

Excavations Inside Ravensden Church, 1969

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SUMMARY

Excavation in the nave and aisle of Ravensden Church revealed early medieval building phases. The earliest structure was a twelfth century church, 35ft by 15ft, with earthen floors. Related features included a pit, probably used for bell-founding, and a base, possibly for a font. The evidence found, together with architectural details and material from documentary sources, allows a reasonably complete account of the church to be compiled.

INTRODUCTION

During February 1969 the nave and aisle of Ravensden church (TL 078544) were re-floored. This was necessary because the existing red tile floor was uneven and had been laid directly on the earth, making the church very damp. The old tiles were removed and about one foot of earth taken out to make room for a hardcore and concrete base. A total excavation was not possible because of time limits imposed by the contractors. Areas marked I - VII on the excavation plan were taken down carefully; the remaining parts were dug out by the workmen leaving the whole area excavated to the earliest building level.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

The earliest known reference to a church at Ravensden is dated 1166.¹ No details of the building are given until the sixteenth century visitations, when the nave roof was in a ruinous state.² Much information may be learned from the eighteenth century Churchwardens' Accounts³ and later Archdeacon's Visitations,⁴ Parish Returns,^{5, 6} and other descriptions.^{7, 8, 9} The relevant documentary evidence is considered in the discussion section.

THE EXCAVATION

A plan of All Saints, Ravensden, is given in fig 1 and full architectural details in appendix 1. A detailed plan of the excavation is shown in fig 2.

Remains older than the church

On the north side of the nave there was a gully approximately 2ft wide by 7ft long and 3ft deep¹⁰ (Fig 2, Fl.) The exact length could not be found because of the disturbance caused by an eighteenth century burial on the south side, nor the exact depth because the water table was only 2ft down. The gully had a blackened, red burnt clay lining 1in thick and the fillings showed signs of intense heat and contained many shapeless lumps of once molten bronze. The feature is dated immediately before the first phase of the church because the sandy layer, left by early builders, ran over the fillings, which were loose enough to allow this sandy stratum to sag into the gully slightly. It is possible that this pit was made and used by bell-founders.

The pottery found in the gully (fig 3. 1 - 2) is of mid twelfth century type.

The first church

The first building was rectangular almost exactly 30ft by 15ft, corresponding approximately to the present nave. None of the walls now survives above floor level. The position of the north wall was established by three sections, one under each arch (pl 3a); at a later stage in the excavations it was exposed in its entirety. It was 4ft 6in thick. The footings consisted of flint pebbles bonded with blue clay laid in a trench 3ft wide and 2ft deep. At about the level of the old top soil (now a brown clay) 1ft 2in below the floor, the wall widened 6in

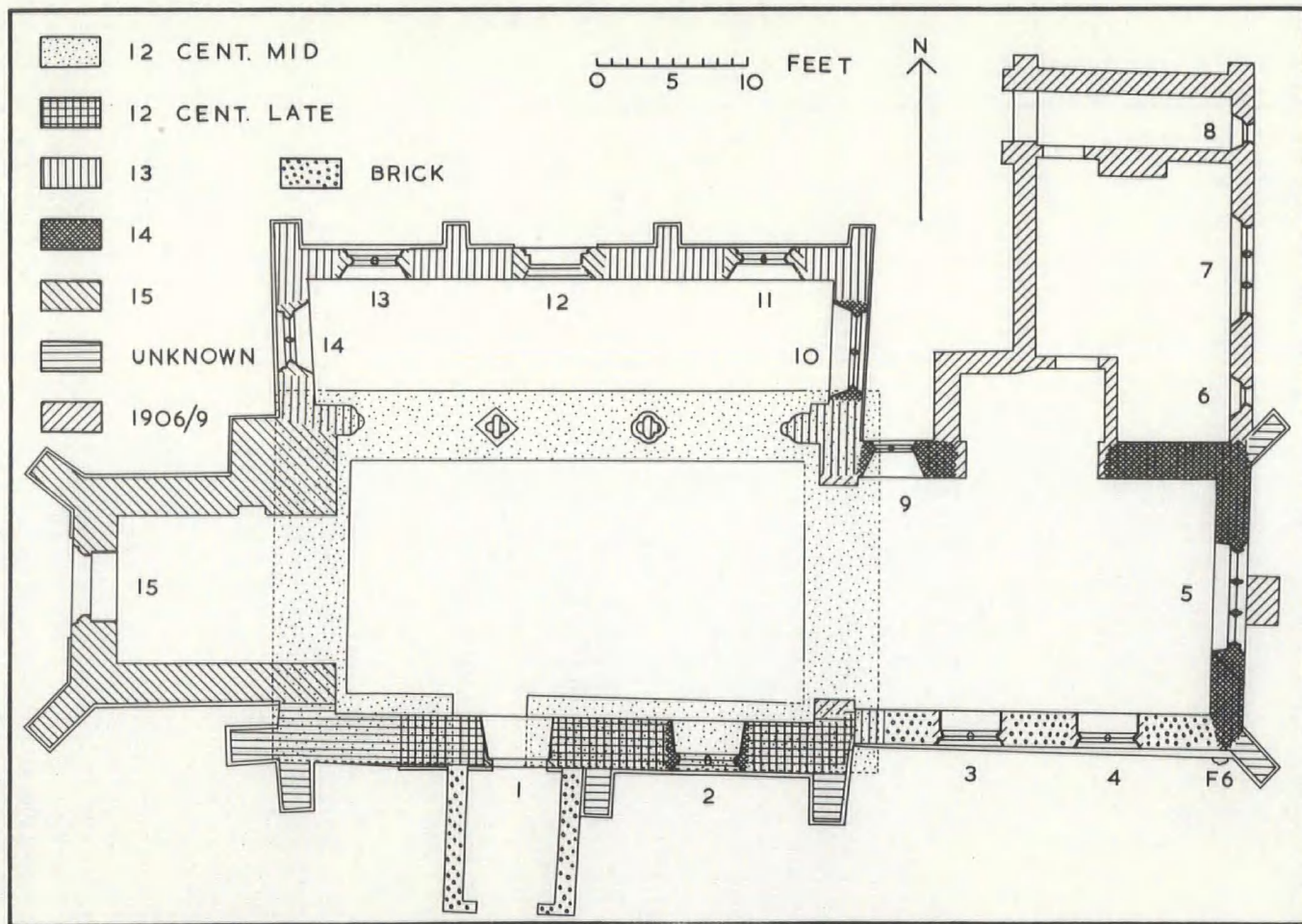


Fig 1 A general plan of Ravensden Church. The numbers refer to architectural details described in appendix 1.

on the outside and 1ft on the inside to make up the 4ft 6in width. In the area of trench 1 the full width of the wall was set slightly in the subsoil on the south side, leaving the line of a shallow footing trench. At the level of the full width, the wall was constructed of flints and pebbles bonded with a very coarse sand. This sand was spread by the builders on the ancient topsoil over most of the nave area and formed the lowest artificial stratum.

It was not possible to check the widths of the other walls of the first building. The lower courses of the west wall survive below the tower arch (pl. 3b). The line of the south wall was represented principally by a robber trench, and was interrupted by a doorway 5ft wide (pl. 3b). The present south wall stands on the central flint and clay footings of the first wall. The original east wall survives as the flint and clay footing which now supports the chancel step.

The area of the modern pulpit in the north east corner was not examined fully, but some laid flints and pebbles not in line with the old east and north walls could have been the footings for an, at present, unknown object.

The floor consisted of a 4-6in layer of blue clay which covered the builder's sand layer. (pl. 3a).

There is no direct dating evidence, but the building must be earlier than, or of the same date as, the twelfth century Norman tympanum and chevron moulding over the inside arch of the south door. This tympanum could indeed have belonged to the first church, it is quite a common feature for door mouldings to be re-used.¹¹ The first building must be earlier than the pottery found in the latest destruction layer (fig 3, 3) so, a late twelfth century date seems to be suitable.

Fire damage to the early church and the rebuilding.

Not long after the completion of the first building, and before the earthen floor layers had had time to accumulate, there was extensive fire damage. The area at the south west was scorched deep red, and a blackened layer was found over most of the early floor (pl. 3b and 4b). In the south east part there were two reddened and black marks probably caused by burning roof timbers (fig 2 F2). The south wall, at least, probably needed rebuilding as a result of the fire and still survives as the oldest part of the present church.

The dating of this fire and the rebuilding is still within the twelfth century, according to the pottery found in the burnt layer at the south west (fig 3,3), and the nature of the existing south wall. Both the tympanum and the thickness of the wall confirm a twelfth century date. The wall, is however, thinner than the first long walls, and shows an increasing appreciation of the stress which a stone wall is capable of withstanding.

Immediately on the black burnt layer a nearly square limestone footing, 4ft 6in by 4ft 3in, was built in the centre of the west end of the nave (fig 2 F3, pl. 4a). The insertion of an eighteenth century burial partly destroyed it (fig 2 F4). This footing was that of some small superstructure, perhaps a font, constructed in the late twelfth century as part of the rebuilding after the fire. It did not survive the period of the earthen floors, since late ones ran over it. It was, very probably, destroyed at the time of the reformation in the sixteenth century.

Also placed on the burnt layer was a feature in the north east of the nave (fig 2 F5). Like the footing of the presumed font it was covered by the later earthen floors. When these were removed it first appeared as an elongated oval area of blue clay with flints and chalk, about 5ft by 1ft 6in, orientated east and west. As the medieval earthen floors were removed down to the late twelfth century burnt layer it was seen that they ran up to and partly over the clay mass, so that the bottom was larger than the top, some 6ft by 2ft. Excavation of the clay feature itself showed the east end was formed by chalk pebbles around and covering the clay mass (pl. 4b). Total removal of the feature showed that no interment had existed beneath it. The purpose of this structure is not clear. Again the date is late twelfth century because the clay is set directly on the blackened layer, except at the west end where it cut through the black slightly.

Earthen floors were used during the medieval period. They are in layers of sand or plaster, presumably laid down when the previous level became muddy or was worn away. Just east of the presumed font there was a change of level in the floors across the nave; north from this font there was a line of stones (fig 2 F8), but by the font the floor layers merely dipped steeply down to the lower level. This dip showed up during the excavation as sectioned lines of sharply upward-rising layers (fig 2 F9). A brown mark in front of the doorway of the first building represents a wooden step set askew, presumably to allow ready access to both the floor levels.

Medieval expansion of the church

In the thirteenth century the north wall was knocked down and the north aisle built with a triple arcade. The quatrefoil piers are characteristic of the Early English style. The aisle walls, much thinner than those of the first church, have footings of large blocks of limestone going down to 2ft 9in below the floor level. The windows are fourteenth and fifteenth century insertions. The floor levels were all disturbed in the eighteenth century except near the old nave north wall (pl. 3a). There was a concentration of pebbles near the north door.

There is little evidence about the early roofs. A few stone and pottery tiles were found (fig 3, 6-8), so both these materials must have been used at some stage. The timbers of the present nave roof are late medieval and are dated between 1518 and 1530.²

The site of the altar in the early church was disturbed by an eighteenth century gravestone (fig 2 F11). In the aisle a modern side-altar stands on the site of the ancient one. There were a number of pebbles at the east end which probably derived from the base. The mosaic and plain flooring tiles (fig 3, 10) may have come from the steps and surrounds of these altars.

A small quantity of weathered medieval glass and window lead was found. All the glass was opaque and crizzled, but did not seem to be coloured or painted.

Post-medieval changes in the church

The aisle roof is of two gables facing north and covered with seventeenth century tiles. Similar tiles appear in the south west part of the nave wall and the two buttresses. There is a discontinuity here (fig 2 F7) in the plinth outside, and the stone courses inside. It is possible that these were later repairs.

Earthen floors continued to be used until well after the end of the medieval period. An unstratified seventeenth century reckoning counter was found and near the south door on the earth floors there was a small badly worn copper coin or token. This is either a farthing of James I (1603-25) or a mid-seventeenth century token. Clearly the earthen floors were still in use. Several brass pins of an eighteenth century type were also recovered. It is very likely, therefore, that the church was not tiled

until this late date. Confirmation comes from entries in the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1739 when 1300 'paving bricks' were paid for.³ These tiles are the small square ones replaced in 1969; the oblong tiles are probably Victorian.

There are no burials in the aisle but four in the nave, all of eighteenth century date. Jasper Wagstaffe (1685-1722) probably still lies beneath his gravestone (fig 2 F10), since all the earthen floors were cut through.

Elizabeth Wagstaffe does not lie under her stone (fig 2 F11) since the old floors ran uninterruptedly underneath. Both of these stones were moved a few inches in 1969 to align them squarely with the nave. To the south of the gravestones probing detected two coffins probably made of lead (fig 2 F12, F13). These are almost certainly those of Elizabeth (1650-1713) and John Wagstaffe (1646-1718) commemorated by the plaque on the south wall. Both these persons must have been small because the coffins are only 4ft 11in and 5ft 6in long respectively. The stone base of the presumed old font was damaged by another burial without a lead or stone coffin. The upper fillings of the grave contained a piece of tin-glazed eighteenth century pottery (fig 3.5), and some disturbed bones. The latest burial had therefore probably disturbed an earlier one. None of these burials was disturbed in the present excavation.

On the south east side of the west pier there was what seems to have been a hearth in the earthen floors (fig 2 F14). Here were also found churchwarden pipe fragments and post-medieval glass, showing the latest stage of use was during the seventeenth century until the 1739 tile floor. It may be possible that this hearth was built in the medieval period; but it would not be before the thirteenth century as it lies partially over the first church north wall.

In 1906 there were extensive repairs⁵ and the vestry was built in 1909.⁶

DISCUSSION

The excavations revealed the stages of development of Ravensden church, from the simple rectangular twelfth century structure to the relatively complex lay-out of today.

Nothing earlier than the twelfth century was found, and no post holes or other remains of an earlier Saxon building. This could be taken to accord with the absence of the name *Ravensden*

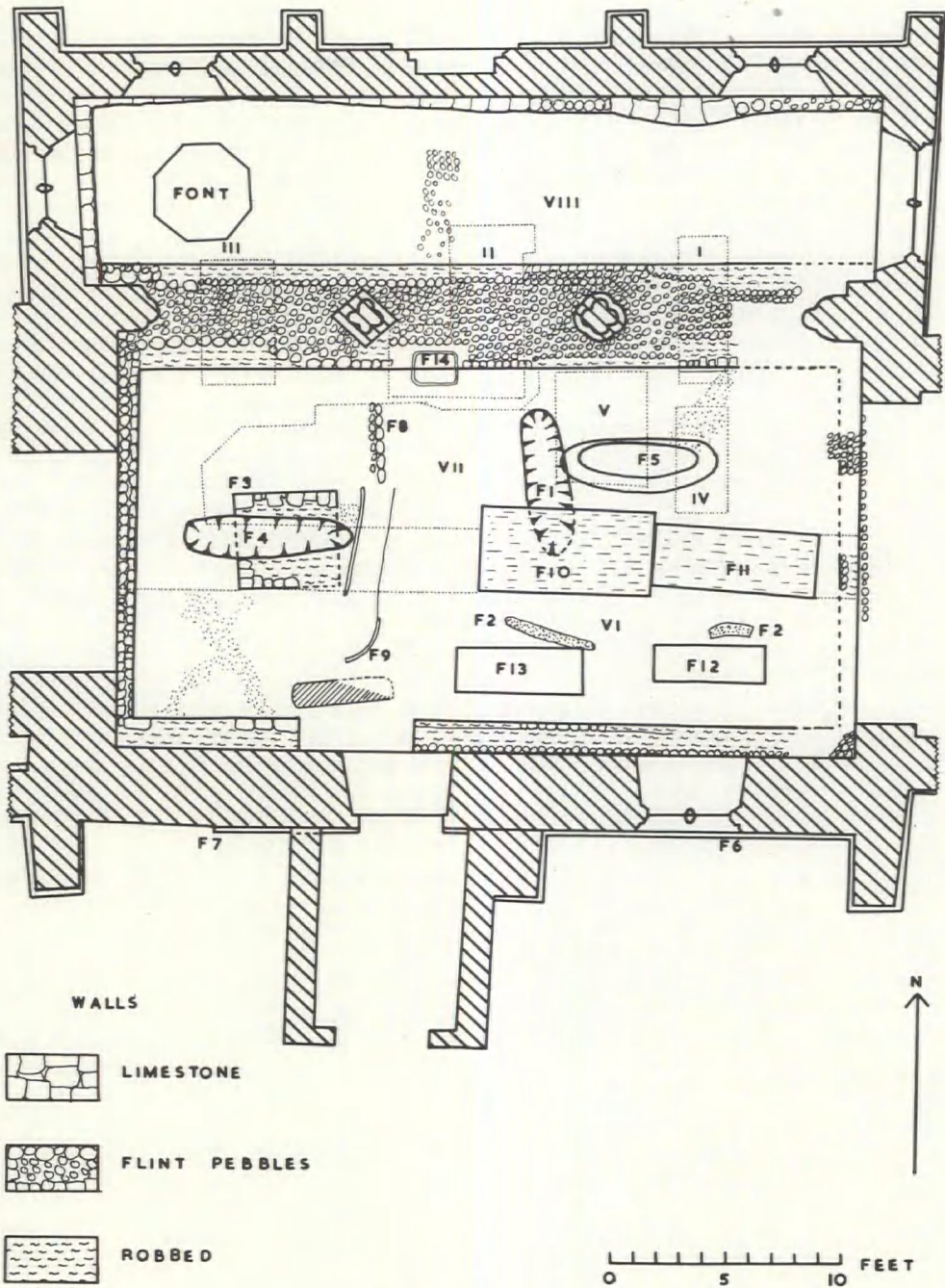


Fig 2 Ravensden church: plan of excavations

from the Domesday Book, leading to the conclusion that the vill is a late settlement. However, the case is more complicated. In 1914 Fowler gave evidence for identifying the Domesday name *Chainhalle* with the settlement later called *Ravensden*.¹² Elliott criticised this, pointing out that *Chainhalle* had a valuable mill which must have been situated in the Ouse.¹³ Fowler replied that sometimes mills were detached from the main vill, examples being Bletsoe and Bromham.¹⁴ He could also have cited the example of Chelveston, in Northamptonshire, which has a long, narrow tongue of land stretching two miles from the vill to the river mill. With change of ownership such a narrow strip of land could easily be taken in with adjacent holdings or manors. It is not likely that *Channels End*, in Colmworth, is *Chainhalle*, it simply indicates that *Channels End* is the *End* of Colmworth nearest to *Chainhalle* or *Ravensden*. Similarly *Podington End* at Wollaston, Northamptonshire is two and a half miles from the Bedfordshire village of Podington.

If it is accepted that Ravensden is a Domesday settlement under a different name at that time, we are left with the problem of the whereabouts of the Saxon church and burial ground. They could be on an entirely different site at one of the Ends of this fragmented settlement. Recent work at Bletsoe¹⁵ (TL 019585) has shown that the Saxon Christian cemetery is an appreciable distance (500 yards) from the medieval church and vill. The absence of burials in Ravensden north aisle further suggests that the church site was a new one. The burials round the first church had not reached the north side by the thirteenth century, when the aisle was built.

The excavations showed that the first building was a simple rectangle, and proved incorrect the unsupported assertion of the *Victoria County History* that there was a twelfth century nave which had been widened on the north.¹⁶ No trace of such a widening was found.

The first known reference to a church is of about 1166¹ and accords well with the dating of the earliest building; the pottery in the 'bell-founders pit' must be at least as old as that and so forms a valuable, closely dated group.

Although it was rather surprising to find a bell-founder's pit in the area which subsequently became the inside of the church, it is apparently not unusual. The authors have found a larger one in the twelfth century nave of neighbouring Thurleigh church. It is known that bell-founders did travel a-

round to churches rather than deliver the finished goods from a central workshop.¹⁶

The east-west aligned clay mass is very difficult to explain. A similar one, 2ft by 10ft was found in the late twelfth century levels in Thurleigh church nave. Something must have stood on or over the clay, and have been sufficient importance to have existed many years. Whatever it was, perhaps a tomb or table, was supported in such a way that the earth floors were able partly to cover the clay.

The chancel requires some comment. Only the east and part of the north walls are medieval. From the stonework it is clear that the windows are not insertions. Their tracery shows the oldest part of the chancel was built no earlier than the beginning of the fourteenth century. The absence of a plinth round the outside of the chancel is further evidence that the chancel is not contemporary with the aisle. Also the corbels of the arch are Decorated and were used when the arch was rebuilt in 1906. It seems unlikely that an aisle would be built without a chancel in the thirteenth century, and therefore possible that a previous chancel and chancel arch were entirely rebuilt in the fourteenth century. The stone footing immediately to the west of the present south east buttress (fig 1 F6) may well be the remains of a 'square-on' Early English buttress.

From the eighteenth century onward there are various records giving details of repairs and upkeep of the church. There was considerable activity in the first half of the eighteenth century.³ In 1729 there was expenditure on the roof, 2,000 plain tiles being fetched from 'Wotton', along with 'gutor' and 'ridg tils' and laths. In 1739 there was the tiling of the floor already mentioned. The area covered by 1,300 tiles 6in square is rather in excess of 325 sq ft. The area of the nave, aisle and chancel are 576,344 and 365 sq ft respectively. However, it is very probable that the whole building was tiled at that date. In 1747 there were repairs to a 'pue' door and the seats; from a later account⁷ it is clear that these were in the chancel, and that in the nave, as now, the 'sittings are for the most part open' (1852). Another repair in the eighteenth century, not specifically recorded, is the rebuilding of the chancel south wall. The bricks used correspond very closely with examples dated 1740 from a vault at Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire. An unexpected entry in the Churchwardens' Accounts is for various colouring matters in 1785, 'witin, bleu, yellow oker and lamp black', presumably parts of the building received a colour wash.

The occurrence of pins in the eighteenth century

levels is common to several churches in the area.

In 1817 the tower arch was built up,⁷ and the tower roof repaired in 1823.³ In the same year a new font basin, plated paten and flagon were bought.⁴ There were a few other minor repairs, but by the time of the detailed account in 1852⁷ the whole fabric was in a very poor state. By this time there was a building to the north of the chancel, variously used as a school and vestry. Apparently it was built in the early years of the nineteenth century according to the later references.^{8,9} No repairs were made and the reports of 1894 and 1905⁸ described the bad state of the building and particularly mention that the vestry should be replaced, the tower arch opened and the chancel arch, east window tracery and roof be repaired. In 1906 all the repairs were completed except those of the vestry and floors. The pews were removed from the chancel and the organ replaced in a recess. The font was removed from the nave to the aisle. The total cost was £727 - 17 - 0.⁵ In 1909 the vestry was built, £50 being spent on it in that year.⁶ The chancel floor was relaid with wooden blocks in 1966. The remaining floor area was replaced with new tiles in 1969, some of the old tiles were relaid down the centre of the nave. The cost was £1,000.

THE FINDS

Pottery (Fig 3)

1 Pink — buff with a grey core; shelly.

2 Outside blackened orange, inside pink, grey core; shelly. These two sherds and many body sherds came from the gully predating the church (fig 2 F1). They are in the 'developed' St Neots ware tradition, and are almost certainly the same cooking pot. Parallels can be found in the early levels at Strixton, Northants¹⁸ which are twelfth or thirteenth century; at Eaton Socon castle¹⁹ of the mid twelfth century; and at Southoe, Hunts also of the twelfth century.²⁰ These parallels agree well with the architectural evidence of the sherds' date (see above). Since the first reference to the church is about 1166, the sherds must be earlier still.

3 Blackened brown and purple outside, buff inside, blue core. From the first church burnt layer. A shelly 'developed' St Neots ware; some shells leached out on the inside. Parallels at Strixton dove-cote, Irchester manor,¹⁸ and Eaton Socon²¹ are dated of mid twelfth century.

A further eight body sherds were found in the

medieval floor levels. Four were shelly and four sandy.

4 Hard sherd fired orange throughout; a green glaze on the outside below the spur on the rim, and an orange glaze on the inside. Fabric similar to a late sixteenth century group found at Beacon Hill, Wollaston, Northants.²² Unstratified.

5 Very hard white sherd, with white tin glaze. Not a 'delft' ware, therefore dating after about 1750. From the fillings of the grave cutting the medieval font (fig 2 F4).

Roofing Tiles

All from the disturbed levels in the aisle. 6 and 7. Two stone tiles.

8 Hard red tile with blue core. Two holes for pegs. Not closely datable in the range thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

9 Hard red tile with red core. Part of a ridge tile, very similar to a fifteenth century example from Eaton Socon.²³ Mrs E.S. Eames of the British Museum suggests a fifteenth century date, since earlier examples are normally glazed.

Flooring Tiles

10 Green glazed tile; buff lower part changing to a bluish fabric near the glaze. A porous leached material. The glaze is splashed over the edge. One side has only been cut half way through before firing, and then broken afterwards. It is not possible to tell whether the tile was lozenge shaped or triangular. The fabric exactly corresponds to tiles found by D. Baker at Elstow Abbey, dated to the first half of the fourteenth century.²⁴ Two sizes of early unglazed tile were found in the nave north of the old font. They were 8.75in square by 1in thick; and 7in square by 1.5in thick. The tiles replaced in 1969 were of two types; 6in square by 1in thick and 9in by 4.5in by 1.25in thick. The first are almost certainly those laid in 1739; the larger appear to be of nineteenth century workmanship.

Iron

11 Ornamental iron strip, probably from a door. From south of the Wagstaffe gravestones (fig 2 F10, 11).

12 Thumb-piece of a door latch; from the seventeenth century levels near the south door.

13 A bolt of near square section. Various hand-made nails were recovered.

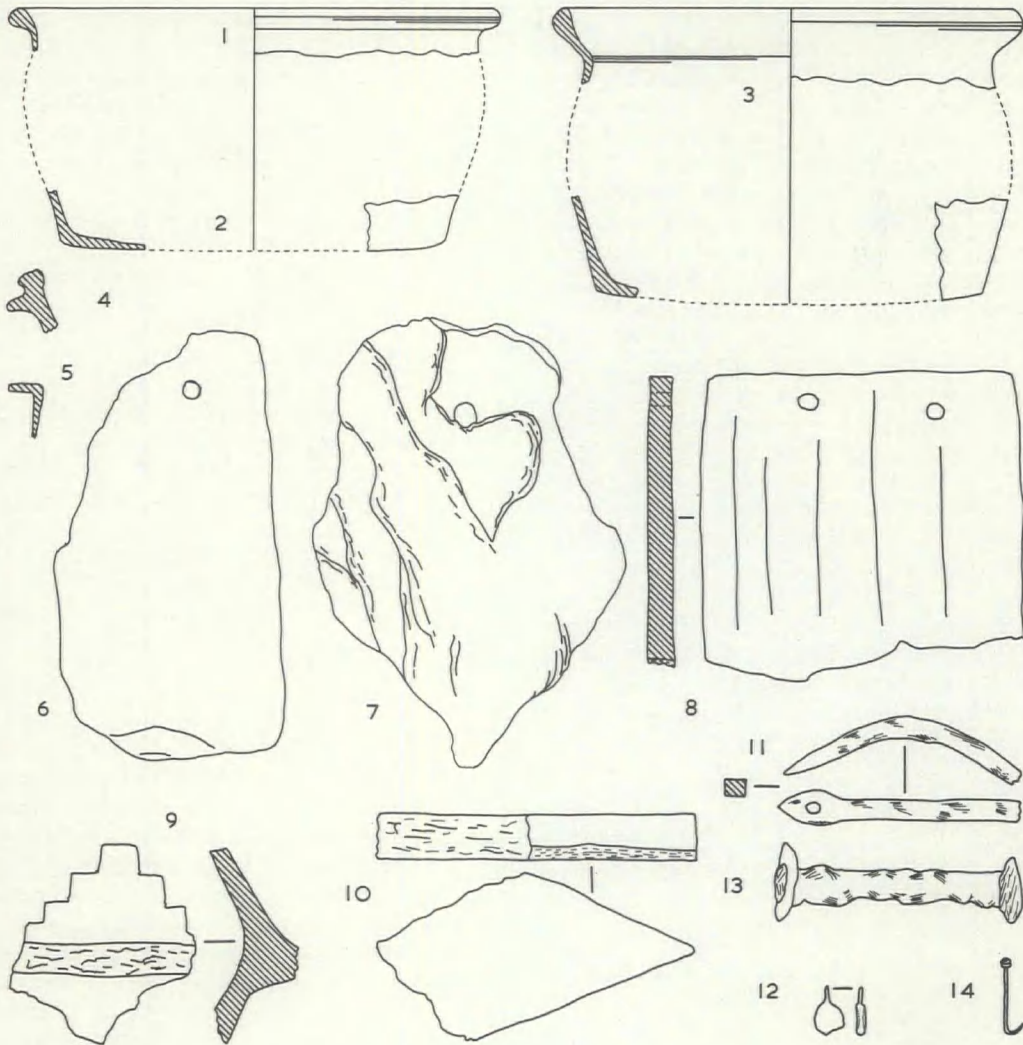


Fig 3 Ravensden church excavations: small finds ($\frac{1}{4}$ scale)

Brass

14 A bent pin, of the same type as the late eighteenth century pins found at Newton Willows church, Northants.²⁵ From the nave floor north of the Wagstaffe stones.

Also found in the aisle was a bundle of wire strands each 0.01in thick, looped and twisted into a 'rod' of bronze 0.75in long and 0.1in thick. In the same area was a solid rod bent into an approximate half circle 1in in diameter; the rod ends are 0.15in thick and the middle 0.2in.

APPENDIX 1

Notes on Architecture

The architectural periods of the walls are marked on fig 1.

The tower arch is of simple fifteenth century Perpendicular workmanship springing from corbels. The chancel arch springs from fourteenth century Decorated corbels which were reused when the arch was rebuilt in 1906. The aisle arches are of two chamfered orders springing from quatrefoil piers

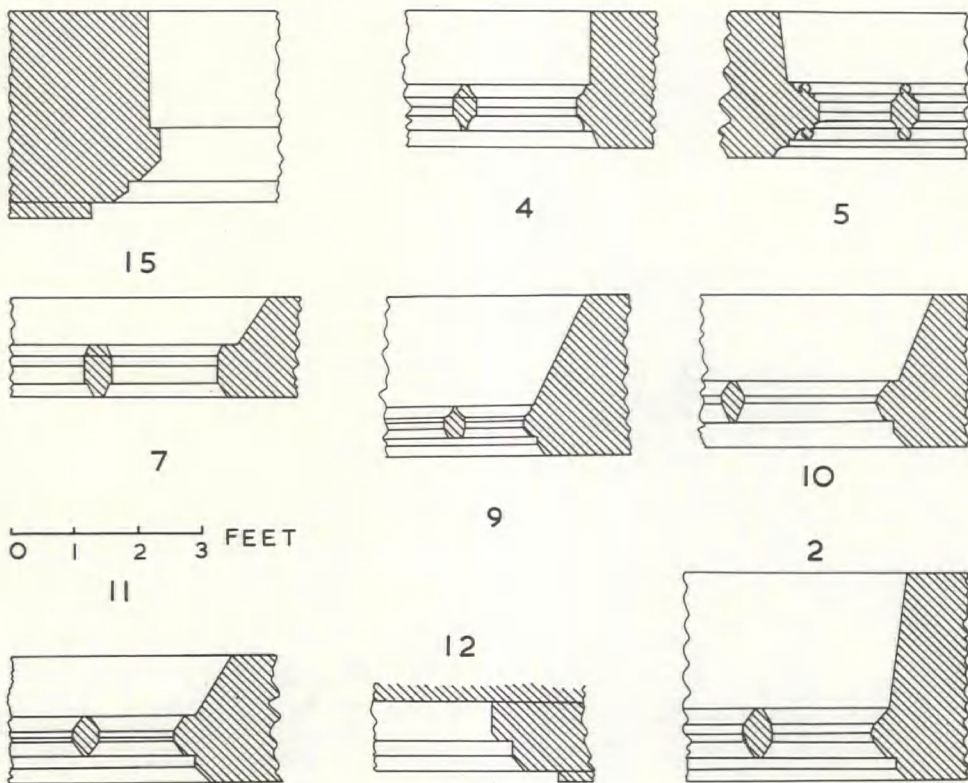


Fig 4 Architectural details of door and window mouldings

so characteristic of the thirteenth century Early English period.²⁶

Considering the doors and windows, and using the numbering system given in figure 1. Relevant sections are drawn in figure 4.

1 The south door. On the inside is a damaged twelfth century Norman tympanum. The arch is semi-circular and two stones have Norman chevron patterns on them. The outer arch is two centered, with a slight chamfer and no capitals, so presumably it is fourteenth or fifteenth century. The date of the brick filled, wooden framed porch is very difficult. The bricks do not look of quite the same character as the eighteenth century material used in the chancel south wall and are probably older. Pevsner gives a seventeenth century date.²⁷ The character of the brick infilling suggests it replaced lath and plaster. The tiles on the roof appear to be seventeenth century.

2 Nave south window. A typical Decorated example but the mullion is rather weathered and so is now very asymmetrical.

3 and 4. Square framed windows of the eighteenth century fitted with 1906 Gothic revival tracery.

5 East window. A fine example of Decorated work, similar to a window at Saint Peter's Church, Bedford. The upper parts were blocked out in 1823,³ and opened up again in the extensive repairs of 1906. The buttress underneath was added at the same time.

6, 7 and 8. Gothic revival of 1909.

9 Chancel north window. A square framed Decorated work. The concave moulding of the mullion and jambs, and the ogee tracery leave no doubt as to the period.

10 Aisle east window. Probably Decorated. 11, 13 and 14. Aisle north and west windows. The mullions continue to the point of the arch in the Perpendicular manner. The inserted nature of these windows is very evident from the outside, in contrast to the chancel east window.

12 North door. Double chamfered without bases or capitals. Perpendicular. It is blocked up on the inside.

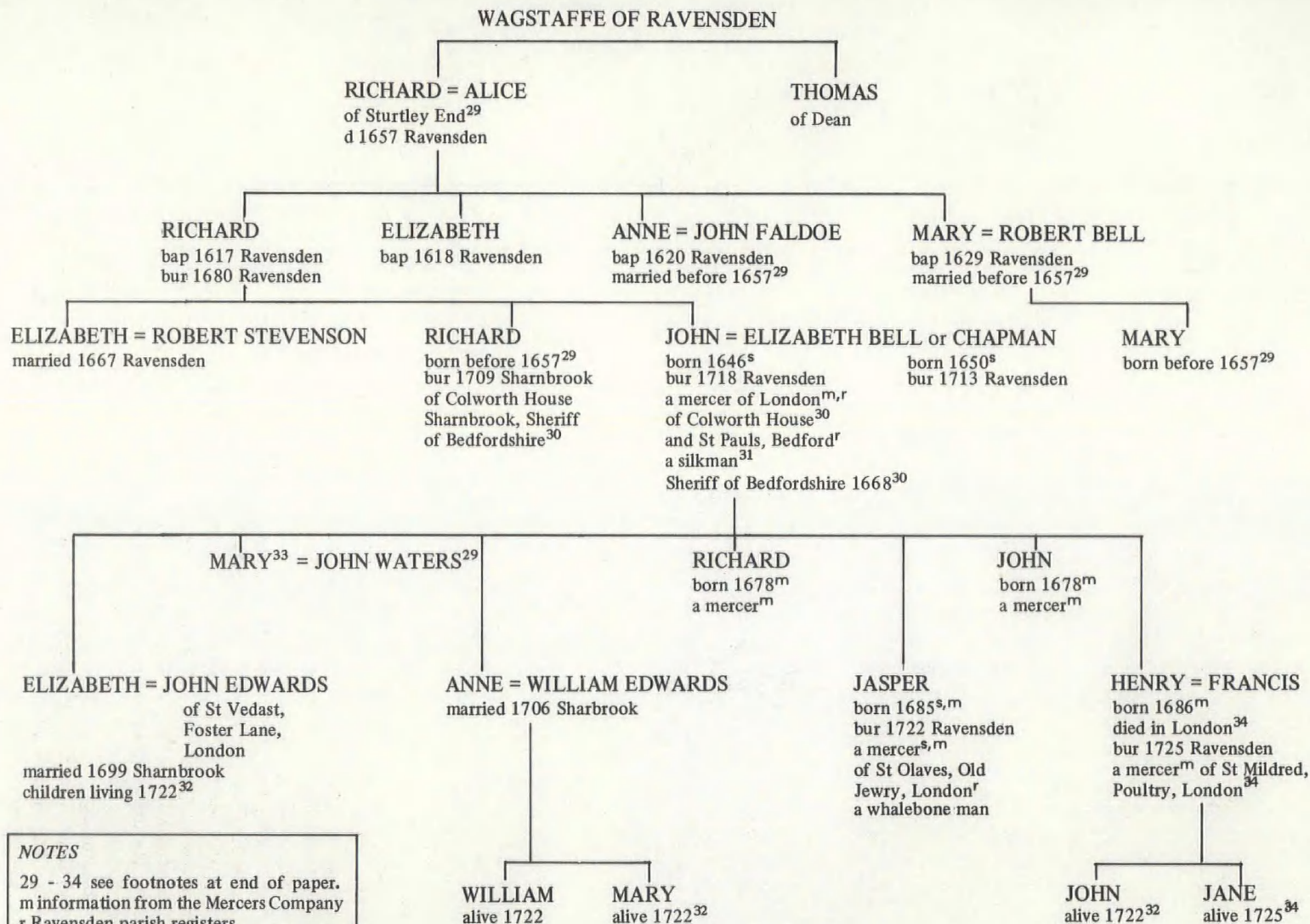


Fig 5 Genealogy of Wagstaffe of Ravensden

15 Tower door. Very similar to the north door. Perpendicular. The tower has a stone staircase on the north east, not indicated in figure 1.

The nave south buttresses have been repaired. Since they are at right-angles and not diagonal to the wall, they are probably thirteenth or fourteenth century work. The rebuilding of the south west part of the nave could be of the same date. The chancel diagonal buttresses are probably 1906 (replacing fourteenth century?) The aisle buttresses are original thirteenth century and those of the tower are original fifteenth century.

The tower and steeple are principally fifteenth century work, with a sixteenth century parapet and belfry.

APPENDIX 2

The Memorials

Note, full sources, where quoted, refer to documents at the Bedford Record Office.

There are four monuments inside Ravensden church; one is on the chancel floor, one on the nave south wall and two on the nave floor (fig 2 F10 and 11).

This chancel memorial is half buried under the organ and the visible part is below on the right hand side of the vertical line. On the left hand side is an attempt at the probable full version using details found in the parish registers.

<p>Here lies de the body of R son of Richard vicar of this p died at Golding on November 1 aged 15 ye also Carol sister of the who died on March aged 9 mon</p>	<p>posited ichard Leech arish ton 5 1787 ars ine above 13 1791 ths</p>
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In the register we read of Richard's character 'this beloved youth was blessed with every virtue and clear from every vice.'

Caroline died at Goldington, no mention being made of the whereabouts of Richard's death. However, it may be assumed that Richard died at the same place. A clue to the reason the vicar was living outside the parish can be found in an undated newspaper cutting which described the Ravensden vicarage as 'uninhabitable' (circa 1880) and the

living of £80 as 'being very poor'.²⁸ From the records studied it is apparent that there was no substantial period of recovery in the finances of the church between 1787 and 1826 when the Archdeacon, at his Visitation, noted the 'great poverty of the village'.⁴ It is possible, therefore that the vicarage had been uninhabitable for the century prior to 1880.

The other three memorials are to members of the Wagstaffe family. The memorial on the nave south wall reads :

'Here lieth the Body of John Wagstaffe Esq^e
Died ye 11th April 1718 in ye 72 year of his
Age And Elizabeth his wife Died y^e 6th October
1713 in y^e 63 year of her Age.

The memorial on the nave floor (fig 2 F11) reads :

'Here Lyeth y^e Body of Elizabeth Wagstaffe y^e
Wife of John Wagstaffe Esq Who Departed this
Life Octob 6th 1713 In y^e 63 year of her Age.

The other memorial on the nave floor (fig 2 F10) reads :

Jasper Wagstaffe Citizen & Mercer of London
Whalebone man^{et} departed this Life the 14th
of November 1722 Aged 37 years.

From the parish records it appears that there were two families of Wagstaffes in Ravensden during the period 1600 to 1800. One line is of Sturtley End, Ravensden, to whom the above memorials belong, the other line originating in Udwick End, Wilden. Part of the family tree (fig 5) was built from parish registers but much of the information came from wills and other sources. None of the generations which included John and son Jasper was baptised in Ravensden parish church but many members returned to be buried there.

Richard (ob 1657) held land at Mowsbury, Ravensden,³⁴ Kempston,²⁹ and part of Salpho Manor, Beds;²⁹ his son Richard also holding land at Graves Hill, Ravensden (WG 543). Richard's sons, Richard and John, held Colworth House, Sharnbrook, Beds and still held land there in 1708 (BS 2038); John's daughter Anne was married at Sharnbrook in 1706 and Richard was buried there in 1709 although, according to Harvey,²⁵ Mark Antonie had purchased Colworth manor from the Wagstaffes in 1700.²⁵

At the time Richard (1617-1680) took occupation of the 10 acres at Graves Hill (1647) he was already a Captain in the Parliamentary army. He took part in the suppression of the regiment's mutiny at Oxford (for which Parliament voted him

£40); with Okey, his commanding officer, he took and maintained the Bedford religious house of St John the Baptist for 'John Bunnion the tinker'; he examined (as a J.P.) and gave evidence against county Royalists; he represented Beds in Cromwell's Parliaments and took part in the thwarted plot of 1654 to seize the Tower of London for Parliament. He was promoted major but at the Restoration was ordered by proclamation of the Council of State to surrender at Whitehall upon pain of sequestration. He appears not to have taken part in the final battle with the Royalists near Northampton and he escaped the fate of Okey who was executed for failing to surrender to the proclamation.³⁵ However, even though a Parliamentarian he was buried at the parish church 20 years later. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch on the imagination to believe that the ruination of the church and the vicarage commenced with Richard and a strong local non-conformist attitude to religion.

It appears that it was this Richard who led the family into the City of London, his younger son John was apprenticed to Maurice King for 8 years at the age of 16, and all of John's sons were admitted to the Freedom of the City of London via membership of the Mercer's Company. This branch of the Wagstaffe family does not appear in the Ravensden registers after Henry's death in 1725, he died in his sick bed at his home in London and was brought to Ravensden and buried there 8 days later. The wills of John and son Jasper request that their bodies be buried inside the church and, as Henry's will contains no such request, the identity of the fourth burial in the nave remains unknown.

The Wagstaffes living in the village for about 60 years after Henry's death were probably descendants of the Udwick End family. The Bedford Wagstaffes held land at Ravensden as late as 1783 (BS 568) and therefore could have been some relation to the Ravensden family. George Wagstaffe, a maulster, mayor of Bedford in 1702 was buried in St Pauls Bedford. He was a plumper for Sir William Gostwick in the County Election of 1705, when the Gostwicks held the advowson to Ravensden church.

Above the monument of John and Elizabeth there is an impaled coat of arms without tinctures: (Argent) two bends engrailed (gules), in chief an escallop (of the second) impaling party per chevron (—) and (—) a crescent counterchanged. Jasper's monument displays his shield, helmet and crest. His

coat of arms is the same as that of his father with the addition of the cadency mark a crescent. The first arms granted to a Wagstaffe was made in 1611 to a member of the Derbyshire family but the Ravensden shield is that of the Warwickshire family which was differenced by the addition of the escallop; the crest being that of the Earls of Warwick, a demi lion holding a staff, raguly. The shield of the Hinwick, Beds. Wagstaffes was not differenced by the escallop. The coat of arms with the tinctures of Richard of Ravensden was described in 1634³⁶ as: Argent, two bends engrailed gules the lower one coupé at the top, in chief an escallop of the second. A slight quandary exists over Jasper's cadency mark; the crescent is the mark of the second son and, according to the Mercer's records, he was the third son. He may have used the cadency mark of his father, who was a second son, as a difference, but this cadency mark is not on John's impaled shield. Elizabeth's coat of arms is that of Bell or Chapman, depending upon whether the tinctures are argent and gules or argent and sable. Therefore the exact identity remains unknown until the marriage record is found. It is perhaps more likely that she was a Bell, as references to cousin Robert Bell were made in the wills of John (1718) and Jasper (1722); however these may have been made to descendants of Mary Bell daughter of Richard Wagstaffe (ob 1657).

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NOTES

- 1 British Museum Harl MS 3656 fol 14b.
- 2 *Lincoln Rec Soc* 33, 115 'Navis ecclesie est in magna ruina in tectura' (1518); *ibid* 35, 2 'omnia bene' (1530).
- 3 Ravensden Churchwardens Accounts, Bedfordshire County Record Office document P89/5/1. (The Bedfordshire County Record Office is hereafter abbreviated as B.C.R.O.)
- 4 Archdeacons Visitations, B.C.R.O. ABV 3 and ABV 28.
- 5 Parish Returns, (1908) B.C.R.O., P89/2.
- 6 Parish Returns, (1910) B.C.R.O., P89/2.
- 7 *Northampton Mercury*, (1852) B.C.R.O., CRT 120/34.
- 8 Architects Reports, B.C.R.O., P89/7/2.
- 9 Graves, *The Way About Bedfordshire* (1901).
- 10 Depths are given from the present floor level, which is the same as that before the 1969 relaying. Both floors were brought to the level of the Jasper Wagstaffe gravestone (fig 2 F10).
- 11 Pevsner, *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire* (1961) 27.
- 12 *Beds Hist Rec Soc* 1 (1913) 63.
- 13 *Beds Hist Rec Soc* 2 (1914) 265.
- 14 *Beds Hist Rec Soc Quarto Memoirs, Bedfordshire in 1086*, (1922).
- 15 Unpublished work of the North Bedfordshire Archaeological Society.
- 16 *VCH Beds* 3 (1912) 213.
- 17 North, *The Church Bells of Bedfordshire* (1883).
- 18 D N Hall and N Nickerson, Medieval Pottery from Higham Hundred, Northamptonshire, *J Northampton Mus* forthcoming.
- 19 *P Camb Ant Soc* 58 (1965) 72; fig 14,28 to a lesser extent, fig 14,26 and 29.
- 20 *P Camb Ant Soc*, 49 (1956) 68; fig 7, 22.
- 21 *P Camb Ant Soc*, 58 (1965) 57 and fig 8 20-22, and 70-72 and fig 14.
- 22 D N Hall and N Nickerson, 'Post-medieval pottery', forthcoming.
- 23 *Beds Arch J* 4 (1969) 46.
- 24 British Museum, National Reference Collection of Medieval Tiles, of which Mrs E S Eames is Assistant Keeper in charge.
- 25 D N Hall and J B Hutchings, 'Newton Church', *J Northampton Mus* forthcoming.
- 26 Pevsner, 1961, 29.
- 27 Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire and the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough* (1968) 136.
- 28 'A.R.' *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* undated cutting found in the Archdeacons Visitations B.C.R.O., ABV 3.
- 29 The will of Richard Wagstaffe, 1657 Folio 23, The Literary Room, Somerset House.
- 30 Harvey, *History and Antiquities of Willey Hundred*, (1872-8), xx.
- 31 Blaydes, *Genealogia Bedfordiensis* (1890).
- 32 The will of Jasper Wagstaffe, 1722 Folio 227, The Literary Room, Somerset House.
- 33 The will of John Wagstaffe, B.C.R.O., APW 1718 83.
- 34 The will of Henry Wagstaffe, 1726 Folio 63, The Literary Room, Somerset House.
- 35 *Beds Hist Rec Soc* 35 (1955) 79.
- 36 *The Visitations of Bedfordshire [Harleian Soc 19 (1884)]*

