows the site occupied by a building of similar plan, also called Ashley Hall.³⁸ Ownership of this house can be traced through census returns and county directories to 1851, when it was described as 'A modern well built mansion' in the tenancy of a Hammond family.³⁹ The records of the enclosure of Ashley in 1815 show the site

occupied by a farmhouse in the tenancy of the same family.⁴⁰

The North family papers also include leases of the manor farm and farmhouse of Ashley to John Crauford of West Wratting in 1753,⁴¹ and John Roos of Southwell Park at Hargrave in Suffolk in 1714,⁴² while a carpenter's bill for repairs to the family's farms at Ashley in 1742 includes payments for work in the Hallyard.⁴³

The reasons why Silverley church was abandoned or why the Hospitallers' chapel continued in use are not clear. But if the population of Ashley and Silverley was no more than 200 and if settlement in the parish had shifted to its present site, then these villagers could have had little use for two remote parish churches, while they may have maintained the chapel because of its more convenient situation.

When William Dowsing, the notorious Commonwealth visitor of churches, inspected Ashley in 1644 he can have found little to offend his puritan sensibilities, for he only removed one cross from the roof of the church.⁴⁴ (By referring to one church in his journal he suggests that the parish church of Ashley had fallen out of use by then.)

Two Eighteenth-century Descriptions

Two eighteenth-century descriptions of Ashley and Silverley provide information on the churches there.

The first of these is contained in a manuscript in Lambeth Palace Library known as the *Notitia Parochialis*: replies to a questionnaire circulated among English parish clergy in 1705 enquiring into the condition and value of their benefices. The survey was probably instituted by Sir Robert Harley, though there is no evidence that it was used for any purpose at the time.

The replies include that of Thomas Serancke, rector of Ashley from 1682 to 1730,⁴⁵ who did not answer the questions, but instead concentrated on describing the churches under his care.

Ashley-cum-Silverley... have been formerly two distinct towns, but are now united and but one town... We have the ruins of both churches, but both so dilapidated that they are wholly out of use. We bury our dead in the churchyard belonging to Ashley, which is at the distance of above half a mile from the town, and that, I presume, was the cause of the church's ruin. There are small remains of Silverley church. We have a chapel in the midst of the town which is in constant use. It is of very ancient standing, being spoken of by Holinshead as an ancient chapel in his time, having the bell belonging to it in a tree, for it was till within [a] few years [ago that] we built up a steeple and repaired and beautified our chapel.⁴⁶

This makes it clear that the medieval parish churches of Ashley and Silverley had fallen into ruin by the start of the eighteenth century. Silverley churchyard was not even used for burials. Thomas Serancke did not say if he knew anything of the history of Silverley church, but it should be noticed that he 'presumed' that Ashley church had fallen into ruin because of its distance from the village. As this church had been in use at the start of the seventeenth century it is possible that its history was still remembered, although we cannot know whether his presumption was based upon knowledge or mere speculation.

The chapel had replaced both churches as the village's place of worship, and a tower had recently been added. It was already believed to be very old, and Thomas Serancke knew little of its history except that it had been mentioned in Holinshead's *Chronicle* (which he referred to inaccurately, for William Harrison made no mention of its age).

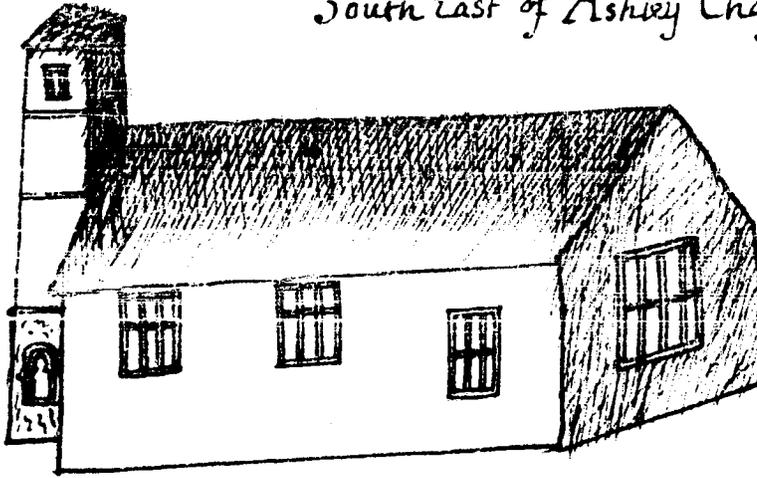
The second description was written by William Cole during a tour of Cheveley Hundred which he made in one day in August 1752 (declining an invitation to visit Kirtling Hall as he wished to return to Milton that same evening).⁴⁷

At Silverley he sketched the ruins of the church (Figure 2*b*) and made some notes in his journal.

There is but one church remaining in this depopulated parish, and nothing of the church but the tower, which was formerly a very noble one. It had one of the largest west doors into it I almost ever saw for a parish church. There are two or three ruins on the south side, which seem to be the remains of the porch, which is all I can say at present, taking the rough draft on the side of this, writing while I was on horseback.⁴⁸

These observations show that the church had fallen into complete dereliction. The fact that earth

South East of Ashley Chapel.



Ruins of Silverley Church.

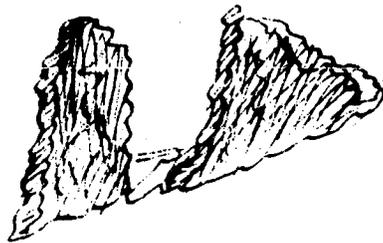
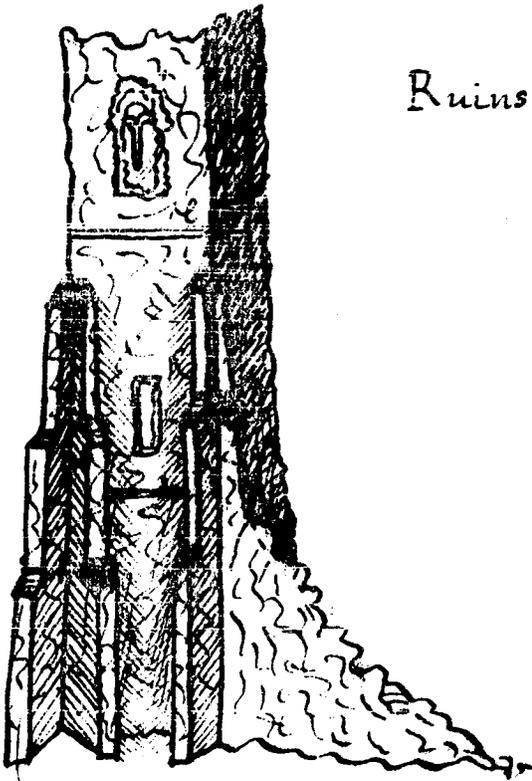


Figure 2. Sketches from William Cole's journal: (a) Ashley Chapel; (b) Silverley Church.
Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

had piled around the tower so that the west window could have been mistaken for a door suggests that the churchyard had lain in a state of neglect for a considerable time.

William Cole then rode to Ashley, where he wrote a disparaging account of the chapel.

This is one of the meanest and poorest built churches in the whole county of Cambridge. It consists only of a small poor square tower, if it deserves the name of one, being built of mortar, except the lowest storey, which is of stone, and by its antique appearance seems to have been a chapel or oratory in former times. In this turret hangs one small bell. The rest of the building consists only of a nave, built of clay and stud work and tiled. The altar stands on one step and the old pulpit in the north east corner by it, and the old font at the entrance by the belfry. There are no monuments in this church, it not having the right of sepulchre, but the inhabitants are buried at old Ashley churchyard, there being only a dilapidated church there which I had no opportunity of seeing. This mean chapel stands on a sort of green and in the precincts of a farmyard.⁴⁹

The chapel could hardly have been described as an imposing place of worship. William Cole considered the lowest stage of the tower to have been medieval, and it does have a distinctly antiquarian appearance in his sketch (Figure 2a), while the upper storeys must have been added by Thomas Serancke. References to 'The old pulpit' and 'The old font' might mean that furnishings had been taken from the medieval churches. He suggested that the chapel had been the Hospitallers' chapel by saying that it lay within a farmyard (presumably of the Hall Farm).

The most likely explanation for William Cole's failure to visit the ruins of the parish church of Ashley is that he was in a hurry to go to Cheveley (the next village to be described in his journal). This probably deprived us of an informative description of the ruins.

Neither Thomas Serancke nor William Cole appears to have known much of the history of Ashley or Silverley. Yet had the replacement of the medieval parish churches by the chapel been seen as unusual at the time, the process should still have been remembered locally at this date. Since there is no evidence that this was so, this was probably seen as a natural course of events, and soon forgotten.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The population of Ashley increased from the middle of the eighteenth century,⁵⁰ standing at 272 by 1801 and rising to 397 by 1841. The size of the chapel proved so inconvenient that it was considered necessary to build a new church (Figure 3a).

The scheme to build this church was organised by John Crichton-Stuart, the second Marquess of Bute, who had inherited the Kirtling estate in 1802 through marriage to the North family, and the principal source of information on the subject consists of copy letters from the Marquess to Mr W. Webb. This Mr Webb cannot be traced elsewhere, but he would appear to have been an agent of the Marquess.

Preparations were underway by October 1843, when the Marquess wrote to Mr Webb asking that he arrange a meeting of local landowners to discuss raising a rate to finance building the church, and have its proposed site surveyed.⁵¹

The services of an architect had obviously been engaged by then, for in November the Marquess wrote to Mr Webb again.

I have just received a letter from Mr. Ferrey enclosing a plan for the new church at Ashley, from which I learn that the expense of building it, after deducting £50 for the value of carriages [possibly the cost of transporting building material], will be £800 or a little more. I therefore authorize you to state that I shall subscribe £420... This subscription is in addition to the site, which I give as patron.⁵²

Mr Ferrey was Benjamin Ferrey who, although seldom remembered now, was considered one of the rising architects of the day. Aged thirty-three, he had built up an extensive practice, and he was known to the Marquess, having designed the church at East Hyde on his Bedfordshire estates two years earlier. Unfortunately we cannot know how he approached this commission at Ashley, for most of his papers have been lost or destroyed.⁵³

After this there must have been a disagreement, for the Marquess's next letter reads as a reply to



Figure 3. (a) Ashley parish church: the ruins of the medieval building and churchyard. Photographed by William Palmer in 1930. *C.A.S. Collection*. (b) Ashley-cum-Silverley parish church in 1985: the new building, erected between 1844 and 1872.

a complaint about the proposed size of the church, stating that a larger building would be unnecessarily expensive and detrimental to the interests of the village.⁵⁴ In the following letter he spoke more forcefully.

Mr Ferrey took down the plan with him, which was drawn under my particular directions to contain 280 people only, but it is unnecessary to correspond further on the subject as I saw Mr. Smith [Edward Smith, rector of Ashley from 1835 to 1869] when I was at Kirtling last week, and he at once stated to me that the size of the new church was left entirely to my judgement.⁵⁵

This shows that the Marquess played an active role in determining the character of the building, with Benjamin Ferrey working to his directions, and the rector and parishioners deferring to his judgement. He had his way in this dispute too, for the church was eventually built to accommodate a congregation of 280.

The first stone of the new church was laid on 22 June 1844.⁵⁶ It was a rectangular, single-cell, flint building in a simple neo-Norman style with a vestry to the north-east and a bell-cote at the apex of the west gable. New furnishings were provided, the bell – which had been cast seventy years before – being the only item to be re-used from any of the older churches.⁵⁷ The new church was consecrated on 26 April 1845 and dedicated to the Holy Trinity, the date 1845 being carved on the south face of the font to commemorate the event.⁵⁸

By 1871 the population of Ashley had increased to 564, and it became necessary to enlarge the church. Having raised funds the parishioners commissioned Clark and Holland, a Newmarket firm of architects, to design extensions, and a faculty permitting work to proceed was obtained on 22 May 1871.

The builder's contract was given to Robert Tooley of Bury St Edmunds, who added a choir with an apsidal sanctuary, north and south transepts and a north-eastern vestry and organ chamber in the modest neo-Norman style of Ferrey's original work, while enhancing the comfort of the worshippers by installing an underfloor heating system.

The new work, which cost the parishioners £1,000, was consecrated on 10 October 1872, the church being re-dedicated to St Mary, patroness of the medieval parish church of Ashley.⁵⁹ The church has remained in use since then, requiring no significant repair or alteration.

After the new church had been built the chapel became the village school, although it was singularly unsuitable for this purpose, as it lacked proper furniture and heating, and also served as the store for the parish funeral equipment. Visiting inspectors described it as 'wretched', 'squalid' and 'neglected', and when a new school was built in 1879 the chapel became a barn and then a garage.⁶⁰ The tower must have been taken down soon after 1845, for none of the older villagers remembers it.

When the Historical Monuments Commission inspected the chapel in 1952 it was found that the plaster had rotted away from the timber frame and that the structure was in danger of collapse.⁶¹ By 1960 it had been demolished in the belief that it was unsafe.

The churchyard of the medieval parish church of Ashley gradually became overgrown, and it is now impenetrable for most of the year.

In 1851 it was reported that Silverley churchyard had recently been forested by the Marquess of Bute.⁶² This work was probably being carried out while the new parish church at Ashley was being built. Eventually the trees grew to the same height as the church tower, and misinterpretation of a report that these trees were unsafe led to an attempted demolition of the tower in 1971. Prompt action by the villagers prevented its destruction, but much damage was done, including the loss of almost all the upper storey.⁶³ The remaining portions were preserved, and still stand with an air of neglected grandeur (Figure 4*b*).

SURVEY OF THE LOST CHURCHES OF ASHLEY AND SILVERLEY

Silverley Church

The tower of Silverley Church is a structure of the Decorated style of the later fourteenth century, built from flint rubble with limestone dressings. It is three storeys high: until 1971 it stood 14 m high (Figure 4*a*), but now it only reaches a height of 12.5 m. At its base the tower measures 5.5 m square

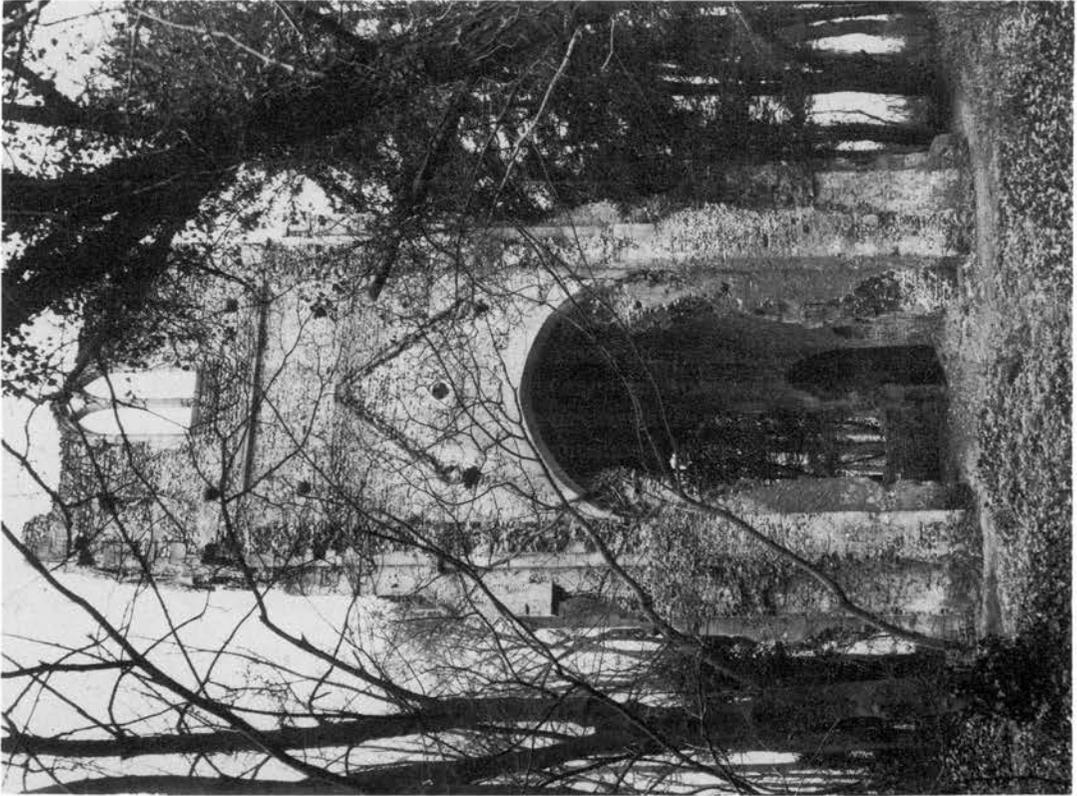


Figure 4. (a) Silverley Church tower in 1971. Reproduced by permission of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). (b) Silverley Church tower in 1985.

externally (excluding angle buttresses), and 3 by 3.7 m internally. Four staged stone buttresses stand at the corners, but the lower stages of the facings have been removed, probably for building material. A stone plinth one metre high ran around the base of the tower, most of which has also been removed. Three string courses run around the exterior: the lowest (which also forms a hood mould over the west window), at a height of 4 m, the upper two at the respective heights of 7.5 and 11 m, just below the second and third floor windows. Putlock holes for scaffolding have opened in the exterior and interior walls.

The ground floor chamber opened into the church through an archway 2.85 m wide and 6.5 m high, which occupies most of the east side. The west wall is lit by an unusually large west window 2.05 m wide and 4.7 m high. The window arch is lined with bricks and no remains of tracery can be discerned.

A spiral staircase in the north-west corner connected with the first floor. The lower stages of the stairs and the upper part of the internal wall have fallen away, yet the entire upper circuit of the stairs remains in situ, a peculiarity that was commented on by Nikolaus Pevsner.⁶⁴ Some plaster remains on the walls. During repairs after 1971 the entrance was cemented up, but vandals have cut an entry through the exterior wall.

The second storey formed an intermediate chamber between the church and the belfry. Small rectangular windows are set in the north and south walls and a small lancet window is set in the west wall, while a quatrefoil opening in the east wall served as a squint into the nave. Ledges for the support of floorboards on the first and second floors run around the interior of the tower.

Most of the third storey was destroyed in 1971, but photographs show that it was lit by four windows about 2 m high with Y tracery.⁶⁵

Ridges in the ground to the east of the tower appear to represent the foundations of a church 24 m long and 5 m wide. Vestiges of a tile roof remain on the east face of the tower, rising from a height of 7.7 m to a meeting point 9.25 m above ground level at a pitch of 70°. These suggest that the church was a simple tower–nave–chancel building. (George Boissier, writing in 1827, before the churchyard was planted, said that the church had consisted of a nave, chancel and north and south porches.)⁶⁶

Ashley Church

In 1852 Edward Kedyngton Bennet of Rougham Hall in Suffolk said that the remains of Ashley Church suggested a building of the Decorated period (although offering no explanation for this).⁶⁷ Thirty years later the Rev. John Raven, F.S.A., vicar of St George's church, Great Yarmouth described them as no more than 'A few grey masses of masonry'.⁶⁸ The only known photograph of the ruins (Figure 3*b*), taken by William Palmer in 1930, shows the grass-covered foundations of a small rectangular building.⁶⁹

The churchyard is overgrown, but when inspected by the author in January 1984 it was found that winter had reduced vegetation cover sufficiently to render the site accessible, and the remains of the church were found to lie approximately 30 m from the south-east corner of the enclosure.

The base of the west wall was 7.6 m long and approximately one metre high, but a large amount of earth was banked around it. The foundation of the south wall stretched for 15.85 m, the collapsed remains of the north wall forming a pile of rubble about 15 m long and 1.5 m high. All three walls were constructed from flint rubble, and no dressing stone could be seen. Loose flints and lumps of mortar were scattered over the site.

No remains of the east wall or any other parts of the church could be seen, but since the soil was very disturbed these could lie below the ground. None the less, the visible remains indicate that this was one of the smallest churches in the county.

The Chapel

The chapel was demolished some time between 1955 and 1960. Fortunately the building was inspected by Peter Eden for the Historic Monuments Commission in 1952,⁷⁰ and photographed by the National Monuments Record in 1955 (Figure 5).⁷¹

The chapel was a half-timber construction, 13.1 m long and 5.2 m wide. The side walls were 3 m high, while the roof was 4.5 m high with a pitch of 63°. The timber frame was constructed from vertical posts measuring 170 mm by 115 mm on 39 cm centres, slotted into top and base plates and strengthened



Figure 5. Ashley Chapel in 1955.
*Reproduced by permission of the
Royal Commission on Historical
Monuments (England).*



by diagonal corner braces. The side windows contained three lights and the east window contained five lights, each with simple two-centred ogee heads.

The roof was of crown post design, divided into three bays by ogee-moulded tie beams and principals with leaf stop decorations and octagonal crown posts. Slots in the eastern tie beam and its supporting posts suggested the former presence of a screen.

Peter Eden concluded that the chapel had been built in the fifteenth century. Timber-framed places of worship from this period are uncommon, so the chapel's loss was most unfortunate.

The tower was removed during the early part of the nineteenth century, but it had been described by the rector of the parish in 1705⁷² and by William Cole in 1752.⁷³ It was also mentioned by George Boissier in 1827, when he described it as a low structure of the Decorated period.⁷⁴

William Cole's sketch suggests that the tower was narrower than the rest of the chapel, and only slightly higher. The ground storey, which acted as a porch (and may have been built as such), was of stone, and was possibly the oldest part of the chapel. The upper stages, which were of lath-and-plaster work, were added in the late seventeenth century to contain a bell.

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NOTES

B.L. British Library.

Bod. North North manuscript, Bodleian Library.

C.R.O. Cambridgeshire Record Office.

C.U.L., E.D.R. Ely diocesan records, Cambridge University Library.

N.R.O., N.D.R. Norwich diocesan records, Norfolk Record Office.

P.R.O. Public Record Office.

S.R.O.(B), A.S.W. Archdeaconry of Sudbury wills, West Suffolk Record Office (Bury St Edmunds).

- 1 Christopher Taylor, *The Cambridgeshire Landscape* (London, 1973), pp. 87–90.
- 2 P. H. Reaney, *The Place Names of Cambs. and The Isle of Ely* (English Place Name Society, xix, 1943), 113–28.
- 3 *Victoria County History of England: Cambs. and The Isle of Ely*, 1 (1938), 358–9.
- 4 N.R.O., N.D.R., Institution registers, REG. 7, f. 10v. (Ashley and Silverley lie within the deanery of Fordham, which formed part of the diocese of Norwich until 1837.)
- 5 P.R.O., Feet of fines, CP. 25 (1)/24/13, m. 3.
- 6 W. E. Lunt, *The Valuation of Norwich* (London, 1926), p. 431.
- 7 *Taxatio Ecclesie Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate Papae Nicholia IV* (Record Commission, 1802), p. 121 (see also 'The taxation of Pope Nicholas IV' in Rose Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies* (London, 1929), p. 298).
- 8 Cartulary of the Hospitallers, secunda camera, sexta tituli, B.L., Cotton MS Nero, C. ix, ff. 49–138; *Rotuli Hundredorum* (Record Commission, 1812–18), II, 589–90.
- 9 B.L., Cotton MS Nero, C. ix, ff. 71–2.
- 10 L. S. Larking, *The Knights Hospitallers in England* (Camden Society, first series, LXV, 1857), p. 121.
- 11 P.R.O., Eyre rolls, JUST. 1/95, m. 60d.
- 12 *Feudal Aids* (Record Commission, 1899–1920), I, 154; J. J. Muskett, C. H. Evelyn-White, *The Cambs. Lay Subsidy of 1327* (1905, p. 27; R. E. Glasscock, *The Lay Subsidy of 1344* (British Academy, 1975), p. 27.
- 13 W. M. Palmer, *Cambs. Subsidy Rolls* (Norwich, 1912), p. 21.
- 14 P.R.O., E. 318/81/163, m. 11.
- 15 'The condition of the archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury in 1603', *Proc. Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, xi (1901), 16.
- 16 P.R.O., E. 179/244/22, ff. 75–6; E. 179/244/23, m. 52.

- 17 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Thomas Lancaster of Ashley, 1516, Fuller, f. 13; William Goddarde of Ashley, 1519, Newton, f. 5; John Clark of Ashley, 1527; Brydone, f. 246; Thomas Parker of Ashley, 1532, Longe, f. 121; Henry Norwich, 'Of the town of Ashley in the parish of Silverley', Brett, f. 184; William Ashwell of Ashley, 1546, Coole, f. 213v; Robert Almer of Ashley, 1547, Buxton, f. 12; Edmund Clark of Ashley, 1550, Coole, f. 100; Henry Clark of Ashley, 1558, Sparrowe, f. 100; Edward Ashwell of Ashley, 1559, Sparrowe, f. 144; Roger Pitcher of Ashley, 1559, Sparrowe, f. 174v; John Ashwell of Ashley, 1559, Sparrowe, f. 379; Thomas Parker of Ashley, 1562, Woode, section B, f. 91v; John Colet of Ashley, 1564, Arnold, f. 140v.
- 18 J. J. Muskett, 'Cambs. Church Goods', *The East Anglian, or Notes and Queries*, second series, VIII (1899), 212, 229; IX (1901), 349.
- 19 P.R.O., Prerogative court of Canterbury wills, Ayloff, PROB. 11/19, f. 40.
- 20 P.R.O., P.C.C. wills, Porch, PROB. 11/22, ff. 249–50.
- 21 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Newton, f. 5.
- 22 P.R.O., Augmentation office, grants of crown lands, E. 318/17/812, m. 11.
- 23 B.L., Cotton MS Nero, C. ix, f. 158.
- 24 N.R.O., N.D.A., Institution registers, REG. 12, f. 92v. (There is no record of the disposal of the rectory of Silverley at the dissolution of Hatfield Regis priory in 1536.)
- 25 N.R.O., N.D.A., REG. 12, f. 140v.
- 26 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Woode, section B, f. 91v.
- 27 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Arnold, f. 140v.
- 28 Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1586), I, 154 (republished London, 1807, I, 252).
- 29 William Harrison's introduction to his work, Holinshed, *op. cit.* 1586, I, ii; 1807, I, vii.
- 30 For an analysis of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle* and William Harrison's description of England see C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford History of English Literature, III, 1954), 301–4.
- 31 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Alice Ashwell, Bacon, f. 270; Richard Norwich, Bacon, f. 49; Charles Norton, Coppinge, f. 34.
- 32 S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., John Norwich, Coppinge, f. 294; William Clark, Coppinge, f. 438.
- 33 P.R.O., Special commissions in the Exchequer, E. 178/1572.
- 34 P.R.O., Prerogative court of Canterbury wills, Porch, PROB. 11/22, f. 250.
- 35 P.R.O., Minister's accounts, SC. 6/Henry VIII/2402, m. 17d.
- 36 Compotus roll of the North family estates, 1575, Bod., North, c. 47, no. 1, m. 5; S.R.O.(B), A.S.W., Stephen Norwich, 1583, Frende, f. 106; Agnes Norwich, 1591, Bacon, f. 95; John Norwich, 1602, Coppinge, f. 294.
- 37 Sale catalogue of Ashley Hall, C.R.O., 515/SP. 116.
- 38 Six-inch O.S. map, 1884, Cambs./Suffolk, sheet XLII, south-east, no. 12 (latitude 52° 13' 30, longitude 29° 15).
- 39 *A History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cambridgeshire* (Peterborough, 1851), p. 399. (The 1851 census returns for the Newmarket area are missing.)
- 40 Enclosure map, C.R.O., r. 60/24/2/1; enclosure aware, C.R.O., R. 62/12, reference schedule, p. 4, no. 2.
- 41 Bod., North, c. 42, no. 8.
- 42 C.R.O., R. 56/5/10.
- 43 Bod., North, c. 21, f. 294.
- 44 J. Cheshire, 'William Dowsing's work in Cambs.', *Trans. Cambs. and Hunts. Arch. Soc.* III (1909), 90.
- 45 N.R.O., N.D.A., Institution registers, REG. 20, volume B, March 1682 (unfoliated); REG. 22, f. 36. Thomas Serancke graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1675 (J. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses (1250-1750)* (Cambridge, 1927), IV, 38). I can find no explanation for the origin of his unusual surname.
- 46 Lambeth Palace Library, MS 942, f. 647.
- 47 B.L., Cole MS, Add. MSS 5819, f. 120.
- 48 *Ibid.* f. 121.
- 49 *Ibid.* f. 122 (published in W. M. Palmer, *William Cole of Milton* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 80).
- 50 Suggested by typescript indexes to the parish registers in the C.R.O.
- 51 National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Marquess of Bute collection, Box 70, letter book (Kirtling estate), 1840–4, pp. 75–6.
- 52 *Ibid.* p. 77.
- 53 Information supplied by Benjamin Ferrey's great-grandsons, Peter Ferrey of York and Peter Ferrey of Surlingham, Norfolk, and the curator of Luton Hoo, Michael Urwick-Smith.
- 54 Letter book (Kirtling estate), 1840–4, pp. 79–80.
- 55 *Ibid.* pp. 80–1.
- 56 *The Cambs. Chronicle*, 22 June 1844, p. 2.
- 57 J. J. Raven, *The Church Bells of Cambridgeshire* (Cambridge, 1881), p. 118.
- 58 C.U.L., E.D.R., CONSEC. 10; G. 31/1.
- 59 C.U.L., E.D.R., CONSEC. 144; D. 3/7; *The Cambs. Chronicle*, 12 October 1872, p. 8.
- 60 W. M. Palmer, *William Cole of Milton* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 80–2; G. S. Rickson, *Ashley School, 1874–1974* (privately printed, Newmarket, 1974), pp. 1–2.
- 61 Manuscript report on the chapel, offices of The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments at Trumpington.
- 62 *History... of Cambridgeshire* (Peterborough, 1851), p. 399.
- 63 Press cuttings relevant to this event are kept on file in the Cambridgeshire Collection at the Central Library, Cambridge.

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- 65 National Monuments Record, negative nos. BB. 71/3521; BB. 71/3522.
- 66 G. Boissier, *Notes on the Cambs. Churches* (London, 1827), p. 54.
- 67 J. H. Parker, *The Ecclesiastical and Architectural Topography of England: vi, Cambridgeshire* (Oxford and London, 1852), entry 175.
- 68 Raven, *Church Bells*, p. 55.
- 69 Cambs. Ant. Soc. photographic collection, print no. 1, 2.
- 70 Manuscript report on the chapel, offices of The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments at Trumpington.
- 71 National Monuments Record, negative nos. CC. 69/9' CC. 69/10.
- 72 See above, p. 33.
- 73 See above, p. 35.
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