



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**The history and architectural development of
St Peter's Church, Grandborough**

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Iain Soden BA MIfA

Summary

The building of St Peter's Church, Grandborough, dates back to the 14th century, although there has been a church here since probably c1100 or before. From about that time it lay in the purview of Ronton Augustinian Priory, Staffordshire until 1536, with foundation-links also to Coventry Benedictine Priory, which held considerable manorial rights and lands in the village. The Dissolution of the monasteries brought a long line of various secular patrons, who have left little trail. There were numerous periods of alteration and extensive restoration during the 19th century. The church benefits from comparatively good documentation including numerous relevant medieval references.

Introduction and Acknowledgements

St Peter's Church, Grandborough, Warwickshire, lies at the east end of the village of Grandborough, a parish which formerly included outlying dependent hamlets of Woolscot, Caldecote and Sawbridge. The church lies at NGR: SP 4925 6700 (Fig 1) at the junction of Main Street and Church Road. To the north-east lies the course of the River Leam and the low-lying valley, while to the west is the former Manor House of Grandborough. The modern village lies mainly to the south-west of the church, although earthwork remains show that its medieval predecessor was much more extensive, to which may be added its outlying dependent hamlets.

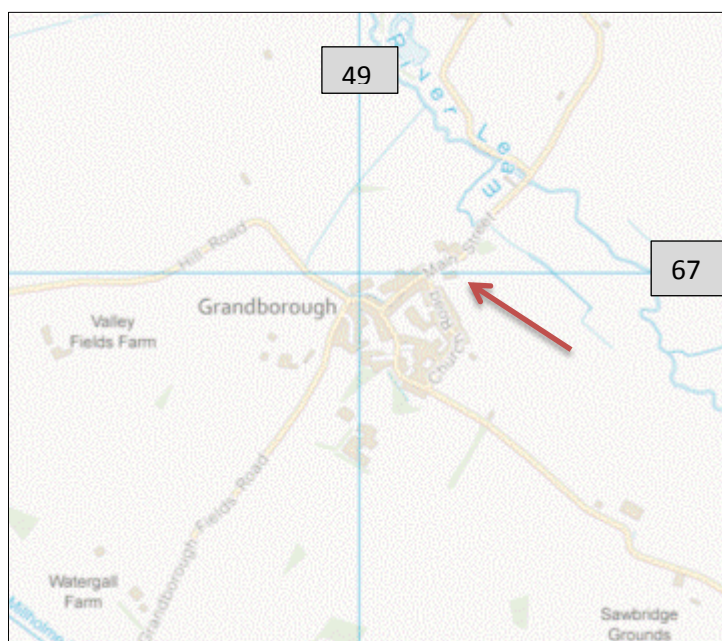


Fig 1: Grandborough, with the location of St Peter's Church arrowed.
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The church is built of varied stone types denoting a number of geological and geographical sources. It is principally medieval in character, but much of its fabric has been rebuilt in the 19th century, robbing it of some medieval detail but lending it a gothic-style overlay in places. It is unclear how faithful the 19th-century works were to the medieval fabric as in places the later work was extensive.



Fig 2: St Peter's church, viewed from the south-east

The church comprises a main body of chancel and nave, with both north and south nave aisles added, and a north chancel aisle, today a vestry. A tower and spire have been added at the west.

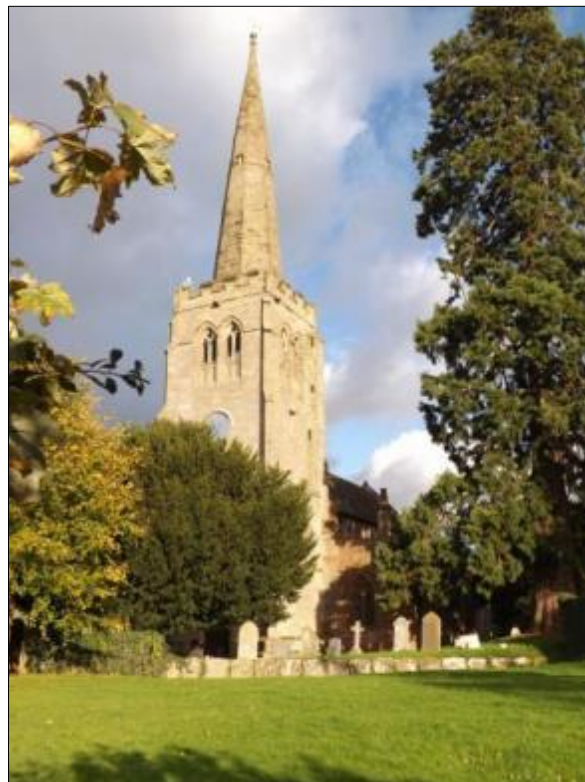


Fig 3: St Peter's Church, viewed from the south-west; note retainer made of gravestones

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The current report has been compiled from available published sources to trace the history and architectural development of the building through the records of its fabric and some of those individuals most closely associated with it. It has been synthesised in response to a wish to apply for funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve areas of the fabric which are deteriorating further.

I am grateful to John Wright, Architect for his introduction to St Peter's and to Peter Johnson, sometime Churchwarden, for his help and access to the church whenever needed. To the staff of Coventry History Centre, Warwickshire Record Office and Staffordshire's Lichfield (Joint) Record Office go my thanks for their patience with me as I trawled through both their published and their original documentary holdings. To Ben Wallace and his team at Warwickshire Historic Environment Record and to Jonathan Parkhouse, DAC Archaeological advisor, my thanks for checking their records of previous interventions.

In the compilation of this report, the church was visited three times in late 2013, when all the photographs and architectural notes were taken. The photographic record comprises both digital images (some of which are reproduced in the report) and black and white print with related negatives, for archive purposes. The visits to the Record Offices date to the same time, as do the visits to any websites cited here. In due course, it is intended that the archive will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum in accordance with current archaeological practice.

A note on the name 'Grandborough'

Through the medieval period the village and parish was variously known as Grandborough, Granborough and Greenborough. There is a variety of spellings to both of these, such as Greneberg(h), Grenberg and other alternatives, such as Greneby/Greveby. All these spellings are met with in original documents. The modern Grandborough is used here wherever possible, unless in quoting original documents *verbatim*.

The dedication of the Church

The Parish Church of Grandborough was originally dedicated to St Paul (Wrottesley 1880, 294 f59). The dedication to St Paul seems to have been still in force as late as the editing of the second edition of Dugdale's Warwickshire (1656 [2nd edition of 1730], 312-5). In 1743 it was noted as 'St Peter's' so the change in dedication may be placed in the mid-18th century (WRO: DR111/175). There was also a 'Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Grandborough' [Capella Beatae Mariae de Grenburg] in the medieval period, which may not be a separate church (it says de Grenburg, not in Grenburg, but is likely to be a Lady Chapel or secondary chapel within the parish church (Wrottesley 1880, 295 f60).

The churchyard

The churchyard surrounds St Peter's Church on all sides and is hedged and ditched along Main Street and Church Road. It contains a number of mature specimen trees including Wellingtonia, Yew and Holly, together with a short avenue of pollarded limes. While some of the older graves and some

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fine tomb-chests on the south side of the church have remained untouched, the majority of gravestones around the churchyard, especially more modern ones, have been removed and placed around the edge to facilitate mowing. The churchyard was levelled in 1969. A further number of stones has been stood up against a terrace in place of a wall within the churchyard, in order to retain the grave-soil (Fig 3). At the north-west corner of the churchyard stands a granite cross War Memorial to the village dead of the First World War (Imperial War Museum online database, no 38488; www.ukiwm.org.uk).

Previous archaeological work and recording

The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted for previous recording or interventions. The records they hold simply note the existence of the church (MWA3031) and the overall extent of the medieval village from basic documentary sources (MWA9064). Although the medieval village has seen numerous small interventions and fieldwork pursuant upon developments there, the HER relates no previous inquiry or fieldwork in relation to the church or churchyard.

The history of St Peter's Church

12th-13th centuries

The Parish Church of Grandborough was originally dedicated to St Paul, and may have been a small late Saxon chapel, at the heart of a small hamlet which lay in the purview of Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his better-known wife, Countess Godgifu, who has come down to us as the 'Lady Godiva' of legend. They gave Grandborough to the Prior and Convent of St Mary's Benedictine Priory, Coventry (Salzman 1951, 95). As an entity the church does not appear in records for some time.

Robert de Limesey, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1086-1117) gave considerable Priory lands in Grandborough to his daughter Celestria, possibly as a dowry, and to her husband Noel, their marriage taking place before 1100. The church almost certainly went with this and the gift was later ratified by Prior Lawrence to Noel and Celestria's son, Robert (Franklin 1997, xxxiv, 2v opp i ; 83). Celestria was the founder of the Augustinian Priory of Ronton (also called *Ranton* and *Rumpton*), Staffordshire, which held the *Advowson* (the right of presentation of a vicar) to Grandborough Church. Keeping it in the family, the son, Robert, is often said to be the founder of Grandborough Church and anecdotal evidence purports that the dismantled and re-erected tomb outside the east end of the church was his, the so-called 'founder's tomb'. Architecturally, this tomb post-dates Robert by at least a generation and is unlikely to have been his, unless it was raised over his body a considerable time after his burial. If so, then such a delay might be explained by more extensive building works getting in the way.

Ronton makes the occasional early appearance in Grandborough affairs. In 1220-21 Peter Smith of Grandborough was able to petition Alured, then Prior of Ronton, in respect of a court case there (Stokes and Wellstood 1932, doc 235). At about the same time the Pope (Honorius III) confirmed land grants including Grandborough and its church to Coventry Benedictine Priory (at this stage its hold on the parish church nominal only, as it did what the Bishop demanded) (Bliss 1893, 84). A 13th

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century separate chapel in Grandborough Church, dedicated to the Blessed Mary, may have been a sop to their Benedictine cousins in Coventry, whose interests henceforth in the village were largely all about their secular manor there (see Wrottesley 1880, 295 f60; Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013, *inter alia* 315 & 568-72).

The fact that Ronton acquired the *advowson* is clear and almost certainly via Celestria's dowry and her family's benefaction. The Ronton interest in this and the adjacent Vicarage is ratified in the great church taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, when their value was assessed at £20 and £4 annually, respectively (Rec Comm. 1802 fol 242b, 244b).

Ronton may have had little time to spend upon Grandborough during this time since in the period 1255-90, the Priory's history was dominated by protracted disputes elsewhere over her lands.

12th-13th century Vicars of Grandborough (with the published authority):

- Michael, 1226-7 (Stokes and Wellstood 1932, doc 235; Wrottesley 1880, 292 f54)
- William, 1259 (Wrottesley 1880, 293 f56, where he appears 4 times)
- John de Rodeleye (or *Rogeleye*), 1297 (Wilson 1905, 124)
- Elias 'the Clerk' (Hobhouse 1880 f6), date unclear

14th century

From 1297 the Vicar was charged with finding a resident Deacon, whose name begins to appear on occasions too. Resignations were relatively common. At periods at the beginning and the end of the century some vicars presented a problem as a number were instituted but then almost immediately left, or at least refused to reside in the Parish (such as de Calf/de Valk and later, atte Brugg), which was a requirement from the Bishop. It became the requirement for the newly instituted vicar to have to swear that he would reside at Grandborough. These circumstances are related by the Bishop's scribe when the replacement was instituted in each case. Some disaffection was settled by exchanges of benefices, with the Bishop's blessing, and of course that of Ronton. Other than the Priory's lands the Prior of Ronton still owned goods in Grandborough in 1332, when he was assessed for tax on these as third highest in the village in a list of nine (Carter 1926, 31). These may have been goods which had given some cause for concern in the mid-1320s.

In the early years of the 14th century Bishop Walter Langton (1297-1321) made a visitation to Grandborough Church (Hughes 2001, doc 369). Neither the date nor the reason is made clear, although inspection of building works is a possibility. At the very end of his episcopacy, Langton granted license to Ronton Priory to have the full profits of the Vicarage for their own use. But he backed it up by bidding them to be content with their lot thereafter, suggesting that they had been petitioning hard for this additional funding, for whatever reason (Hughes 2001, doc 1154). If building works needed funds, sadly it is not possible to discern whether such funds might have been for Grandborough or for the mother house at Ronton. Either or both is or are possible. Their financial dealings were often overwrought, and the Priory's probity came into question again in 1372 (VCH Staffs III, 253).

However, within a short time there were apparently problems at Grandborough, highlighted under Langton's successor, Bishop Roger Northburgh (1321-58) who made another visitation in 1324

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(Hobhouse 1880, 251-2). At that time he found that books and ornaments (probably portable statuary and liturgical furniture) belonging to the church of Greneby (*sic*) were stowed in a shed belonging to the Prior of Ronton. The Rural Dean (of the requisite local Merton Deanery) was charged with making provision for them. These should have been looked after by the Vicar John de Dumpleton and for his errors and to clear him for further duty he was required to seek dispensation from the Papal court.

If any documents suggest that major building works were in operation, it is these. The irregular storage of key liturgical material (including books which were incredibly rare, fragile and expensive) suggests that their normal storage, locked in a locked cupboard or muniments chest at the church was denied them and it was their inappropriate dispersal which drew a sharp retort.

The swift disappearance of Vicar Dumpleton thereafter from the record and the appointment of the existing deacon Sir Henry Hammond ushered in unprecedented stability and if building works were not already under way, it is during Hammond's incumbency that Grandborough was surely expanded to something like its current extent (probably with the exception of the tower and spire).

14th century vicars of Grandborough

- Robert de Calf (or *de Valk*), 1305 (Hughes 2001, doc 137)
- Geoffrey de Caldecote, 1305 (Hughes 2001, doc 143)
- William de Lillyngton, 1307-8 (Stokes and Drucker 1939, doc 1267)
- Geoffrey de Botyndon, 1321 (Hughes 2001, doc 1154)
- John de Dumpleton, 1324 (Hobhouse 1880, 252)
- Peter Oliver of Grandborough, ordained Deacon 1317, 1318 (Hughes 2001, doc 1319D, 1320P)
- Henry de Hammond, ordained and then ordained Deacon 1317 (Hughes 2001, docs 1319S, 1320D)
- Henry Hammond of Grandborough 1318 (Hughes 2001, doc 1321P)
- Sir Henry Hammond, 1328 (Dugdale 1656/1730, 313; Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013, 106b.4, 119b.2); resigned 1374/5 (Wilson 1907, 51). It is clear that Hammond was the most prominent member of a notable Grandborough family, his (?) father or brother William (Carter 1926, 31), his (?) son Geoffrey (who also entered the church in 1368 – Wilson 1907, 43) and his sister Matilda being also known. His appearance as Deacon at Grandborough in 1318 and then apparently unbroken incumbency throughout the tumultuous period 1328-74 has no parallels during the medieval period and should be seen as stability in the most difficult times. After an unparalleled 46 years at the helm, his resignation may have been due to age and infirmity. When or how he was knighted is not known but a youthful military career, however short, under Edward I (1272-1307) or Edward II (1307-27) may be assumed.
- William Suwet, 1365-6, probably Deacon (Drucker 1943, doc 2131).
- Richard de Woner (1371-2), probably Deacon (Drucker 1943, doc 2189)
- John de Plumpton St John, 1375, replaced Sir Henry Hammond (Wilson 1907, 51). John Plumpton is also referred to in documents of 1410-11 (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013, 569).
- Dom Richard atte Brugge, 1383 (Wilson 1907, 65) ['Brugge' may be Bridgnorth]
- Robert de Polesworth, 1384 (Wilson 1907, 69)
- Dom William Perbyn/Pyrbyn, Prebend 1388, Chaplain 1403

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15th -16th centuries

During the 15th century the Prior and Convent of Ronton Priory took over full responsibility for the provision of the clergy to Grandborough and the church virtually disappeared from published diocesan records. The process began in 1401 when the Priory fully appropriated the endowed Vicarage and its Church, in return for the annual gift of alms to the parish poor (Dugdale 1656/1730, 313; Calendar of Patent Rolls 1399-1401, 537; Salzman 1951, 99). In order to corroborate this, the exhaustive unpublished list by Lipkin (1979) was checked thoroughly: Grandborough does not appear once between 1480 and 1543. All paperwork generated during this time was apparently vested in Ronton Priory. Sources relate that in 1535, the year before Ronton Priory was dissolved, Grandborough church was served by a secular priest, but his name is not known (Salzman 1951, 99).

15th and 16th century vicars of Grandborough

- John Hylde (or *Hildys*), 1407, resigned 1417 (Swanson 1990, doc 34)
- William Screyfeld, 1417 (Swanson 1990, doc 34)
- Henry Coventry, 1445, resigned 1451 (Bates 2008, doc 67)
- John Parkyn(s), 1451 (Bates 2008, doc 67)
- Dom Richard Rushall, 1458
- John Yonge or John Robinson, 1507-8 (Drucker 1943, doc 2814)

The Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536-9 would have affected Grandborough very badly, not least for the historian in robbing the church of all its relevant documentation since everything pertaining to Ronton Priory was forfeit to the Crown. Few documents survive of this period and even canting allusions to the church are scarce. Only after the Dissolution was complete do one or two references begin to appear again, such as in Bickley (1923, 112-3) and the National Archives (TNA: E315 Misc 513).

The latter of these two documents dates from the period of the young King, Edward VI (1547-53), when the new Church of England was finding its feet. In an alphabetical list by parish, probably written in 1552, it sets out the liturgical moveable contents of Grandborough Church as follows (first published in WAM 1877, 171):

Granborough (probably 1552)

Item, there is oon chalice, quattuor belles, with a lytle belle

Two copes, oon velvet, oon of other silke

3 vestements, two silke, one linen

Two sutts for deacon and subdeacon, oon silke, oon lynene, with albes

3 altar clothes, whereof oon is diaper

6 towells

Two frontlets of velvet

Two corporys with casys silke

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A crosse coper and gilt, with the staf of the same

A stream silke

Two cross clothes silke

Two bannerclothes tewke

A paire of organnes

The list is interesting since it relates what the new church and the diocese considered to be valuable at the time and a requirement for the liturgy and the celebration of communion in the new Reformation-period church. Much was probably left over from its pre-Reformation Roman Catholic mass and would have been vestments worn under the patronage of Ronton. It is the first indication of the medieval church having had a total of five bells (although the 'lytle' one possibly hand-held and for use at the altar) and that music in Grandborough's late medieval and early Reformation parish church was provided by one or both of two organs (probably little more than what we might recognise as a relative of the hand-held accordion today). The list also indicates that there was also the position of deacon and sub-deacon, whose names are so rarely met with.

The list of clerical vestements would soon be augmented by the gift in 1555 in the will of the last (disenfranchised) Prior of Ronton, Sir Thomas Dampont (also known as Thomas Alton). Thomas may have been Prior for at least the period c1517-36, maybe before, so had had plenty of time to build a strong affinity with his former Grandborough parish (Leadam 1897). He died in 1555, leaving Grandborough Church '*my best and fairest alter clothes*' (VCH Staffs III, citing TNA: E178/3239 m8; also SHC 1926, 11-12). It was the last tangible link with the church's foundation and its medieval monastic patron in Staffordshire.

The medieval bells mentioned in 1552 did not last, and they were either replaced or re-cast one or more at a time. The replacements, which survive today, were noted with their cast legends in 1910 (Tilley and Walters 1910):

1. Cantate Domino Canticum Novum (Sing to the Lord a New Song) 1641
2. Joseph Smith in Edgbaston made mee 1706
3. Henry Bagle made mee 1641
4. Mr Christopher Tille Minister, Mr Philemon Clarke and Mr John Goode Church Wardens 1706. Joseph Smith made mee.
5. By my voice the people may knowe to come to heare the word of God. 1639. Henry Bagley made mee.

Vicars, post-Reformation to 1804 (for which, see <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk> ; website visited 3/1/2014)

- Thomas Radbourne, 1546-7 (Bickley 1923, 112-3)
- Dom Edward Jurdeyn, c1558-61
- *Vacant 1561*
- Jas Funderell, 1571-81

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- Thomas Davies, 1581-1611
- Peter Gibson, 1611-13
- John Reason, 1613-15
- George Beale, 1615-68
- Christopher Tilly, 1668-1725
- Andrew Mieres, 1725-53
- John Mieres, 1753-67
- Charles Thursby, 1767-83
- Henry Bromfield, 1783-1803; his memorial is on the south side of the chancel
- Thomas Ross Bromfield, 1804-1842; his memorial is on the south side of the chancel

Curates 1787-1828 (also from <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk> ; website visited 3/1/2014)

William Flamank, 1787; Thomas Ross Bromfield, 1790; William Salmon Bagshaw, 1819; John Clark Jenkins, 1822; Henry Bromfield (Jun) 1824-5; William Wheeler Hume, 1828.

During the middle decades of the 19th century the church underwent considerable structural alteration and restoration. This can be seen documented below in a later portion of this report. All through the 19th century the church kept excellent records of what was being done, usually through Vestry minutes and Churchwardens accounts. These too are dealt with below.

Vicars 1844-1908 (from Grandborough deposits in Warwickshire County Records Office, principally DRO111/18 and DR617/1)

- Duncan Campbell, Curate 1844
- William J Wise, 1844-62
- W Pearson, 1862-6
- G R D Walsh (officiating 1866, but status otherwise unknown)
- Alexander Brodie, 1866-7; his gravestone lies in Grandborough churchyard
- Robert Kettle, 1867-70
- Charles Tooth, 1870-72
- Edward Sandford, 1872-4
- W Bunter Williams 1874-1908; his memorial is on the south side of the chancel

Architectural development

The starting point for enquiry into the architecture of Grandborough Church are the two learned expositions by Sir Niklaus Pevsner and the Victoria County History of Warwickshire (VCH), Volume 6. Pevsner and his co-editor, in an unusually inconsistent and sometimes erroneous entry, compare materials which are not alike and are uncharacteristically dismissive, making no mention of 19th century restorations:

'The church is of red sandstone, the west tower of grey ashlar. The church is mostly Decorated [gothic]; see the south doorway and windows, the chancel, the north windows, the north and south arcades (four bays, standard elements). Only the exceptionally fine steeple is Perpendicular [gothic]. The bell openings are twins

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with transom and block tracery below. The spire is recessed behind battlements. No pinnacles. Communion rail C18. Plate: paten 1725, chalice 1807.' (Pevsner and Wedgwood, 1966, 296).

The description in VCH for Warwickshire, Volume 6 remains the baseline description of the church's architecture. As with most VCH volumes, it characteristically presents a very full description, but this is not entirely accurate (the inaccuracies are noted in bold) (Salzman (ed) 1951, 97-8):



Fig 4: The chancel from the south

Exterior

Chancel

'The east wall of the chancel has a window of four pointed lights with hood-mould, all modern, and above it the gable has been rebuilt in red sandstone ashlar. Built against the wall beneath the window there is a late 12th- or early 13th-century tomb recess with a round headed arch of two moulded orders, each supported on short shafts with moulded capitals. The south side into three bays by buttresses in two stages, the east having a pointed traceried window of two trefoil lights; the centre a two-light with trefoil ogee heads and below it a doorway with a pointed arch of two orders, a splay and a wave-moulding; the west a similar window but with three lights and below it a square blocked low-side window of two splays. The doorway and traceried windows have hood-moulds with return ends. The north side has a modern window of two pointed lights and a hood-mould without stops. The roof has a steep pitch covered with tiles and a coved eaves course.'

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Fig 5: The south aisle, partly obscured by a yew tree; note the scarred stonework around the doorway where a former porch once stood (green dashed lines), the top of the scar itself removed by later roof repairs (blue dotted lines)

South aisle

'The south aisle has a low-pitched slated roof, diagonal buttresses at the angles and a modern chimney stack against the west wall.... [From here the current record diverges from that of VCH which is simply incorrect-]. The east end has a traceried three-light window which is a modern copy of the adjoining window in the chancel, but with head-stops to the hood-mould. The south face of the south aisle is composed of a two-light traceried window with daggers and quatrefoil at the east, the middle is a two-light ogee-headed with ogee quatrefoil and pierced spandrels. On the west there are two plain pointed lights, while at the west gable is another window matching the eastern example, with daggers. Between the windows to the west there is a large doorway with a richly pointed arch, the mouldings continued to splayed stops. The hood-mould has 19th century foliated stops.

The modern clearstory, built of red sandstone ashlar, has four trefoil lights with square heads. (By this note VCH shows that their term 'modern' in 1951 is used for '19th-century').

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Fig 6: North chancel aisle (chapel/vestry); the window on the right was a doorway until after c1820



Fig 7: North (nave) aisle. The middle portion may be substantially original

North aisle

The north aisle is divided into four bays by buttresses, with diagonal buttresses at the angles, and extends over the chancel to form the chapel. The chapel is lighted on the east by a pointed traceried window of three trefoil ogee-headed lights, and on the north by a pointed traceried window of two trefoil lights; another, with trefoil ogee-heads, which has been blocked on the inside, takes the place of a doorway which is shown in a view of c1820 (Birmingham Archives, Aylesford Collection, Vol 1, fol 106; below). The east bay of the aisle has a similar window to that in the east bay of the chapel, and a square-headed window of two trefoil ogee-headed lights. The west bay has a door similar to the south but on a smaller scale, with modern [19th century] foliated stops to the hood-mould, and a pointed window with two pointed lights; the west end has a square-headed window, as on the north side, with modern head-stops to the hood mould.

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Fig 8: The tower, west face; note the lift scar above the door arch (dashed). The window tracery was extensively conserved in 1997 (see below). The first clock was affixed in 1816 (also below)

The tower

The tower rises in four stages, with diagonal buttresses at each angle, the battlemented parapet on a moulded string-course having pinnacles at the angles and a gargoyle on each face. The tower is finished with a tall octagonal spire which has a string course half way up, above which, on the cardinal faces, two-light gabled spire lights with trefoil heads and flanked by pilasters with crocketed finials. The belfry windows on all four faces are in pairs, each of two trefoil-headed lights, with pointed arches, transoms, quatrefoil piercings, and below each light are two ogee-headed panels. In the south-east angle there is a projecting stair turret weathered off below the parapet string course. On the west side there is a pointed doorway of two splayed orders, the outer splay sunk, and above, in the second stage, a pointed traceried window of three moulded orders with deep splayed jambs; the string-course is taken over as a hood-mould; above this window there is a clock dial. On the north and south faces are square-headed windows of two splays to the ringing chamber.

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Fig 9: View along nave and chancel, looking east

Interior (with interior measurements)

Chancel

The chancel (43ft 5in by 19ft 5in) has plastered walls except the east, which is coursed rubble, a tiled floor with step half way and two steps to the altar. The altar is modern but the rails, which date from the 17th century [Pevsner and Wedgewood, cited above, say 18th century], have reeded posts, moulded rail, turned balusters and double gates with contemporary iron hinges. On the south wall at its east end there is a trefoil ogee-headed piscina with a modern shelf in place of a basin. All the windows have splayed reveals with stop-chamfered rear-arches; the door has square jambs with a segmental rear-arch; the blocked low-side window is hidden beneath the wall plaster. On the north side, giving access to the chapel, is an arcade of two bays with pointed arches supported on octagonal pillar and half-octagon responds with moulded capitals and splayed bases. Originally these were window-like openings on dwarf-walls, stepped up to conform to steps in the chancel, the west respond being 2ft 11in above the floor, the pillar 3ft 2in, and the east respond 4ft 11 in. The wall of the east bay has been cut away to give access to what is now a vestry and the tomb recess, and the west bay accommodates the organ; west of this bay a modern opening with a pointed arch has been formed to give additional light to the vestry.(?) The roof, of four bays, still retains the tie-beams with shaped brackets to the rafters and shaped struts to the pole-plate of an early roof, probably contemporary with the chancel. The beams and struts are moulded on the undersides, finishing on pointed stops, and in the centres of the tie beams there are foliated carved bosses. The purlins, rafters, wall-plates and ashlar are later, probably a 17th-century repair.

Nave

The nave (42ft 8in by 19ft 4 in) has a stone-paved [actually partly tiled] floor and plastered walls. The steep-pitched open roof is of the collar-beam type and some of the old timbers were re-used when the roof was repaired. Both arcades consist of four bays with pointed arches of two splayed orders supported on moulded capitals with splayed bases on the north and square on the south with stop-chamfered corners, later cut away to octagons on the aisle side only. The responds repeat the arch splays, with moulded capitals to the inner order, the outer order being carried down to stops. The chancel arch, which is the full width of the chancel, and the tower arch, which is narrow and very lofty, follow the same detail as the arcades.

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South aisle

The south aisle (42ft 2in by 11ft) has a lean-to roof with moulded beams, posts, and purlins of 17th century date and carrying modern rafters and boarding. At the east end of the south wall there is a piscina with a stop-chamfered pointed head, with its projecting basin broken off. The windows and door have splayed reveals with stop-chamfered pointed rear-arches. The font is a modern octagonal one of stone, placed at the west end [over a grave ledger slab].

North aisle.

The north aisle (42ft 8 in x13ft 3in) has a roof similar to the south aisle and the arch to the chapel is of the same detail as the arcades, but with moulded bases to the responds instead of splays. The door has a segmental-pointed rear arch, and all the windows have widely splayed reveals with rear-arches corresponding with the exterior.

North chapel

The north chapel (30ft 3in by 13 ft) serves as a vestry and organ chamber.

Tower

The tower (12ft square) has un-plastered walls and a floor partly of stone paving and partly of wood, over a heating chamber, now disused, electric heating having been installed. On the north wall there is a slate slab with a painted list of charities.

In the vestry there is an oak chest of the 17th century with shaped legs on bearers, bound with iron straps terminating in fleurs-de-lys and fitted with three original locks [since when vandalism has removed two and the third is damaged]. The oak pulpit, dating from the 17th century, placed on the south side of the chancel arch, is octagonal with tracery-headed panels, a carved frieze, and a low moulded octagonal stem. The panels have been cut out leaving the traceried heads. There are a number of 19th-century wall memorials, and one of...1728.

Other commentators have made passing mention of the church, and its architecture, but never with the same detail as the compilers of the Victoria County History of Warwickshire. The antiquarian Thomas Sharpe, writing in the late Georgian period, noted '*the church has a neat spire and pleasing general character*' (Sharpe 1835, 78). The church he saw was basically still that of the 1820 drawing, with no restoration probably even contemplated at that stage. Between the world wars, the local travel writer W H Bird noted that the late Perpendicular tower window and door below were of two dates and stated that the spire was 18th century. Noting that the building otherwise was mainly early Decorated, with the piscina and aumbry in the chancel being the only surviving pre-reformation features (he missed the piscina in the south aisle), he adds that the 1862 restoration was 'drastic' (Bird 1935, 57-8). It is also clear that far from the spire being 18th century, it is late medieval and was already in need of considerable restoration by 1767. More recent work on the village made no mention of the church (Jones 1986).

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Documents relating to 18th and 19th-century alterations and construction work

In 1709 a gallery at the west end of the nave was taken down and a new pew installed, in accordance with agreement in the Diocesan Consistory Court (LJRO: B/C/5). This is the only reference to a permission (not necessarily a faculty) at Grandborough in the Lichfield Diocesan Records for more than 300 years (Lichfield Joint Record Office), suggesting that all works which were carried out during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, including the major restoration works of the 1840s and 1860s, were carried out without a faculty and at the whim of the incumbent! Whatever Diocesan knowledge of the work there might have been, it seems to have gone through on the nod.

In an old newspaper cutting framed in the nave at Grandborough are the bare facts of the major works done at the church in the 19th century:

'Tower and spire restored 1848; Reredos erected 1849, re-plastered, ceiling taken down, exposing the oak timbers (of the chancel), and a tile floor of encaustic tiles laid; 1862-3 Nave and aisle ceilings taken down, clerestory added in incumbency of Rev W Pearson. Plans by GR Clarke of London; 1868 during incumbency of Rev R Kettle, western gallery removed (presumably a replacement for the new one erected in 1709), tower arch opened out; 1879 during incumbency of Rev W B Wilkins, nave roof repaired after being damaged by lightning.'

The extraordinary run of documents for the 19th century puts all that went before into the shade. The following is a summary extracted from three principal documents in Warwickshire Record Office: DR111/21 (Agreement Book for the period 1767-1802); DR111/18 (Vestry Minutes and Churchwardens Accounts 1809-68); DR617/1 (Vestry Minutes and Churchwardens Accounts 1844-78). Entries are presented chronologically, run together where their coverage overlaps, for items relating to works on the church.

DR111/21 (1767-1802)

1767 John Bickley of Lutterworth, mason, agreed to take down and re-build the spire so far as shall be thought necessary and point the same within and without down to the tower, by 4 May.

1788 Establishment of the Sunday School.

1797 Agreement to the finishing of the church, and raising of the roof and so forth.

1802 Establishment of the workhouse.

DR111/18 (1808-68) [with DR617/1 beginning at 1844]

During this period are detailed regular payments to parishioners bringing in vermin, bell ropes are replaced, brooms bought to sweep the church; ale is purchased for meetings and money is given in alms to the poor. Regular purchases of sand, gravel are made, and may denote work on the church, although gravel was also spread to make the churchyard paths, and where bricks are also introduced, the combination is usually for the construction of tomb- and grave-shafts, whether inside the church or in the churchyard. The church clock was purchased and needed regular oiling and winding, for which payments were made, while new locks were often bought, especially after break-ins, such as happened at the Sunday School in 1828. Annual payments of coal at first, and

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then coke, in sudden and rising quantities, denote the insertion of one and then another heating system. The windows received regular attention and new glazing was common.

1810 Sand and gravel purchased. New flooring in church.

1811 Work on the pinnacles (tower) and chancel. New lock for the tower door.

1812 Sand, lime, slates from Coventry. (Roof alterations)

1813 Work on the windows.

1816 Advertisement placed for a new church clock. A new square of Crown glass for the church door (a predecessor to the current one). New communion plate £7 4s.

1817, 1819 Work on the windows. Annual oil purchases begin for the church clock.

1820 Carriage for the font (which was presumably moved at this date). Plastering (10qtrs lime, 2 loads sand, 6 bushels hair).

1820 Artist drawing and pen wash of St Peter's Church.



Fig 10: 'Granborough' church from the north-east c1820
(The Library Of Birmingham, Aylesford Collection Vol 1, f106)

1824 6cwt coal for the church (this purchase had previously been specifically for the Sunday School, and this new entry probably marks the first introduction of heating into the church).

1825 Coal for the church stove, thereafter an annual purchase in late autumn. Confirmation that the church was heated from 1824 onwards.

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1825-6 Organ repairs.

1827 Repairs to the church, including tiles and slates. ?Storm damage?

1828 Sunday school broken into; money paid to the parish constables to give chase! New locks.

1829 Payments for clearing the belfry of snow. The weather seems to have played a part in the 1820s, with the heating, possible storm damage. In addition this decade saw the churchyard hedge planted and the surrounding ditch dug. Each year thereafter, payments were made for cleaning the church and 'walking' the churchyard, annually noting defects and putting them right.

1831 Stock lock for the belfry door.

1832 12cwt coal for the church stove at the start of winter, twice the amount of only 8 years previously when the stove was new. A further 2cwt was bought before the spring of 1833 was out. It was either an exceptionally cold patch or the stove was burning too fast.

1835 Repairs to the bells.

1837 Taking down the stove for repairs (This entry seemingly bears out the steep rise in coal consumption). Repairs to the church windows.

1838 More glazing bills. Lime purchases (either for putty (not often used) or plaster-repairs).

1839 Tiles purchased for the churchyard (possibly for path-edging).

1842 Gravel, lime and sand purchases.

1843 New font given by Rev Bromfield and others, set up in the church on 25 April.

1844 Lime purchases. Glazing works. Coal for the vestry room – the first indication that the vestry had its own heating (possibly at the west end of the south aisle, not the current vestry). Repairs to the church.

Around this time the old pulpit of about 1790 was taken out. It must have been dismantled and stored for a while as in 1848 it was given to Lady Hood of Coventry who took it to St Peter's Church, Wolfamcote, where it remains today (1997 Church guide; Herne 1996).



Fig 11: The old pulpit now in Wolfamcote. Made c1790 it is decorated with marquetry. Its stair-location means it may have stood on either side of Grandborough's chancel arch.

1846 Alterations to the (new) pulpit and (new) reading desk (DR617/1)

1847 Money towards the pulpit. Repairs agreed upon to the parish church (DR617/1)

1848 Cleaning the steeple. Doors to the tower and spire repaired (DR617/1)

1849 Memo that the Minister, Churchwardens and principal inhabitants decided to have the tower and spire pointed with cement for the preservation of the said tower and spire. The money was borrowed from the stewards of the Grandborough club, to be paid back in instalments. B. Bradshaw was the builder.

1849-50 Numerous purchases of gravel and glazing repairs.

1852 Two episodes of glazing works.

1854 Mending the bell.

1858 Purchase of a grate and 'frame', payments for faggots. This may suggest a new stove has been inserted and is being proved for the first time.

1859 Repairs to the spouts (probably on the tower).

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1861 First purchase of coke along with coal. This seems to confirm that a new heating system was in place.

1862 Expense agreed for restoring the roofs of the church in accordance with Mr Clark's plan. Contract to be advertised in the Rugby Advertiser, Northampton herald and Leamington Courier (DR617/1). In August six tenders had been received up to £473, of which Mr Satchell's, the cheapest at £328, was adopted. Satchell appears to have balked (or was a sharp operator) and raised his price. This act cost him the contract, and he was quickly dropped in favour of the next cheapest of the original six (Mr Denny at £386). More finances had to be raised in October to finish the main phase of works. He was paid £319 in December. The church was then re-pewed and re-seated, work which Mr Denny carried out, and included the cleaning and colouring of the walls and pillars of the chancel. If the gallery was to be taken down, this was to be done at the expense of a local inhabitant, Mr Watson. Denny's tender was again accepted, with the new pewing to re-use the old materials, except for the gallery.

Rev Kettle (1867-70), who stepped into the breach when Rev Brodie died suddenly after a very short incumbency, seems to have become very unpopular very quickly. The Parochial Church Council was racked by resignations and elections. In 1869 there was only one Vestry meeting, suggesting a level of autocracy was in force. By 1870 it is clear that money was now in short supply and special quarterly collections were needed to pay for services. Under Rev Tooth (1870-72) the root of the financial problem was found to be mismanagement of the School, which was no longer just a Sunday school but still lay in St Peter's purview. It was running up serious debts, laid eventually by 1874 firmly at the door of the Treasurer and the committee. Rev Tooth was slow to deal with it as Mrs Tooth may have become involved in some way, perhaps in some side-issue. She seems to have been a formidable woman. At her husband's untimely death in 1872 she had removed stops from the brand new church organ without authorisation (perhaps expecting widespread silence in her mourning) and the new vicar, Rev Sandford, had to retrieve them via a deputation. There was some consternation how Mrs Tooth would react and there was a wait to see what Mrs Tooth would do (presumably with the organ in full flow). A subsequent silence on the matter suggests she backed off.

In 1874 there was a special levy to defray the school debts which otherwise stubbornly refused to go away. In 1875 Church cottages were taken down, while other houses owned by the church were declared unfit for habitation. That year also saw widespread resignations on the school committee, suggesting that the financial problems were set to return. In 1878 a Diocesan inspection of the school and its finances concluded that it was unsatisfactory. In October that year the Master, Mr Harwood was given three months' notice to quit and a pay-off, the news broken by Rev Williams. The church's financial recovery could begin.

1879 Nave roof repaired after a lightning strike (1997 Church guide).

1894 Architect's plan of the church drawn for a new heating system (DR794/15).

In the more recent past, the conservation of the church has once more come to the fore as both the surviving medieval fabric and its sometimes poor 18th- and 19th-century replacements have all degraded. A number of documents are deposited with English Heritage photo-archive, Swindon and Warwickshire Record Office which detail the story. They are summarised here in calendar form.

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- 1919 View of the chancel, south side exterior, ivy-encrusted (English Heritage, Swindon).
- 1936-9 Electricity installed, new electric heating (DR749/9, 10)
- 1959 To photos of the church: one the exterior from the south, the other the chancel interior looking east (DR1456/20/19-20). Copy also with English Heritage, Swindon.
- 1960-1 Unspecified repairs to the tower, nave and aisles (DR794/12).
- 1960s Photographs of various windows (DR1456/20/11-18).
- 1969 Churchyard levelled (DR794/14)
- 1975 North aisle re-paved (DR1456/20/28). One photograph (DR1456/20/9) shows the 13th century stonework above the arch from vestry to the chancel. The banded stonework is distinctive and clear. At this time the organ was underpinned, the vestry re-paved and re-plastered. Anecdotal evidence suggests the operation uncovered vaulted brick grave-shafts under the aisle floor, as one might expect, (1997 Church Guide) but no record of these has been traced.
- 1980-3 Repairs to the tower and spire, including replacement of the top c 8 feet, possibly the same portion which was re-built in 1767-8 (DR1456/15).
- 1982 Roofs of north and south aisles replaced (DR1456/14).
- 1995-6 External repointing of walls to 600mm up from the ground.
- 1996 Roof of the nave replaced; a contract fraught with difficulty. Contemporary replacement of the parapet of the east gable of the chancel (DR1456/16).
- 1997 Repairs to the tower west window, including new mullions and tracery. The window to the east of the north door was noted as 'poor' (DR1456/17).
- 1998-9 Widespread plaster repairs (DR1456/18).
- 2001 Heating, lighting and electrical wiring replaced (Church faculty current log).
- 2010 Toilet and servery inserted in north aisle (Church faculty current log).

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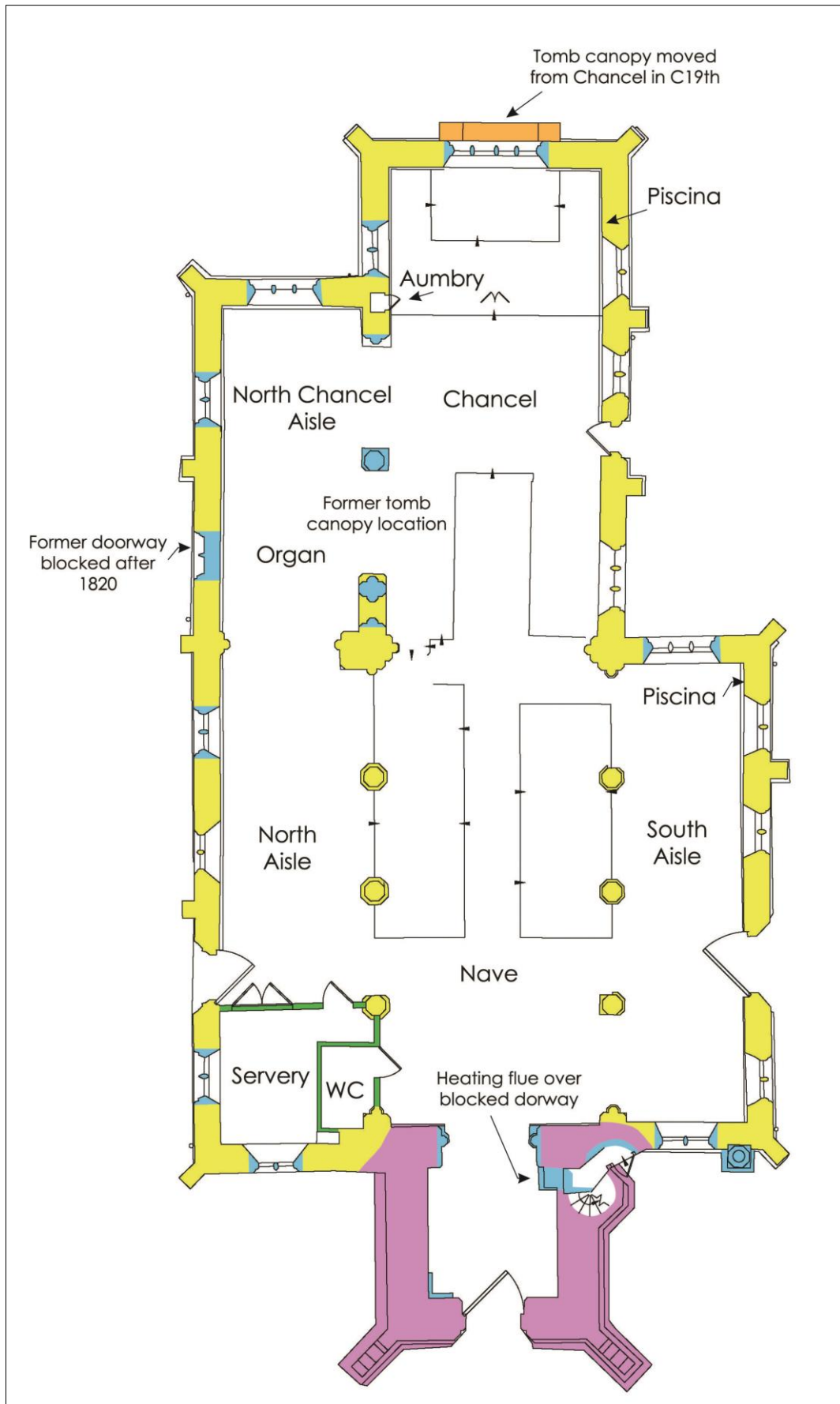


Fig 12: Plan of the church, phased.

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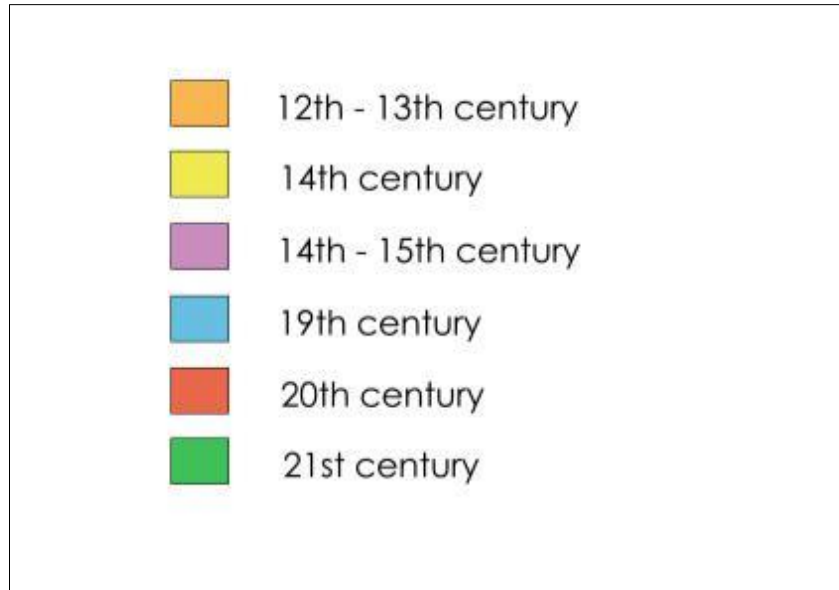


Fig 13: Colour key to the phasing of the building

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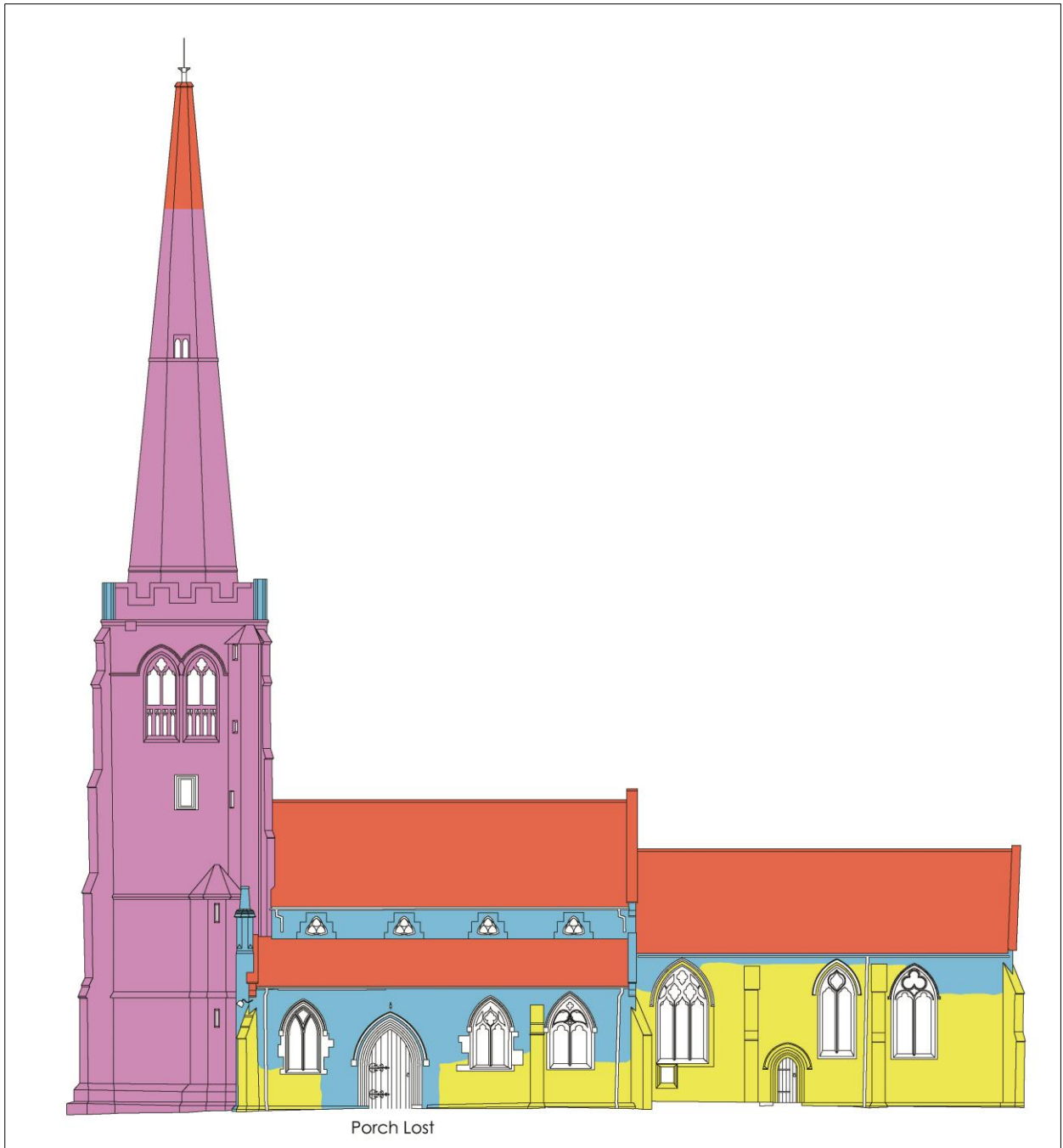








Fig 14: South elevation, phased, key below

	12th - 13th century
	14th century
	14th - 15th century
	19th century
	20th century
	21st century

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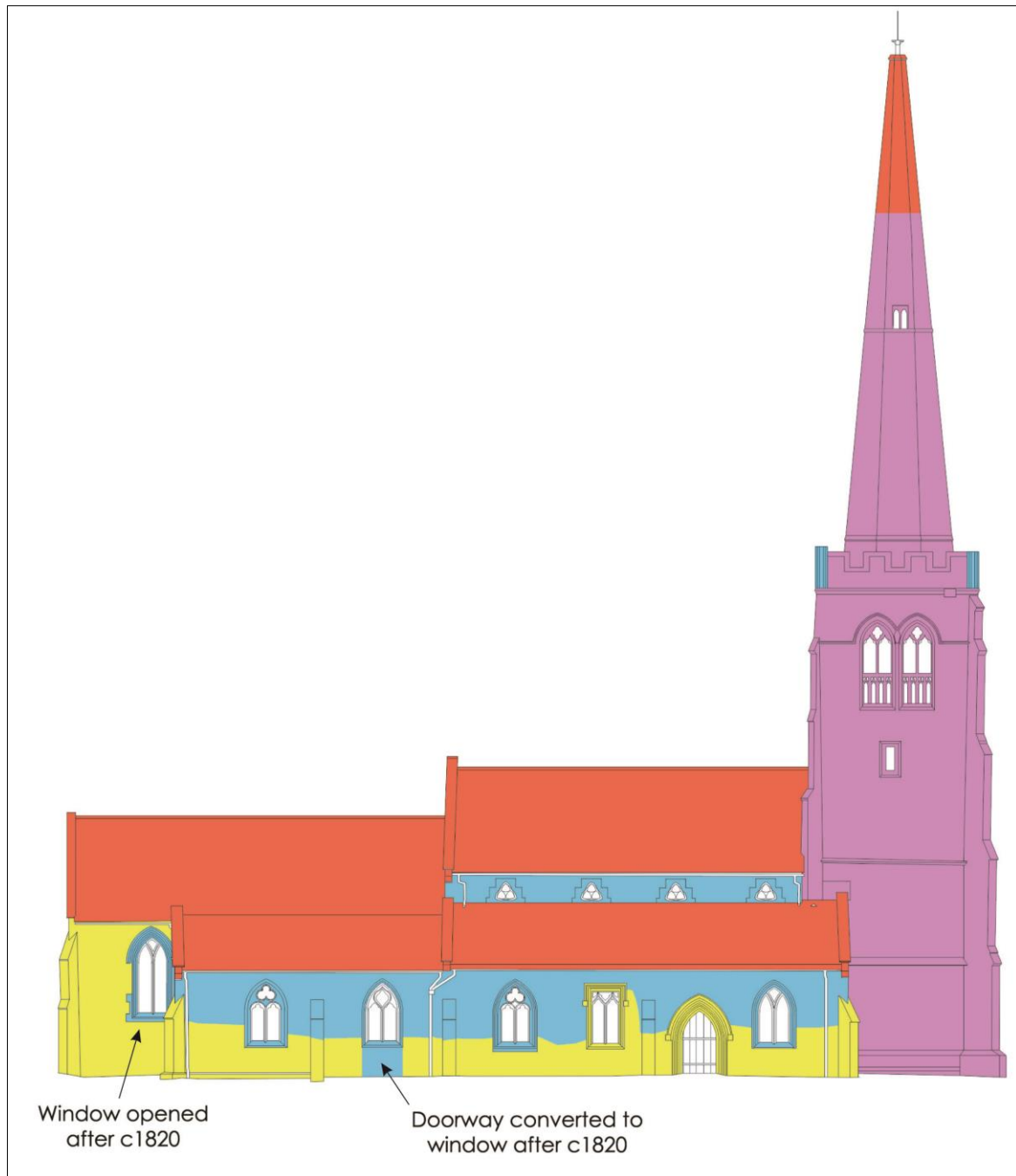
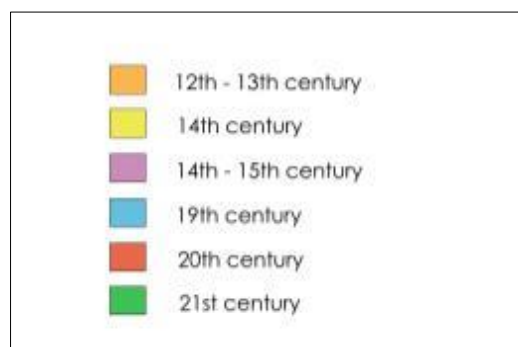


Fig 15: North elevation, phased, key below



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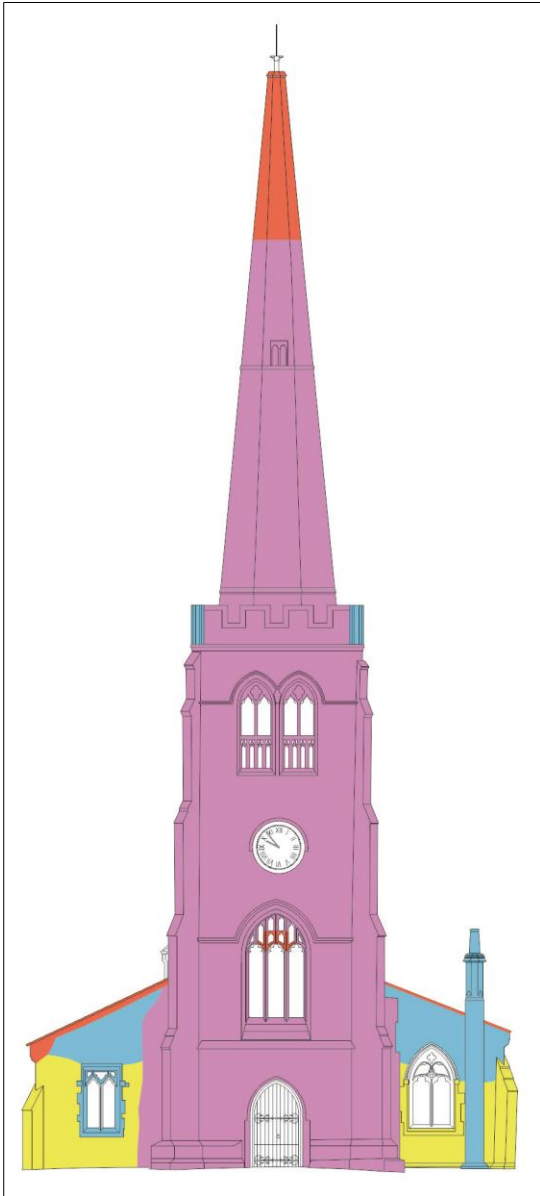


Fig 16: West elevation, phased, key below

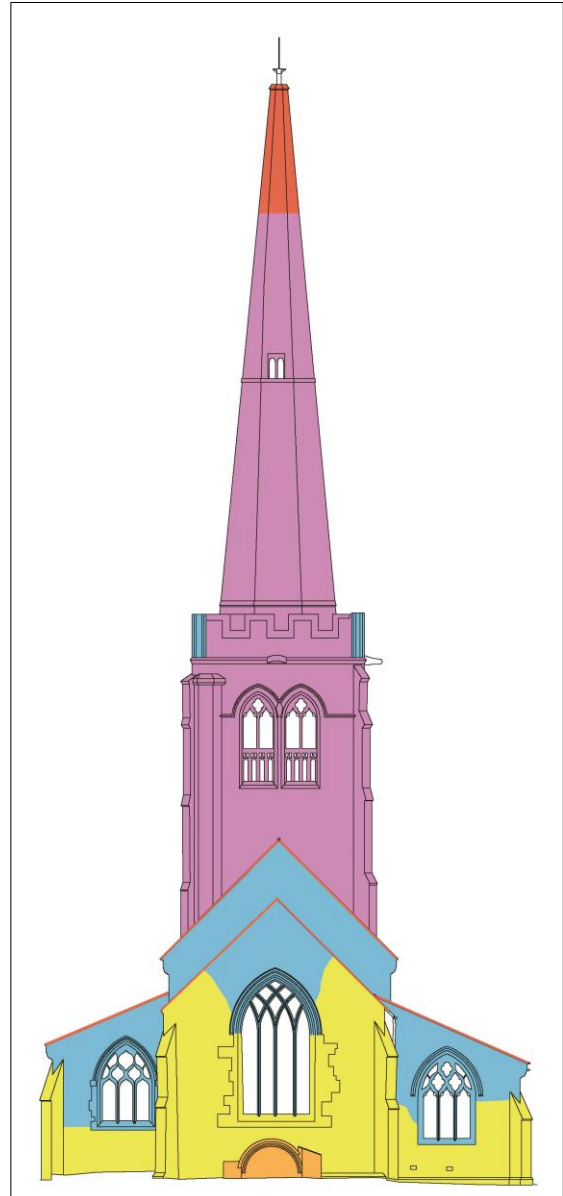








Fig 17: East elevation, phased, key below

	12th - 13th century
	14th century
	14th - 15th century
	19th century
	20th century
	21st century

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Revisiting the fabric and the development of the building

There are many questions remain about the structure. Although the ground plan is relatively unchanged since the late 14th or early 15th centuries, the exact extent of the numerous (and on occasions, very extensive) restorations and alterations through the 19th century remain unclear. The useful drawing of c1820 (Fig 10) shows how aspects of the north and east elevations have changed since then, with a window subsequently unblocked, a door in-filled and replaced with a window (although the question arises-where was the 'new' window taken from?).

Roofs have changed a number of times, in particular the coverings and the parapets and only the main timber trusses of the chancel in particular now possess any great age. The c1820 view in Fig 10 is instructive as regards roofs as it shows not only the nave roof of that date, before the addition of the 1862 clerestorey, but also the scar or drip-moulding on the east face of the tower which indicates an earlier, possibly original, medieval nave profile which enjoyed a very steep pitch, a not uncommon occurrence or survival. This may have even predated the creation of the aisles, when what are now the arcades were solid walls with windows. The same figure also shows the north chancel aisle (now the vestry) roofed with lead-sheet, the only suggestion this material was used formerly on any of the roofs.

The floor surfaces, whether now containing grave slabs, flags or tiles are no older than the later 18th century, and most are 19th and 20th century. There are none of the small medieval floor tiles, many stamped, which once characterised church floors in the wider area (with a major tiling industry at Stoke, in Coventry), and which can still be seen in small numbers, such as the extensive examples at St Peter's, Wormleighton, Warwickshire. It is in imitation of these that the Victorians introduced new Minton-type encaustic tiles around the altar at Grandborough in 1849.



Fig 18: St Peter's, Wormleighton, with Coventry-made tiles of c1400.

This is how medieval St Peter's Grandborough's floors would have looked: Golden yellow and green or dark blue with intricate patterns. Some patterns were chosen as locally significant.



Fig 19: Minton-type gothic-revival encaustic tiles around the altar at Grandborough, c1849

The poor state of the stonework at Grandborough may be partly the result of a similar attitude being taken in regards stone as was documented in relation to the interior seating in the 1860s. The extensive re-use of the timber there would have resulted in many pieces being left over, unusable. Indeed the former aisle seating re-utilised some of this and was in such poor state, that it was taken out and burnt in 1976 (1997 Church Guide). Stone is re-used without so much 'care', and frost-damage, or merely being knocked-about and bruised through insensitive re-use, can result in large areas degrading quickly. The variety of stone-types used has been far from conducive to conservation, with the red or grey Triassic sandstone (looking towards Coventry, Warwick and central Warwickshire), Jurassic Northampton Sand with Ironstone (Northamptonshire) and the blue Jurassic Lias limestone (South Warwickshire) all combine to produce differing rates of degradation, with very different bedding planes and textures. The colour-coded drawings above are meant as a guide only and it may be that measured and closely-observed conservation works will add considerably to establishing the exact extent of the various 19th-century works, not least on the windows, although it may never be established which might be which as the records indicate a regular succession of minor interventions.

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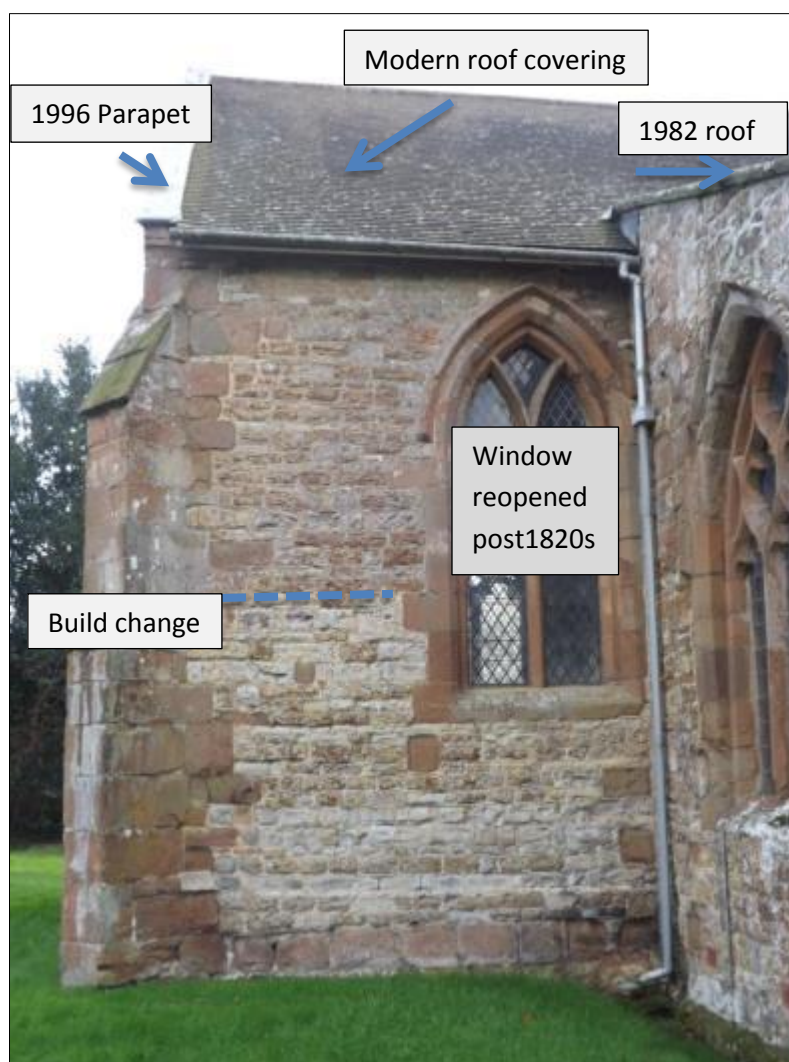


Fig 20: an example of the suspected and known alterations – chancel, north wall, irrespective of the varied use of stone-types

In progressing around the building, now with the benefit of a widespread documentary background, it is clear that the medieval elements of the interior are relatively few but enjoy good context. No evidence survives for the extensive full-colour wall-painting which characterised most church interior walls which were lime-washed over merely white from the Reformation onwards (two local examples survive at Holy Trinity and St Mary Magdalene, both Coventry churches, and at Ashby St Ledgers, Northants). Of the two *piscinae*, that by the principal altar (communion table) is almost untouched, whereas the basin is missing from the one in the south aisle, potentially the location of the former Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Grandborough. The loss of this feature might reflect the drastic departure from Marian reverence which characterised the break with Rome in 1536-9 and the subsequent persecutions of the middle decades of the 16th century and the later Puritan clamp-down on all things 'popish'. Equally the years around 1539 saw the break of Grandborough village with its medieval monastic cousin and manorial overlord, St Mary's Benedictine Cathedral Priory, Coventry, whose monks would have appreciated this local dedication when visiting their considerable holdings in the village and doing business; it must be borne in mind that the medieval church was a place of business and meeting, with any fair and well-intentioned business agenda demonstrably agreed as being overseen by Almighty God to ensure probity.

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Fig 21: Principal *piscina* in the chancel. The drain is filled in



Fig 22: Broken *piscina* in the south aisle possibly the location of the 'Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Grandborough'. A formerly projecting basin has been faced off.



Fig 23: *Aumbry* in the chancel



Fig 24: Squint or re-made rood-loft doorway?

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The *ambry* in the north wall of the chancel is the proper location for such a feature, and the Victorian door and surround for this re-discovered feature is as good an approximation as one might find. As a cupboard for storing communion plate and altar cloths etc, it would have become very damp with time however.

Also in the north wall is the small 'Victorianised' arched opening, usually described as a *squint*, to enable masses to be sung almost simultaneously in different areas of the church and the lead-celebrant followed. However, with the only demonstrable secondary altar position being in the south aisle, it might be argued that it is on the wrong side. It is suggested here that what the Victorian restorers may have found here and interpreted in new stone was a characteristically-small doorway to a former rood-loft, the access stair, usually out of sight of the nave, which gave access to the former, pre-Reformation rood-screen, which separated the business of the priest in the chancel from the worshipper in the nave. Such doorways remain visible, many blocked, in local churches, although in all but a very few the screen has gone, along with the often graphic sculptural depiction of the suffering Christ on the cross above. The Reformation turned the priest around, enforced the loss of the physical barrier between celebrant and congregation and adopted the empty cross of the Risen Christ. All evidence for the former screen in the chancel arch has been lost in the 19th-century restoration.

The carved tie beams of the roof trusses above the chancel are arguably the only surviving medieval timbers in the building. They may be 14th century and the carved foliate bosses are in keeping with the time. Their preservation is perhaps due to their having been covered with a ceiling for much of the 16th-19th centuries. There was a major market for skilled timber carvers (as well as stone masons) at nearby Coventry in the 14th and 15th centuries.



Fig 25: Carved foliate oak ceiling boss above the chancel

The oak pulpit and the reading desk in the church are believed to have been introduced in the 1840s and were quickly altered. They seem to have replaced a Georgian example, said to be of c1790 which was removed to Wolfamcote Church (today in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust), where it remains. The tradition of this movement of the pulpit survives independently at both churches although the exact dates are not certain (Church Guide 1997; Herne 1996).



Fig 26: Pulpit, put in or altered 1846



Fig 27: Reading desk, put in or altered 1846

The bases to the pillars of the 14th century arcades have been much cut about over the centuries. In the medieval church there were few regular pews or seats of any kind, except misericords for the elderly and infirm at the back or against the walls (a selection of carved and very uncomfortable medieval pews can be seen in nearby Wolfhamcote Church). Most medieval space was utilised for liturgy, procession and business, much of it either standing or on one's knees. Between the arcade pillars were often upstanding tombs, erected to commemorate those whose money as legacies paid for prayer for the salvation of their souls. Widespread (usually) 1540s removal of these tombs (although most notably at Grandborough in the Victorian removal of the so-called 'founder's tomb') accompanied the passing of the medieval idea of the 'Cure of Souls', that prayers for the dead could speed them through purgatory into heaven. The new ways restricted prayer to those for the living only; the rest was left to God's grace. The loss of these burial or 'chantry' chapels was very difficult for many families whose ancestors rested very visibly among them and some survived in side-chapels, while others were moved to less prominent and less vulnerable locations so as to escape the attentions of 'reformers'. Where the tombs and the railings were first inserted on behalf of the sponsoring family, and the space decorated, and where any were subsequently removed, the architecture was often damaged and scarred.



Fig 28: The so-called 'founder's tomb' said to be from the chancel, north side; removal from chantry spaces of such canopies and tombs, some with recumbent effigies, could be very damaging.



Fig 29: Fine example of such a chantry tomb, C15th. Polesworth, Warwickshire



Fig 30: Altered arcade pier base: traces of (probably) medieval red paint and the scars of a removed vertical partition, possibly a tomb or chantry-railing at the west end of the south aisle; scale 30cm

While changes in liturgy leave their mark on the church, there is often little sign of the parishioners themselves. At Grandborough, however, there are a few vestiges of the daily attendance at the church enjoyed by the people of the village, not all of it related to their spiritual lives! While there are very many marks on the tower, often reputed (but impossible to prove) to be from sharpening arrows, or more commonly knives, there are also two circular scratch dials (marked to show the time of mass) at either end of the church.



Fig 31: Scratch-dial on south side of chancel



Fig 32: Scratch dial on south side of tower

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Very old graffiti too is extensive, although none of it is medieval. It is most extensive on the soft Triassic sandstone of the tower, where a number of names and initials are dated in the 18th and 19th centuries, eroding slowly. At around waist to shoulder height too the inside of the tower has at one time been covered with similar graffiti. However, this has been all but removed by assiduous Victorian and later restorers and a few names and dates can only be seen with the aid of a raking light source through the chisel marks of the new stone-facing. There are further graffiti inside the tower stair, as this was not always locked!



Fig 33: Tower exterior-TK1742



Fig 34: Tower interior-F.COX 1898

Until the 19th century the church was unheated. The succession of heating stoves leading to the current system can be seen in the documents from the purchases of fuel. Within the church fabric, however, there is evidence for a system based in the tower and another in the south aisle.



Fig 35: Heating flue in tower, scale 1m. Note the blocked doorway behind and to the right



Fig 36: Chimney on south aisle

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Within the tower the system was only installed with the effect of blocking a doorway within the tower which gave access to the belfry from the interior of the church. This can still be seen partly behind the rendered brick flue. Probably contemporary changes took place which altered the exterior access to the tower and the same blocked doorway can be seen from within the foot of the external access. The former firing chamber lies beneath the tower floor. As regards the south aisle, the clean, crisp exterior stonework of the chimney betokens a recent addition. However, there is no inkling on the inside as to where the flue exited the church or where any stove or other firing chamber lay. This chimney possibly indicates that a once-separate heating source was used for a vestry located, and perhaps screened off, in the south aisle, an unusual siting if so. It is not clear which structure relates to which heating system. Suffice to say both used solid fuel and neither is in use today!

Gaps in knowledge and future research

Although there has been a church on the site since at least the 13th century and probably since the 11th/12th centuries, as it stands today St Peter's Church is principally a medieval building of the 14th century, with a number of alterations and extensions. These probably took place within a short time, notably the addition of aisles and creating arcades, together with the construction of a west tower and spire. A south porch, possibly of 15th-16th century, has been lost.

The fabric has undergone many alterations since the end of the medieval period, most notably in the 19th century. The use of numerous stone-types and the likely re-use of stone which may not have been suitable, may not have been of benefit to the building as a whole and in many places the stonework and pointing are deteriorating, leading to an ongoing need for conservation in accordance with the relevant legislation (Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994; Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991) and in pursuance of its status as a Grade II* Listed Building.

The church benefits from excellent documentation, dating back to the 13th century, much of it published (although not easily accessible), with a deposited run of records conserved in public ownership which enhance the significance of the building considerably. These have been brought together and synthesised for the first time in the current report.

Above-ground, the principal gap in knowledge regarding the church is the detail of the stonework. Inexpert 19th-century pointing and deteriorating stonework has left the inquiry into detail of the various phases of stonework alteration at best - difficult, at worst – inadvisable without close scrutiny. The opportunity to photographically record areas of stonework once raked out in any conservation programme would aid understanding of the fabric, which at present is based upon the eye of faith. Changes can be seen, but they cannot be traced in detail, and with certainty.

Below ground, understanding of the building remains limited. Although works up until now have not been archaeologically monitored, most notably the re-flooring of the north aisle and vestry in the 1970s, and the old heating trenches have cut deep into the floors, there remains potential for future works to uncover aspects of the early or even the original plan which are not currently apparent, such as the original nave walls, and many dozens of intra-mural burials, with significant numbers in

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18th- to 19th-century brick vaults. The close association of the church with Ronton Priory makes it unusual and it is possible the influence of the priory and its Augustinian order may be seen in the original layout or construction.

The modern loss of very many gravestones too has muddled the current potential for understanding the spread and progress of burial in the churchyard, particularly in the post-Reformation period. Any future structural interventions in the churchyard may offer opportunities to resolve questions as to the size and form of the former south porch and the patterns of burial around the building, together with affording views of the foundations of the building as it stands.

St Peter's still has much to offer.

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