

**The Whittlewood Project**

**Notes on the Medieval Churches**

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## Introduction

The notes which follow are informal, and were designed to stimulate discussion within the Whittlewood Project team. They are not definitive, but represent one stage in a process of thought which is still (early 2006) incomplete: the conclusions drawn should be treated as tentative, and as nearer a starting-point than as complete in themselves.

All the surviving pre-Reformation churches in the Whittlewood project area are discussed, as is the demolished church at Akeley, something of the evolution of which can be gleaned from early illustrations.

All the notes apart from those relating to Akeley supplement existing accounts, which are listed for each building (copies of those produced by the RCHME are reproduced), but an attempt has been made to set out an overall chronology for the medieval phases of each, particularly as my interpretation does not always accord with earlier ones.

Documentary sources have only been used where they are to hand: there is more which could be done in this respect, particularly in relation to the Buckinghamshire churches

The evidence, particularly early in the chronology for each church, has been pushed hard, while seeking to retain a clear distinction between what is relatively certain and what is undeniably tentative. The aim has been to produce something around which a debate can be started concerning the value of the evidence of the churches in the context of the overall Whittlewood Project. Some of the chronology might be refined in the light of evidence produced by other aspects of the Project.

A few things may be pulled out to start the ball rolling:

1. It is striking that, with the exception of Potterspury (St Nicholas), and to a lesser extent Stowe, there is very little significant fabric of the period between the late 14th century and the Reformation. It is a general feature of Northamptonshire that there was almost no wholesale rebuilding of churches in the later middle ages (of the kind found, say, in the Cotswolds and parts of Suffolk), suggesting that sufficient wealth was not available. Many churches in the area, however, received new (or altered) aisles in the 15th century, with larger windows than earlier, and low-pitch roofs (i.e. 'Perpendicular' style). Not only are these features generally absent from the Whittlewood churches, but several of the buildings lack clerestories, the most common form of 15th-century investment in aisled churches, and no chancel or tower appears to have had a major 15th-century refurbishment. This does not mean that there was no investment: rood screens and lofts were almost universally introduced, and money would have been spent on altars and their ornaments, and on devotional images, few of which would have left any trace after their removal in the 16th century. The overall impression created is perhaps of an area which, in the later middle

ages, while not necessarily impoverished or in great decline, was certainly not booming either in terms of population or of disposable wealth, though it is clear that there was some variation between the parishes.

2. The most problematic church is that of Lillingstone Lovell. The interpretation offered below is radically different from any of those which have been advanced previously, and suggests an 11th-century (or even earlier?) church of some importance: not particularly large, but with at least one porticus.

Almost equally problematic, at the other end of the period, is Potterspury. While the precise chronology (both relative and absolute) of the development is open to debate, it is clear that it is the one church which saw major development after the middle of the 14th century

Paul Barnwell

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## Leckhampstead: Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- VCH Buckinghamshire IV
- RCHM Buckinghamshire Inventory (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, 2nd edn

That the nave is of two phases is strongly suggested by the step back in the south wall at the west side of the porch, and by what appear to be the quoins of the corner of a shorter nave above the eaves of the porch. In addition, the character of the masonry above the porch and immediately to its east is very different from that in those parts of the west end of the wall which were not disturbed in the 19th century. If the evidence is correctly interpreted as indicating that the nave was originally shorter than now, the earlier structure would have been a fraction over twice as wide as long, which is what would be expected in the late 11th or the 12th century. Assuming that the position of the south doorway has not changed, it would originally have been very hard up against the west end of the church. It is not possible to ascertain the date of the earlier part of the nave: it must have been in existence by the date of the present south doorway (say 1130–70); the doorway could, however, have been inserted into an existing wall, replacing a smaller, earlier, one.

The fact that the north arcade is uniform throughout its length indicates that it was built at one time, either when the nave was lengthened or subsequently. Given that the north doorway appears to be of late 12th-century date, and the south doorway a little earlier, it is most likely that the aisle and nave extension were erected at the same time. The late 12th-century aisle may have been narrower than the present one, which appears to have been constructed in the 14th century, the north doorway having been moved into the later wall.

The tower presents something of a puzzle, for it contains stylistic evidence which appears inconsistent. The first-floor window in the west face is flanked by shafts with capitals of 12th-century type, and its hoodmould is of the same unusual variety (with lunettes cut in both upper and lower faces) as that above the nave arcade, strongly suggesting that tower and arcade are contemporary. The west doorway of the tower, however, with its keeled mouldings, would sit more comfortably in the second quarter or middle of the 13th century. It is possible that the tower originally had no west doorway, or that the original one was small and plain, and that the present one was inserted after the original building: against this is a lack of any evidence for disturbance in the surrounding masonry, but it perhaps remains the most likely solution.

None of the fabric of the 12th-century chancel, which would have been narrower than the nave, appears to survive. The south wall of the 14th-century chancel, which is set in from that of the nave, is almost certainly on the line of its predecessor, while the north wall appears to have been built immediately outside the earlier one, giving the chancel its present asymmetrical

relationship with the nave (this kind of development can be paralleled in a number of Northamptonshire churches).

The mid(?) 13th-century painted inscription 'Hic sedet Isabella' on the second pier from the east of the north arcade is in almost the only position within the church from which both the altar at the end of the aisle and that in the chancel could be seen. This suggests not only that Isabella was a person of some distinction (whether in devotion or in local society), but also that Masses were celebrated at both altars simultaneously, with the elevation of the Host staggered so that both elevations could be seen in sequence by the those in the nave. A related detail is the way in which the figures at the top of the hoodmould in the west two bays of the north arcade are turned towards the high altar, rather than facing across the nave like their eastern counterparts.

#### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- pre-1160 east part of nave
- L12 west part of nave; north aisle (probably narrower than now); tower
- ?M13 tower doorway
- 1300–1350 chancel and probable widening of aisle (re-using 12th-century doorway)
- 15 porch

The lengthening of the nave so substantially in the late 12th century increased the space for members of the laity, perhaps suggesting population expansion in the parish. The absence of a south aisle, by contrast, suggests that devotional development was relatively restricted throughout the middle ages, and the continued relative narrowness of the north aisle, together with the lack of a clerestory, may be symptoms of stagnation in the late-medieval community, with money not being available for the fabric of the building. This does not mean that there were no developments or that there was no investment in the church: a rood loft was built in the 15th century, and it is likely that the later middle ages would have seen the purchase of a number of devotional images which would have left no visible traces once they had been removed in the 16th century. The impression of decline may be strengthened by the William Atwater's visitation of 1517–20, which recorded that the rector was not resident (not in itself unusual), that the laity had gone away and that the church was 'in ruins',<sup>1</sup> though such reports are often exaggerated.

In 1526, the rector was Master Robert Ashcome, who, by 1535, had been succeeded by Richard Muston, and there was a curate or stipendiary priest,

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Thompson (ed.), *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517–31*, 3 vols, Lincoln Record Society 33, 35 and 37 (1940–7), i, p. 46.

Richard Stoweby.<sup>2</sup> The living was worth £16 in 1291, and £15 13s. 4d. in 1535.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> H. Salter (ed.), *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526*, Oxford Historical Society 63 (London, 1909), p. 241; J. Caley (ed.), *Valor Ecclesiasticus tempore Henrici VIII auctoritate regia institutus*, 6 vols (London, 1810–34), iv, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> S. Ayscough and J. Caley (ed.), *Taxatio ecclesiastica Anglica et Walliae auctoritate papae Nicolai IV circa A.D. 1291* (London, 1802), p. 32; Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 239.

## Lillingstone Darrell: St Nicholas

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- the guidebook available in the church
- VCH Buckinghamshire IV
- RCHM Buckinghamshire inventory (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, 2nd edn

Although the evolution is superficially straight-forward, detailed interpretation presents some difficulties, witnessed by the disagreements between the RCHM and VCH, which are not resolved by the *Buildings of England* even in the revised second edition account.

The RCHM suggested that the early 13th-century tower replaced an earlier compartment, of the 11th century, on account of what its authors believed to be the date of the tower arch. Despite the assumption made there, the tower arch is of very different character from the 11th-century chancel arch, and there is no reason to believe that it pre-dates the present tower: the impost stones contain deep-cut mouldings of 13th-century type.

It is unclear whether the nave walls have always been their present height, or whether they were raised slightly in the 13th century when the tower and present chancel were constructed.

The RCHM suggested that the chancel was built in two 13th-century phases; this is disputed by the VCH and the *Buildings of England*. The question remains unresolved: there is no internal evidence to suggest two phases; any external evidence on the north side is obscured by the later vestry; on the south there may be a change of masonry around the east window of the south wall, but it would be possible to attribute too much significance to it. The change in alignment of the chancel walls could be connected with construction at two periods in the 13th century, but that is not the only possible explanation. One alternative is that the western portions side walls of the chancel were rebuilt on the foundations of their 11th-century predecessors which were (typically) poorly aligned, and that the alignment was rectified in the new eastern extension; a second, perhaps more likely, solution is that the 11th-century chancel was narrower than the present one, and that the western parts of the new were built immediately outside the misaligned 11th-century ones, with rectification taking place further east. A further factor which militates against two-phase construction is that the tracery of the east window, which is derived from plate tracery, is probably of the mid 13th century rather than later (*pace* the RCHM and the *Buildings of England*). The north wall was reported as being 'ruinous' in 1366, perhaps accounting for the apparent re-setting of parts of the recessed tomb there.<sup>1</sup>

The dates of the medieval nave aisles and arcades are also not free from difficulty and debate. The two arcades are similar, but not identical, that on the

<sup>1</sup> VCH, p. 190.

north perhaps being a slightly later copy of the design already set on the south. The south arcade may have been erected a little before 1300. It could be contemporary with the present aisle, which has flowing tracery in the east window. Although that is the most compact and perhaps the most likely sequence, tentative evidence in external elevation of the west wall could suggest that there was an earlier and slightly narrower aisle: in that case either the arcade replaces an earlier one (perhaps unlikely given the lack of opulence displayed in the building as a whole) or the late 13th-century aisle was widened in the early 14th century. The north arcade was probably built very shortly after 1300, when its aisle may have been constructed, but the form of the latter is not certain as it was taken down in the 18th century and replaced in the 19th.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- 11 nave and now-demolished chancel
- E-M13 chancel; west tower
- L13 south nave arcade and aisle
- E14 north nave arcade and aisle
- (E)15 porch

The overall development is pretty much a textbook example of the evolution of a small parish church up to the middle of the 14th century. The main congregational area, the nave, retained its original proportions throughout the period; the chancel was lengthened and widened in the 13th century to accommodate increasing eucharistic ritual, and perhaps, given the scale of the expansion, to provide burial space for the lords of the manor in the high-status part of the building; the tower was probably added to accommodate the bells which became increasingly important during the 13th century; aisles were added to house side altars and other devotional *foci* for the ordinary parishioners, reflecting the increased requirements for them as the consequences of belief in Purgatory were felt. Apart from the porch, there were no 15th-century additions to the fabric: there is no clerestory; the aisles were not widened and given Perpendicular-style low-pitch roofs. This may suggest that, on the one hand, the lords of the manor and rectors found the chancel adequate and, on the other, that the ordinary lay folk did not have the means to support further expansion of their parts of the church for yet greater elaboration in votive services: there is, however, likely to have been investment in a rood screen and loft, and in devotional images, all of which would have been swept away without trace in the 16th century.

In 1526 the only clergyman serving the church was Edward Crankwall, who received a modest, but not minimal, stipend of £8,<sup>3</sup> and was still there in 1535.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See VCH, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 242.

<sup>4</sup> Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 240.



## Lillingstone Lovell: St Mary

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- VCH Buckinghamshire IV
- RCHM Buckinghamshire inventory (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, 2nd edn

The evolution of St Mary's is particularly complex, and few points can be ascertained with certainty. The account by the RCHM, followed in essentials by the VCH, suggests that the earliest part of the nave, of the 13th century, is the western portion, and that it was later extended to the east. While this is not impossible, it would be a highly unusual development, since, for reasons both structural and tenorial, the division between the nave and the chancel is almost always the fixed point around which development took place. The following notes try to piece together a different evolution, and, like the older accounts, must be treated as tentative.

The thinness of the nave could suggest an early date, perhaps lying in the later pre-Conquest period. If its entire length is of one date, that suggestion could be strengthened. Also possibly in favour of such an interpretation is the highly irregular plan of the north chapel. At first sight, the chapel appears to be a 14th-century widening of the east end of an earlier aisle (see below), but in that case its irregular plan is surprising, irregularity tending to be a feature of the 11th century and earlier. A further unusual feature of the plan of the building is the long east 'responds' of the nave arcades. Taking all these factors together, it may be possible to suggest that the nave is essentially of a single pre-Conquest phase and that, at least on the north side, there was a side chapel or porticus-like structure, with a narrow entrance from the nave, the east side of which is defined by the end of the respond; whether such an arrangement was mirrored at the south is entirely unclear. Were this to have been the case, the east pier of the north nave arcade would stand on the site of the angle between the nave and porticus, the walls to its west and north having been cut away when the later aisle was created or in the 14th century when the aisle and chapel were remodelled (see below). Of the chancel which went with the putative early phase of the building nothing is known, though it must have been very small — more of a 'clergy' area than a chancel in the later medieval sense.<sup>1</sup>

Moving forwards from this starting-point, the next stage would appear to have lain in the early 13th century, the date of the south doorway. That phase would probably have consisted of the north aisle, the narrowness of which suggests that it is unlikely to have been built after the 1230s, and possibly a south aisle narrower than the present one, for which the doorway was constructed. Perhaps at the same time or even a little earlier, the west tower was built, though it is difficult to date with precision. The tower arch and

<sup>1</sup> For the evolution of chancels and in this period, see P. S. Barnwell, 'The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: The Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 157 (2004), pp. 41–60.

unbuttressed form of the structure would suggest a date before the middle of the 13th century. Although the RCHM thought that the gable-shaped lintel with dogtooth ornament over the small first-floor lancet on its west face indicate a date in the 13th century, the stones of which it consists may have been moved to their present position.

The later medieval development is also problematic. The conventional story (RCHM and *Buildings of England*) is that the building was overhauled in the first half of the 14th century, the work of that period comprised: the renewal and refenestration of the walls of the north chapel and aisle, re-using the old foundations, and the throwing into one of the two spaces, if they had not been already (above); the replacement of the suggested narrow south aisle with the present one, the early 13th-century doorway being re-used; the re-building of the nave arcades in their present form; the equipping of the north chapel and east end of the south aisle were provided with altars for votive masses, as indicated with unusually elaborate sedilia and piscinae;<sup>2</sup> the rebuilding of the chancel rebuilt both wider and longer than previously (though it was drastically shortened again in the 18th century); the building or rebuilding of the top of the tower. The difficulty with this interpretation is that the piscinae/sediliae are not identical: that on the south has plain pointed arches and no hoodmould, suggesting it is earlier than its northern counterpart, which has slightly ogee-shaped arches and a hoodmould, and is generally much better constructed and finished. The problem is compounded by the fact that east windows of the two aisles both have ogee-arched lights, but are not identical, that at the south having sunk-chamfered jambs: while the two windows are unlikely to be of the same date, the south window with its ogee arches is also unlikely to be contemporary with the piscina/sedilia. The detailed sequence cannot be established. Very tentatively, it may be possible to suggest that the south aisle and chapel were created in their present form in the third quarter of the 13th century, that the north chapel followed in the first half of the fourteenth century, and that at a slightly later date the east window of the south aisle was renewed in a style similar to that of its northern counterpart.

The only significant medieval work to the fabric after the middle of the 14th century was the creation of the clerestory in the 15th century.

The early stages of the development tentatively outlined above would suggest a place of some standing in the pre-Conquest period, for the provision of porticus (whether one or two) would be indicative of a status above that of a simple manorial chapel or an early 'parish' church. Other sequences are, however, possible, one perhaps being that the earliest part of the building consists of the east two bays of the nave, thus creating a compartment originally a little over twice as long as broad, with the south doorway set hard up against the west wall (cf. Leckhampstead and Passenham). Such a plan would suggest that the nave was built in the first half of the twelfth century or earlier, but how much earlier would be impossible to ascertain without

<sup>2</sup> The existing accounts refer to double piscinae, though some note that the south one only has a drain in one compartment. In fact neither is a double piscina, for the apparent hole in the base of the western part of the north piscina does not extend right through the stone. Each fixture therefore consists of an elaborate arrangement of a piscina, a credence (for the cruets) and a sedilia.

invasive investigation. Thereafter, the nave might have been extended to the west in the later 12th century, narrow aisles and the tower built in the early 13th century, the east end of the north aisle widened into a chapel in the 14th century. The principal drawback to such an interpretation lies in the north chapel: it is difficult to imagine why 14th-century builders, who were capable of laying out a regular south aisle and chancel, would have created such an irregular space at the north.

If a long chronology is preferred, it suggests that Lillingstone was a place of some ecclesiastical significance in the pre-Conquest period, and was equipped with a church requiring investment greater than that for a manorial or proto-parochial purposes. Thereafter, whichever scheme of development is followed, the 13th century saw modest investment in the tower and aisles, the south doorway being modestly decorated, and the first half of the 14th century saw significant investment in building work, not least in the unusual and highly elaborate piscinae and sedilia. Either as part of the same phase or during the 15th century, each side chapel was also furnished with a squint from which the priest could view the high altar, suggesting that Masses were, at least on occasion, celebrated simultaneously but with the elevation of the Host staggered so that the laity could see each in turn. During the 15th century, spending on new fabric seems to have been very limited apart from the addition of the clerestory and the creation of a rood loft, the stair for which required the making of a doorway through the north-east nave respond. It is also likely that the parishioners invested in images and other fittings which would have been swept away with no trace at the Reformation. Although the lack of building work in the 15th century cannot, therefore, be taken as a sign of poverty, the fact that the north aisle was never widened may indicate a decline in population and/or disposable wealth amongst the parishioners. By the early 16th century, there appear to have been other signs of difficulty. In 1517–20, a visitation noted that the rectory was ‘ruinous’ and that the font and chrisms were not kept locked,<sup>3</sup> while in 1530 the position was worse: the rectory was ‘enormiter dilapidata et quasi ad terram collapsa’, and the choir ‘ruinosa’.<sup>4</sup> The condition of the rectory could suggest that the rector was an absentee: in 1526 he was Master Lawrence Dodstone, whose stipend was £10 13s. 4d., who had a curate, Richard Style.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, *Visitations*, i, pp. 122–3.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *Visitations*, ii, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 272.

## Passenham: St Guthlac

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- the guide leaflet available in the church
- P. Woodfield, 'Church of St Guthlac, Passenham, Northamptonshire, Diocese of Peterborough: observations during building works, July 2002'
- VCH Northamptonshire V
- *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn

Although documentary evidence suggests that there would have been a church at Passenham long before the 13th century, probably even before the Norman Conquest, nothing survives in the present fabric which can certainly be ascribed to a period before about 1230, the date of the nave. The position of the blocked north and south doorways could, however, be interpreted (very tentatively) to suggest that there was an earlier church on the site.

The north and south doorways (both now blocked) of the 1230 church lie towards the centre of the building, rather than in the more usual position near the west. The east-west positions of doorways and the division between nave and chancel usually remained constant as churches evolved, so that doorways placed further east than normal can indicate the presence of an earlier, shorter, nave. This could be the case even though there is no evidence in the walls of a westward extension, for the nave which set the doorway positions could have been narrower as well as shorter, particularly as medieval practice was to construct new fabric around the old, so that the old building could remain in use for as long as possible: new chancels of the 13th century, for example, were frequently wider by one wall thickness than those they replaced, the new walls being constructed immediately outside the old ones. Such a sequence of development is much less commonly encountered in naves, since there was less need to widen them, but one possible reason for it might have been the replacement in stone of a timber church. *It must be stressed that this is extremely tentative, and based on no hard evidence.*

### *Summary of main phases of development*

- *[Possible timber church of unknown date]*
- c.1230        nave and, presumably, chancel.
- L13/E14     tower.
- 1620–40     major refurbishment, particularly in the chancel.

It does not appear that there was any major building work in the 15th century, unless there was work of that period in the chancel which was subsequently obscured. There may, however, have been other forms of investment in provision for worship by that date, particularly in screens and images swept away at the Reformation. One piece of evidence for continued investment in the 14th- or 15th-century, which reflects evolution in the function of the

building, is the squint at the south side of the chancel arch, which presumably stood above the altar of St Mary referred to in a will of 1533.<sup>1</sup>

In 1526 the rector, Hugo Cotten (a graduate), paid the larger than average stipend of £15 6s. 8d., was probably an absentee, as he paid a curate, Thomas Toorner (who seems also to have been curate at the now demolished church of St John the Evangelist at Wicken — see below), and there was also a chaplain.<sup>2</sup> Cotton was still rector in 1535.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Serjeantson and H. I. Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights', *Archaeological Journal*, lxx (1913), p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 332.

RCHME  
**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: OLD STRATFORD, PASSENHAM, ST GUTHLAC

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

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N/A 1. Baker 1822-30 II, 193-4

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2. Bridges 1791 I, 306-8

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3. Pevsner 1973, 369-70

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N/A 4. RCHME 1975-85 V,

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N/A 5. RCHME 1975-85 VI,

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N/A 6. VCH 1902-37

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N/A 7. Other:

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**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

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N/A 1. Glynne MS Church notes

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2. Drawing by G. Clarke

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3. Drawing by J. Flesher

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N/A 4. Other:

OLD STRATFORD, PASSENHAM, ST GUTHLAC  
SP 781394

DESCRIPTION

March 1983

The church consists of CHANCEL, NAVE and WEST TOWER.

CHANCEL

The chancel was built in 1626 by Sir Robert Banastre. It is a remarkable survival retaining contemporary wall paintings, stalls and the front of the gallery which now stands at the W. end of the nave. This originally formed part of a screen between nave and chancel.

NAVE

The N. wall appears to be of 13th-century date. The chancel arch is of the 14th century as is the little internal window on the S. side. The S. wall has 19th-century windows but the blocked doorway may be 13th-century. The nave never appears to have been aisled.

WEST TOWER

The W. tower dates from the 14th century although the belfry was rebuilt in the 17th century.

OLD STRATFORD, PASSENHAM, ST GUTHLAC

DEVELOPMENT

The nave is presumably of 13th-century origin and the tower is somewhat later. The chancel was totally rebuilt in 1626.



PASSENHAM, ST GUTHLAC<sup>1</sup>  
DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

The royal estate at Passenham had soke over Cosgrove in 1086,<sup>2</sup> implying that Cosgrove and perhaps Furtho were once part of its parochia. This estate had broken up by the time of Domesday Book. Passenham church was, moreover, one of the minsters which were held by the Confessor's 'Chancellor', Regenbald the priest, and which became the foundation endowment of Cirencester Abbey in 1133 (though Passenham lay so near the border of the county that it was not described under Northamptonshire but Buckinghamshire in the foundation charter.<sup>3</sup>) These pieces of evidence together with the unusual dedication, if of early origin, suggest Passenham had once been a church of major importance adds to the strength of this inference. The other churches in Northamptonshire held by Regenbald were Brigstock and Rothwell. At Passenham unlike at Brigstock and Rothwell, no appendent chapels are mentioned in the abbey foundation charter so any parochia once possessed by Passenham had already been destroyed by the 12th century. The 12th-century lords of Passenham, the Ferrers, made some grants to the Hospitallers in the parish,<sup>4</sup> but the rights of Cirencester church were protected by the privilege of Innocent II<sup>5</sup> and never seem to have been infringed. Little else is known of the history of this church. Cirencester abbey never appropriated it, presenting candidates for the rectory until the Dissolution.<sup>6</sup> The monks received merely a pension of 4 marks per annum.<sup>7</sup> In 1389 this sum was disputed in Common Pleas.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1527: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 387.

<sup>2</sup> DB I, 220a, 223b.

Cartulary of Cirencester I, no. 28 = Regesta II, 266-7 cf. Cartulary of Cirencester I, xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. a mill held for two marks: PRO E40/11536.

<sup>5</sup> Cartulary of Cirencester no. 145.

<sup>6</sup> First recorded institution: 1269 - Rot. Gravesend, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Cartulary of Cirencester II, nos. 459, 729.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., no. 912.

## Potterspury: St Nicholas

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- VCH Northamptonshire V
- RCHME notes (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn

The development of the church is complicated, and the detail of the interpretation must remain uncertain, though the main periods of investment in the fabric are reasonably clear.

The most likely origin for the present fabric lies in the first half of the 12th century, or, perhaps (given the unevenness of the setting out), the end of the 11th. At that early date there may have been a nave roughly twice as long as broad, with chancel of the same width and no structural division between the two. Although not the most common 12th-century plan, it is of a recognisable type.<sup>1</sup> The west end of the nave probably lay on the line of the present west wall of the south aisle, so that the chancel would have begun a little to the west of the present chancel arch, at the west end of the (later) arcade to the north chancel chapel. Parts of the low side walls of the nave are likely to survive in the spandrels of the later arcades (the nave was later heightened — below — but the old wall head is visible in its west bay). Nothing is known of the form of the early chancel other than its width.

Late in the 12th century a north aisle was added, separated from the nave by a two-bay arcade (of which the central pier remains) with round Romanesque arches and a long east respond, behind which there is likely to have been an altar. The aisle would have been considerably narrower and lower than the present one, probably with a steep-pitched roof running down from the eaves of the nave, and only extended along the side of the nave.

There is no certain evidence of 13th-century work in the nave, though it is possible that there was a 13th-century predecessor of the present south aisle. The reason for such a suggestion is that the south nave arcade, now of three bays, ends short of the west tower, where the original west wall of the nave may have lain. It is, however, also possible that, in the 14th century, when the present south aisle was built, it was not deemed worth digging out the rising ground to the south west in order to achieve a very small addition to the length of the aisle.

In the 13th century, perhaps in the 1260s, the chancel was enlarged and, perhaps slightly later, in the 1290s (certainly by 1300), a two-bay arcade was cut through the north wall into a predecessor of the present north chapel. Later, in the first half of the 14th century the chancel was generally refurbished.

<sup>1</sup> See Barnwell, 'The Laity'.

Also in the 14th century, the south aisle and arcade were either reconstructed or built from new. Probably c. 1400, or in the early 15th century, the tower was built, the nave extended west to join it, the north aisle and chancel chapel were rebuilt to their present plan (including two-storey vestry/sacristy at the east), the nave arcade extended one bay to the west, and the arches of its existing bays rebuilt with pointed heads. Later, perhaps in the third quarter of the 15th century, there was further significant change, with the addition to the nave of a clerestory: this made the nave taller than the chancel, requiring a new wall with a chancel arch to carry the east end of the nave roof. This was not built on what can be assumed to be the line of the earlier (non-structural) division between the nave and chancel (above), but was a little further east, so that the arch overlapped the arcade to the north chapel. The reasons for this change are not clear, particularly given the awkwardness of the junction with the north arcade (hence the triple-arch form of its 19th-century replacement), but may have been connected with the creation of a rood loft and stair, the remains of which survive on the north side, and, possibly, with the provision of an extra devotional focus against the rood screen.

Work continued in the early 16th century. A bequest of 1510 relates to the building of new porch,<sup>2</sup> though whether it replaced an earlier one is unclear; it was, in turn, superseded in the 19th century. In addition, the north aisle was completely refenestrated in an imposing style, though the fact that the label stops are plain uncarved blocks may indicate that the scheme was never completed.

#### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- L11/E12 nave [*and chancel*]
- L12 north nave aisle
- [13 *south nave aisle?*]
- 1260–1300 chancel enlarged; first north chancel chapel
- M/L14 south nave aisle
- E15 tower; north aisle and chapel rebuilt
- 1450–75 clerestory and chancel arch
- E16 porch; refenestration of north aisle.

It would appear that the earliest church, of the late 11th or early 12th centuries, was of an unexceptional scale, even if its form was slightly unusual. Its evolution through the 12th and 13th centuries was fairly typical, and the level of investment quite modest. From the late 13th century onwards, however, there was a succession of additions and alterations, which, though individually not spectacular, resulted in the transformation of the church into one of the largest and best appointed in the area. The church is unique amongst those in the Whittlewood project parishes in showing continuous investment right through the middle ages to the eve of the Reformation.

By the end of the middle ages, there were at least four altars in the church: in addition to the high altar, dedicated to St Nicholas, there were a chapel

<sup>2</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', p. 394.

(perhaps that to the north of the chancel) dedicated to Our Lady, and altars of St Thomas and Jesus, the former in an aisle.<sup>3</sup> Although the surviving wills do not mention other devotional foci, it is likely that there would have been several other images, and that it was the provision of them and of quite large-scale votive Masses which led to the late-medieval expansion of the church. The overall impression is, therefore, of a place which prospered in the later middle ages, though in 1526 its vicar was paid the relatively modest stipend of £8, and there was only one, quite poorly paid, stipendiary priest.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', pp. 393–4.

<sup>4</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 161; cf. Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 330.

**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: POTTERS PURY, ST NICHOLAS

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

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N/A 1. Baker 1822-30 II, 223-4

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2. Bridges 1791 I, 316-18

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3. Pevsner 1973, 376-7

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N/A 4. RCHME 1975-85 V,

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N/A 5. RCHME 1975-85 VI,

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N/A 6. VCH 1902-37

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N/A 7. Other:

**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

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N/A 1. Glynne MS Church notes

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2. Drawing by G. Clarke

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3. Drawing by J. Flesher

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4. Other: Drawings by J.C.(?) Buckler BL Add MS 36371

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POTTERSURY, ST NICHOLAS  
SP 763433

DESCRIPTION

March 1983

The church consists of CHANCEL, VESTRY, NORTH CHAPEL, NAVE, NORTH and SOUTH AISLES, SOUTH PORCH and WEST TOWER.

CHANCEL

The detailing is all of the 14th century but the walls are unusually thick for a building of that date. There is an arcade of two bays on the N. which overlaps the division between nave and chancel by half a bay.

NORTH VESTRY

The N. vestry dates from the 19th century.

NORTH CHAPEL

The compartment is continuous with the N. aisle. At the E. end there are two single-light windows, one above the other, probably indicating the existence of a former two-storey arrangement at this point. The windows are of c.1400.

NAVE

The N. arcade is of three and a half-bays. The half bay goes with the chancel arcade and is separated from the rest by a section of wall which contains a rood-stair, now blocked. The E. pier of the three bays W. of this section of wall is of the 12th century, as are perhaps the arches springing from it, though later pointed. The remainder of the detailing is of c.1300. The N. wall is of the same thickness as the N. chancel wall and is continuous with it. The chancel arch is 19th-century but in the style of c.1300. It consists of a central arch flanked by half-arches. The S. arcade is of three bays and dates from c.1400. The wall above is of normal thickness. The clearstorey is an addition of late medieval date.

NORTH AISLE

The aisle is continuous with the N. chapel and dates from c.1400.

SOUTH AISLE

The S. aisle is narrower than the N. aisle but appears to be of the same date.

SOUTH PORCH

The S. porch was rebuilt in 1848.

WEST TOWER

The tower appears to be of the 15th century and has an elaborately moulded W. doorway.

## POTTERSPURY, ST NICHOLAS

### DEVELOPMENT

The thickness of the chancel walls and of the N. wall of the nave, together with the unusual form of the chancel arch, suggest that the church had an undivided nave and chancel in the 12th century. The only fabric of that period which can be identified is the pier, of c.1175-1200, in the N. arcade of the nave. This indicates that the church was aisled, at least on the N., by the late 12th century. In the late 14th century the whole church was rebuilt. The nave was divided from the chancel by a chancel arch and wide rood screen, perhaps of the verandah type. A new aisle and chapel were built on the N. The S. side of the nave was taken down and a new arcade and S. aisle built. Later in the 15th century the present tower and clearstorey were constructed. The church was extensively restored in 1847-8 by R.C. Hussey (NRO Potterspurly 272P/40-4) and again in 1860-1 by E.F. Law (Pevsner).

## POTTERSURY, ST NICHOLAS<sup>1</sup>

Dependent chapel: Yardley Gobion (Destroyed)

### DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

In 1086 a priest was recorded at the holding of Henry de Ferrers in Potterspury.<sup>2</sup> By the 13th century the church was a rectory in the patronage of the abbey of St Pierre-sur-Dives (diocese of Sées), though this right was contested by the local lord, for example in 1274, when an assize of darein presentment was required for the abbot to prove his claim.<sup>3</sup> Though the abbot's rights were preserved into the 14th century,<sup>4</sup> probably via his cell at Wolston (Warwicks),<sup>5</sup> there is evidence that the lord of the manor considered the advowson appendent to his property. In 1364, when Thomas le Despenser transferred the manor of Potterspury and Yardley Gobion to the King, the advowsons of both churches were said to be appendent to it,<sup>6</sup> although the royal presentation, made in 1389,<sup>7</sup> was probably possible because of the demise of the alien priories, rather than because of this grant. The advowson of Potterspury was transferred by Richard II to the Carthusians of Coventry who, despite the resistance of the prior of Tutbury, the abbot of St Pierre-sur Dive's new proctor in 1413,<sup>8</sup> presented in the 15th century.<sup>9</sup> A land grant of 1406 shows that the rector of Thornton (Bucks 8 km. S.) owned land in the parish,<sup>10</sup> a fact which could possibly indicate some connection with a parochia across the county boundary. In 1496 the Carthusians of Coventry obtained a deed of future appropriation: the vicarage was to be worth 12 marks per annum and pensions ammissio sequestrationis to the bishop and the archdeacon were ordained,<sup>11</sup> but no vicars are apparently recorded. The two aisles were apparently dedicated to St Thomas and St Mary.<sup>12</sup> In 1510 6s. 8d. was left for the making of a new porch.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1335: PRO E326/652.

<sup>2</sup> DB I, 225a.

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Graveend, 127.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., the presentation in 1313 LAO Register II ff. 125v-126r.

<sup>5</sup> Knowles and Hadcock, Houses, 86, 95.

<sup>6</sup> PRO E40/11046.

<sup>7</sup> LAO Register XI f. 154v.

<sup>8</sup> LAO Register XIV ff. 259r-v.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. 1424: LAO Register XVI f. 71f.

<sup>10</sup> PRO E210/732.

<sup>11</sup> LAO Register XXIV ff. 104-113v.

<sup>12</sup> St Thomas' aisle, recorded in a will of 1510 – Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 394; St Mary's in 1335 – PRO E326/6652.

<sup>13</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 394.



Yardley Gobion, St Leonard<sup>14</sup> (Former chapel of)

A church in Yardley Gobion was mentioned in Thomas le Despenser's conveyance in 1364.<sup>15</sup> Yardley Gobion was a chapel to Potterspury and was probably served by the same priest.<sup>16</sup> By Bridges' time the chapel had fallen out of use: the nave had been converted into a public house and the chancel into a brew house.<sup>17</sup> The present church in Yardley Gobion is entirely of 1864.

<sup>14</sup> 1510: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 440.

<sup>15</sup> PRO E40/11046.

<sup>16</sup> Will of 1526: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 440.

<sup>17</sup> Bridges, Northants. I, 320; Bodl MS Top Northants f. 4 p. 74.

## Potterspury, Furtho: St Bartholomew

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- the guide book available in the church
- VCH Northamptonshire V
- RCHME notes (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn

There is no means of ascertaining the age of the nave. Taking the interpretation proposed by RCHME, that the tower was half inserted into the nave, the original nave was rather less than twice as long as broad, suggesting that it could be pre-Conquest; such proportions are atypical of all periods from the late 11th century onwards.

The doorway in the south wall of the chancel seems to be 12th-century. Although it is the earliest datable feature in the building its significance is unclear. It could represent the date at which the precursor of the present chancel was built (see below), or it could have been inserted into pre-existing chancel and be a symptom of increasing differentiation between clergy and laity as the consequences of the Gregorian Reform were worked out in the twelfth century.

The only other significant phase of medieval development lay in the first half of the 14th century, when the present chancel was built, probably re-using the foundations of the old one.

### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- ?11 or 12      nave [*probably with some form of chancel*]
- 12              chancel doorway
- 1300–50      present chancel

The lack of any kind of investment in the fabric in the later middle ages is striking. In 1526, the living was held by Thomas Baullt, paid a minimal stipend of £5 3s. 8d.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 101.

RCHME  
**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: POTTERS PURY, FURTHO, ST BARTHOLOMEW

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

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	1.	Baker 1822-30 II, 159
	2.	Bridges 1791 I, 297-8
	3.	Pevsner 1973, 221
N/A	4.	RCHME 1975-85 V,
N/A	5.	RCHME 1975-85 VI,
N/A	6.	VCH 1902-37
N/A	7.	Other:

**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

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N/A	1.	Glynne MS Church notes
	2.	Drawing by G. Clarke
	3.	Drawing by J. Flesher
N/A	4.	Other:

POTTERS PURY, FURTHO, ST BARTHOLOMEW  
SP 774431

DESCRIPTION/DEVELOPMENT

December 1987

The church consists of CHANCEL, NAVE and WEST TOWER.

CHANCEL

In the N.W. angle is a corbel, apparently of 17th-century date, presumably for a former roof. At the W. end of the N. wall is a blocked single-light low-side window with an ogee trefoil head. The rear-arch is formed by a timber lintel. Otherwise the N. wall is blind. It has two buttresses, that to the W. perhaps 17th-century and that to the E. 19th-century. Towards the E. end of the N. wall is a tomb recess with a segmental arch of two orders, each moulded with a sunk roll, and a keeled label. The E. window is of three ogee trefoil-headed lights with Decorated tracery of ogee sexfoils. The window is flanked by plain image brackets. There are diagonal buttresses on the N.E. and S.E. angles. In the S. wall are two windows, each of two trefoil-headed lights and half-tracery over. The lower part of the windows is blocked to a height of about 0.3 m. in masonry. The window heads and half-tracery, which are formed in a single stone, do not sit well on the jambs. Below the S.E. window is an ogee trefoil-headed piscina of rather crude and lop-sided design. It has a deep ribbed drain and credence shelf. The westerly light of the S.W. window is dropped to form a square-headed low-side window, probably already blocked in the 17th century. On the upper courses of the S. wall, under the eaves, are the remains of rendering, marked into squares, of uncertain date. Between the windows is the S. doorway. Externally it has a round head formed by radiating voussoirs. Both head and jambs are unmoulded. It has a label with crude head stops. Internally the jambs are square-cut and the rear-arch, like that of the windows, is formed by a timber lintel. The roof is ceiled but the feet of a pair of principal rafters are visible. A cambered tie beam is set between them, boxed and with an embattled cresting. It is probably 19th-century.

NAVE

The N. wall is constructed of regular coursed masonry and rises from a chamfered plinth. At the W. end of the N. wall is a blocked doorway. It has a chamfered four-centred head and jambs. The head is formed by a single large block of stone. The label to the doorway is square, like the labels of the windows. The N. window is straight-headed and of three lights with four-centred heads and sunk spandrels. The sill is deeply splayed down into the church. This design is repeated in all the windows of the nave and tower. The chancel arch is round-headed and of two chamfered orders, the outer continuous, the inner carried on polygonal half-shafts with moulded capitals. The shafts stand on chamfered plinths, without bases. The voussoirs of the arch are set radiating. (There is a third order of radiating voussoirs, without jambs, acting apparently as a relieving arch.) The E. gable is crowned by an ogee finial. In the S. wall are two three-light windows, similar to the N. window. To the W. of the arch is the S. doorway. It has broadly chamfered jambs and a four-centred head with sunk spandrels. In the parapet of the S. wall is a square recessed frame enclosing a shield. The shield apparently was a date-stone, inscribed with a date and initials, now illegible. The tower arch is the same as the chancel arch. The font, which has a plain polygonal bowl and stem, stands just before it. The roof has two cambered and

moulded tie beams, carrying king struts. The wall plate (which survives only on the S.), purlins and ridge are also moulded.

#### WEST TOWER

The 17th-century tower appears to have been built into the westernmost bay of the medieval nave. Thus the eastern part of the internal tower space at ground level belongs essentially to the nave. The compartment is approximately T-shaped. The 'arms' of the 'T' to N. and S. carry wide chamfered beams supporting the belfry. The S. 'arm' is lit by a two-light window similar to the other nave windows. The W. window is the same but of three lights. The S.W. angle is formed by a large, slightly projecting block of masonry, perhaps surviving from an earlier phase of building. From the outside the tower rises in two stages with no set-backs and has a tall battlemented parapet, pierced on the W. by two ogee projecting finials, acting as water spouts. The belfry is lit by two-light openings (now glazed) on every wall, the labels of which are integrated into the string course. There are boldly projecting diagonal buttresses at the corners.

## POTTERSPURY, FURTHO, ST BARTHOLOMEW

### DEVELOPMENT

The earliest feature is probably the round-headed S. doorway in the chancel. Although the rear-arch is formed by a 17th-century timber lintel, the doorway itself appears to be essentially Romanesque. It may however be re-set. The windows, especially the N. low-side window and the E. window, suggest a date for the chancel in the first half of the 14th century. The fenestration and the furnishings e.g. the image brackets and the piscina show that the chancel has survived essentially intact. The N. wall was probably re-faced in the 17th or 18th century but the fabric of the E. and S. walls was not altered. The S. doorway may have been moved and the heads of the S. windows altered (possibly because of a lowering of the eaves) but the window jambs are original. Other medieval features in the church may be:

- a. The pitch of the nave gable. Its steepness is not compatible with the 17th-century parapets to the N. and S. nor with the 17th-century nave roof itself. The gable may have been retained as it forms the W. wall of the chancel.
- b. The external plan of the nave (i.e. including the two 'lobbies' W. of the present tower arch). The proportions of the whole of this space are approximately a double square whereas the internal proportions of the present nave are hardly more than a square, which would be most unusual in a medieval church. The block of masonry at the S.W. angle may be the S.W. angle of the medieval nave.

The earliest authority for the 17th-century rebuilding appears to be Bridges, who dated it to 1620, with Edward Furtho, the lord of the manor as patron. This may be based on a date and initials formerly on the date stone on the S. side of the nave. It is perhaps significant that the advowson was at this time owned by Sir Robert Banastre, who rebuilt the chancel at nearby Passenham at approximately the same period. The detailing of the openings is also similar to the contemporary rebuilding at Preston Deanery. It seems that the N. and S. walls of the nave were rebuilt from the foundations. All the openings are contemporary and , the masonry is even and regularly coursed. The other major element of the rebuilding was the construction of a low tower, set partly within the W. bay of the nave. The siting of the tower created a curious space W. of the new tower arch. Two 'lobbies' to N. and S. retain the width of the nave whereas the tower proper is 1 m. narrower. This curious arrangement may imply that the medieval church had a gable belfry rather than a tower and that the E. part of the belfry was carried on posts set within the W. bay of the nave. It may be significant that the parish never appears to have owned more than the one bell, which was mentioned by Baker and still survives at Potterspury church. All the internal timbers appear from their mouldings to be contemporary with the original building of the tower.

No 17th-century furnishings survive except probably for the font. The font cover is perhaps 18th-century and the rustic altar rails early 19th-century. The church was restored c.1872 (NRO Visitation Book 1872 ML 595). This may be the date of the pulpit in the N.E. corner and of the tie-beam in the chancel. The church has been

virtually disused since c.1920 but repairs, including the stripping of the fabric and masonry replacement, have been undertaken in recent years.

## POTTERSPURY, FURTHO, ST BARTHOLOMEW<sup>1</sup>

### DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

Even though the church dates in part from c.1620,<sup>2</sup> the medieval church is first recorded in 1226 when the lord of the manor presented,<sup>3</sup> as he did throughout the remainder of the medieval period. It seems to have been a benefice, probably proprietary in origin, of tiny value, being below the taxable threshold for the Taxation of Pope Nicholas and only included in the Valuation of Norwich, where it was valued at 2 marks.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1504: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 325.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. RCHM Northants. IV 119.

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Wells II 129.

<sup>4</sup> Lunt, Valuation of Norwich, 000.



## Stowe: Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- the guide book available in the church
- VCH Buckinghamshire IV
- RCHM Buckinghamshire Inventory (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, 2nd edn

The earliest stylistic feature is the north nave arcade, which appears to be of late 13th-century date. The nave is about twice as long as it is wide, and, before the addition of the clerestory (see weathering of earlier roof on the east face of the tower) its walls were about as tall as the nave is wide: these proportions suggest that the nave was first built in the 12th century or earlier.

If that is the case, it is possible, by analogy with churches in Northamptonshire and further afield, that there were aisles before the present ones, in which case they would almost certainly have been narrower and lower than now, with steeply sloping roofs and lower arcades, but there is no evidence for this in the fabric.

Also if the origins of the nave lie in the 12th century or earlier, the chancel is likely to have been narrower and shorter than the present 14th-century structure, the side walls of the new building erected immediately outside those of its predecessor. Widening and, more particularly, lengthening, of chancels was a feature of the 13th and earlier 14th centuries, when increased space was needed for elaborated eucharistic ceremonial; the widening and lengthening could have occurred in the 13th century, with the 14th seeing a refurbishment of windows, etc., rather than the re-building dating from that period.

### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- 12 or earlier nave and chancel
- [L12/E13 one or two narrow nave aisles]
- M-L13 north arcade and north nave aisle
- 1330-40 tower
- M14 chancel refurbished or re-built
- L14 south arcade and south nave aisle; porch
- (L)15 clerestory
- E16 north chancel chapel

The principal phases of investment in the fabric therefore appear to lie in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. By the 15th century there may have been no need to add to the building, but investment in the church may have continued, focussing on screens and images (there is evidence for elaborate image brackets on the eastern piers of the nave arcades). This impression may be strengthened by the fact that in 1526 there were, in addition to the vicar,

Master Thomas Marshall, who may have been absentee, a curate and a stipendiary priest.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Slater, *Subsidy*, pp. 241–2; cf. Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 240.

## Whittlebury: St Mary

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- RCHME notes (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn

The chronology and origins of the church may, tentatively, be pushed back to earlier than the date of the earliest stylistically attributable features.

The nave would appear to be of the mid-12th century or earlier — how much earlier cannot be known. It had no aisles and was approximately twice as long as wide (a typical 11th and 12th-century proportion), with its north wall one wall-thickness to the north (outside) the present arcade (see below).

The north aisle may have been built in the late 12th century or c.1200. The evidence for this is the capital of the east pier of the north arcade. It has, however, been re-used in its present position: the arcade is not on the same line as the former north wall of the nave, and is in any case probably taller than a late 12th-century arcade would have been. While there is nothing to prove that the capital was originally in a north, as opposed to a south, arcade, there is a general pattern in Northamptonshire that north arcades were often added earlier than those to the south. The aisle constructed at the same time as the original arcade was probably narrower and lower than the present one.

The south aisle was probably added c. 1200, and was also probably narrower and lower than the existing one. The date is suggested by the capital and triple shaft of the south-west respond of the arcade. Although the arcade may have been heightened, it is on the line of the original south wall of the church, as indicated by the quoins of the former south-west corner, visible on the external elevation.

Early in the 13th century the tower was built. If the string-course above the tower arch is earlier (as suggested by the RCHM), it may survive from the west wall before the erection of the tower, but this is not certain.

A century later, the aisles were rebuilt to their present dimensions, and that to the south given a newly made doorway. At the same time, the arcades were heightened, and the north arcade was moved one thickness inwards (to the south), narrowing the nave. The evidence for this is the way the tower is offset to the nave, supported by the absence of quoins or a straight joint in the external elevation at the north-west corner of the nave (contrast with the south-west, above). Perhaps also at this time the chancel was re-built, for its 19th-century successor follows the style of that period.

### *Summary of main phases of pre-Reformation development*

- By M12 nave [*and some form of chancel*]
- L12/c.1200 first north aisle
- c.1200 first south aisle
- E13 tower
- E14 new aisles and chancel

The building seems to follow a fairly normal evolutionary path until about 1330, the only unusual (but not unparalleled) development being the narrowing of the nave. Nothing is known of the unaisled church save the dimensions of the nave, so that there is no way of knowing how elaborate it was. In the later 12th century, however, investment was more than minimal, on the evidence of the capital in the north arcade and the tripe column of the south-west respond. By contrast, the 14th-century works are very plain, at least as far as can be determined after the drastic interventions of the 19th-century. Although there must have been later-medieval features — notably a rood screen<sup>6</sup> and loft — many of them were non-structural and their removal would not have left much trace (particularly given the nature of the later restoration). There may, however, be reason to suggest that there was relatively little investment in the later 14th and the 15th century: there is no clerestory; the aisles were not further widened to accommodate more elaborate side altars or given Perpendicular-style low-pitch roofs; the chancel appears to have remained in its 14th-century state, apart, perhaps from a couple of new windows (on the evidence of pre-restoration illustrations). Furthermore, late-medieval bequests to the church do not suggest a wealthy parish: in addition to the high altar, there were altars of St Katherine and St Thomas (one at the east of each aisle), but there are no references to other images and the bequests are generally modest.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The rood is referred to in wills of 1514 and 1539: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', p. 433.

<sup>7</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', p. 433.

RCHME

**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: WHITTLEBURY, ST MARY

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

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N/A 1. Baker 1822-30 II, 72-3

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2. Bridges 1791 I, 247

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3. Pevsner 1973, 460-1

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N/A 4. RCHME 1975-85 V,

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N/A 5. RCHME 1975-85 VI,

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N/A 6. VCH 1902-37

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N/A 7. Other:

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**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

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N/A 1. Glynne MS Church notes

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2. Drawing by G. Clarke

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3. Drawing by J. Flesher

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N/A 4. Other:

WHITTLEBURY, ST MARY  
SP 690443

DESCRIPTION

March 1983

The church consists of CHANCEL, NORTH VESTRY, NORTH ORGAN CHAMBER, NAVE, NORTH and SOUTH AISLES, SOUTH PORCH and WEST TOWER.

CHANCEL

The chancel was much rebuilt in the 19th century in a 14th-century style.

NORTH VESTRY and ORGAN CHAMBER

The N. vestry and organ chamber were added in the 19th century.

NAVE

The N. arcade is of the 14th century but incorporates a reused capital of c.1200. The long respond at the E. is pierced with a 19th-century arch. The chancel arch was rebuilt in the 19th century. The S. arcade is similar to that on the N. and is also of 14th-century date except for the W. respond which probably dates from the early 13th century. There is no clearstorey. The quoins of an aisleless nave survive at the S.W. corner. The roof is 19th-century.

NORTH AISLE

The N. aisle was probably rebuilt in the 17th century (datestone 1638). The walls are very thick so the aisle may have been refaced.

SOUTH AISLE

The S. aisle was rebuilt in the 19th century in a 14th-century style. The S. doorway is also of 14th-century date. Both aisle roofs are of the 19th century.

SOUTH PORCH

The S. porch was rebuilt in the 19th century in a 14th-century style.

WEST TOWER

The jambs of the tower arch are plain, as are the impost mouldings. They look earlier than the arch above, which may therefore have been rebuilt in the 13th century. Above the arch a 12th-century string survives. The upper chamber has four semicircular-headed windows. The belfry have 'Y' tracery. The diagonal buttresses and the thickening of the walls at the N.W. corner are secondary features.

## WHITTLEBURY, ST MARY

### DEVELOPMENT

The tower appears to have been built in the 12th century. It is off-set with the present nave which suggests that the nave was originally wider on the N. The nave may be of c.1175-1200, which is the date of the reused capital in the N. arcade and the W. respond of the S. arcade which probably remains in situ. In the 14th century the N. arcade was moved in by one wall width to give a longer and narrower nave and the S. arcade was rebuilt. The narrow S. aisle was also rebuilt at this time, perhaps on the same foundations as the earlier aisle. Presumably the chancel was also rebuilt in the 14th century to match the new nave width. The tower was strengthened with diagonal buttresses and the thickening at the N.W. corner in the late or post-medieval period. The N. aisle was apparently rebuilt in 1638 (datestone). The church was repaired and refurnished in 1832 and a vestry added in 1850 (NRO Whittlebury 363P/5 Reg. Baptisms). The whole church was restored in 1878, perhaps to the designs of G.G. Scott (NRO ML 595 Visitation Book 1872; ML 598 Visitation Book 1878).

WHITTLEBURY, ST MARY<sup>8</sup> (Formerly dependent chapel of Green's Norton)

DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

This chapel to Green's Norton was first recorded in a vicarage ordination for Green's Norton of 1236,<sup>9</sup> not in 1323 as Bridges thought.<sup>10</sup> In modern times it has become a separate parish.

<sup>8</sup> 1522 - Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 433.

<sup>9</sup> Rot. Grosseteste, 183; Franklin, 'Minsters and parishes', 302.

<sup>10</sup> Bridges, Northants. I, 247 citing LAO Register IV f.168r.



## Wicken: St John the Evangelist

The following notes supplement existing accounts:

- RCHME notes (attached)
- *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn

Post-Reformation reconstruction has been so thorough that nothing useful can be recovered of the form or development of the medieval church save that the nave and aisles were almost certainly re-constructed to their pre-Reformation proportions. The font tub — large and square with simple plain round-headed arches in very low relief — appears to be 12th-century, suggesting that the church had its origins at least as early as that.

Bequests to the church recorded in wills of the late 15th and early 16th century reveal that there were three altars in addition to the high altar dedicated to St John the Evangelist: one to Our Lady, one to St Katherine, and one to St Kenelm.<sup>11</sup> Nothing more is known of the latter two, but the Lady Altar, which is likely to have stood at the east end of the north aisle, was the location of a temporary (one-year) chantry established by Thomas Jebbes in 1507 in a will which also refers to a fraternity of Our Lady.

In 1526, in addition to the rectory, Thomas Collys, who received a stipend of £8, there was a chaplain, paid £6 6s. 4d., and a curate, Thomas Toorner, who was paid the same amount and was also curate at Passenham (see above).<sup>12</sup> Collys was still in post in 1535, when the living was recorded as being worth £10 3s. 5½d.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', pp. 439–41.

<sup>12</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv, p. 330.

RCHME  
**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: WICKEN, WYKEDIVE, ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

---

N/A 1. Baker 1822-30 II, 258-60

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2. Bridges 1791 I, 330

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3. Pevsner 1973 461-2

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N/A 4. RCHME 1975-85 V,

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N/A 5. RCHME 1975-85 VI,

---

N/A 6. VCH 1902-37

---

N/A 7. Other:

**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

---

N/A 1. Glynne MS Church notes

---

2. Drawing by G. Clarke

---

3. Drawing by J. Flesher

---

N/A 4. Other:

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WICKEN, WYKEDIVE, ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST  
SP 745395

DESCRIPTION/DEVELOPMENT

March 1988

The present church was built in 1758-67 to the design of Thomas Prowse, except for the W. tower which is dated to 1617 (Bridges). The former church, which originally belonged to the settlement of Wykedive, consisted of chancel, nave, N. and S. aisles, S. porch and W. tower. The dimensions of the nave and aisles were retained in the rebuilding but the chancel was shortened (NRO Wicken 364P/29). A N. vestry was added in 1878 (NRO ML 598 Visitation Book), the chancel lengthened and a S. 'transept' formed in 1886 (NRO Faculties ML 1121).

## WICKEN, WYKEDIVE, ST JOHN<sup>14</sup>

### DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

Wicken had already been divided into two settlements either side of a stream in 1086.<sup>15</sup> No church is recorded in the northerly of the two settlements, Wykedive, until 1223, when the advowson was in the hands of the lord of the manor, as it remained for the rest of the medieval period.<sup>16</sup> At the Valuation of Norwich, certain tithes were listed as being in the possession of Oseney abbey.<sup>17</sup> In 1507 Edward Giffard mentioned the fraternity of our Lady in his will, and in the same year, Thomas Jobbes left money for a priest to sing for a year at the altar of the Virgin.<sup>18</sup> In 1587 the parishioners of Wykedive and Wykehamon petitioned the bishop of Peterborough that they be allowed to hold services alternately in the two churches, which were so close together. Either of them was big enough to hold both groups of parishioners. The two parishes were united on 31 May 1587,<sup>19</sup> with this church retained in use. The tower of the medieval church was replaced in the 17th century and the rest by a new church in 1758-67.

<sup>14</sup> 1507: Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 439.

<sup>15</sup> DB I, 225b, 228a cf. RCHM Northants. IV, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Rot. Wells II, 111.

<sup>17</sup> Lunt, Valuation of Norwich, 000.

<sup>18</sup> Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 439-40.

Bridges, Northants. I, 330. Petition transcribed: Bodl MS Top Northants e.3 p. 146.

RCHME  
**LIST OF STANDARD SOURCES USED IN ARCHITECTURAL  
DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Parish Name: WICKEN, WYKEHAMON, ST JAMES

**RELEVANT PRINTED SOURCES  
ENTRIES**

---

N/A 1. Baker 1822-30 II, 253

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2. Bridges 1791 I, 332-3

---

N/A 3. Pevsner 1973

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N/A 4. RCHME 1975-85 V,

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N/A 5. RCHME 1975-85 VI,

---

N/A 6. VCH 1902-37

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N/A 7. Other:

**NON-PRINTED SOURCES**

---

N/A 1. Glynne MS Church notes

---

N/A 2. Drawing by G. Clarke

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N/A 3. Drawing by J. Flesher

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N/A 4. Other:

WICKEN, WYKEHAMON, ST JAMES  
SP 740390

DESCRIPTION/DEVELOPMENT

March 1988

The former church of the settlement of Wykehamon was dedicated to St James and consisted of chancel, nave and W. tower. The parish was united with Wykedive in 1586 and the church pulled down c.1619 (Bridges).

WICKEN, WYKEHAMON, ST JAMES<sup>20</sup> (Former church of)

DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH CARD

Wicken had already been divided into two settlements either side of a stream in 1086.<sup>21</sup> No church is recorded in the southerly of the two settlements, Wykehamon, until 1232, when Robert de Welles was collated to the possession of tithes. Wykehamon had then been vacant for more than 8 years.<sup>22</sup> This church seems to have been still regarded as a chapel (capella), rather than a full parish church, being referred to as such at an institution in 1272.<sup>23</sup> In 1278, however, when Ralph de Arden, the lord of the manor, presented, it was referred to as an ordinary rectory,<sup>24</sup> which it remained until its abandonment in the 16th century. In 1376 the rector was licensed to celebrate an annuale, which implies that the church may not have been in a good state of repair.<sup>25</sup> In 1587 the parishioners of Wykehamon and Wykedive petitioned the bishop of Peterborough that they be allowed to hold services alternately in the two churches, which were close together and both big enough to hold all the parishioners. The two parishes were united on 31 May 1587.<sup>26</sup> Wykehamon church was supposedly taken down in c.1619, but in Bridges' time traces of it still remained. He was able to give a description and tentative dimensions: the church seems to have been a three cell structure with nave and chancel 60 ft by 20 ft and western tower 10 ft square internally.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 1534 - Serjeantson and Longden, 'Dedications, altars, images and lights', 440.

<sup>21</sup> DB, I, 225b, 228a; cf. RCHM Northants. IV, 171.

<sup>22</sup> Rot. Wells II, 171.

<sup>23</sup> Rot. Gravesend, 120.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>25</sup> LAO Register XII f.165r.

<sup>26</sup> Bridges, Northants. I, 330. Petition transcribed Bodl MS Top Northants e.3 p. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Bridges, Northants. I, 332-3.

## Demolished church of Akeley: St James

The medieval church of St James at Akeley was demolished in 1854, and replaced with a building which itself has now been completely destroyed. Two drawn illustrations of the early church are reproduced in the village history, one with a brief description attached<sup>28</sup>. Although the sketches are not of the highest quality, and detailed reconstruction of the medieval church is not feasible, some tentative suggestions can be made concerning its form and evolution.

The building appears to have consisted of a chancel and a nave with a south porch and, at built above the west end, an enclosed timber belfry. There was no south aisle, and there does not appear to have been one to the north. The two-cell form of the church is typical of buildings which were first erected in the 11th or 12th century. The north and south walls of that date may substantially have survived throughout the life of the building. The position of the south doorway suggests that the early nave was shorter than at present. The date of the western extension and its chronological relationship to the belfry are unclear. One possibility is that the nave was extended in, say, the 13th century, perhaps in response to a rise in population, and that the timber belfry was only later erected in and above its far west end. The alternative is that the extension was specifically erected in order to support the belfry, in which case it could have been in the 13th or early 14th century. The apparent lowness of the buttresses in relation to the nave walls, combined with the relatively low pitch of the nave roof suggest that the nave walls were later heightened, perhaps in the 15th century. Either at the same time or in the early 16th century, a square-headed window was inserted into the east end of the south wall.

If the suggestion that the nave was built in the 11th or 12th century is correct, the chancel of that date would have been lower and narrower than it, and, probably, roughly square in plan. The two depictions of the chancel are rather different, particularly in relation to its length, but both suggest that it was perhaps of 13th- or early 14th-century date. The reason for this is that it appears to be the same width as the nave, if not a little wider. In favour of a 13th-century date is the very steep pitch of the roof, the apex of which was at the same level as that of the nave (rather than lower), and the simple lancet form of the low-side window. On the other hand, the main south window appears to be of 14th-century form, though it could have been inserted into an earlier wall rather than reflecting the date of construction, and the 19th-century re-building was in a 14th-century style (VCH Buckinghamshire IV).

The overall impression is of a church serving a relatively small and poor community which did not have the resources to invest in anything other than the most basic improvements to the building: the belfry was considerably cheaper than a proper stone tower would have been; the 13th- or 14th-century chancel appears to have been modest. The building was of similar size to Potterspury: Furtho, and may have followed a broadly similar development.

<sup>28</sup> Akeley History Group, *Akeley: Past Times* (Akeley, 2001), pp. 98, 103.



In 1517–20 it was noted that the rector was of advanced years and would soon have to be relieved of his cure.<sup>29</sup> Although the presence of a curate in 1526, in addition to the rector, Master John Hartt, might suggest that help had been found for an ageing incumbent, the fact that Hartt was still in post in 1535 suggests that the earlier rector had been replaced, and that Hartt, who drew the modest stipend of £6 13s 4d., was an absentee.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *Visitations*, i, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Salter, *Subsidy*, p.242; Caley, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, iv. p. 240.