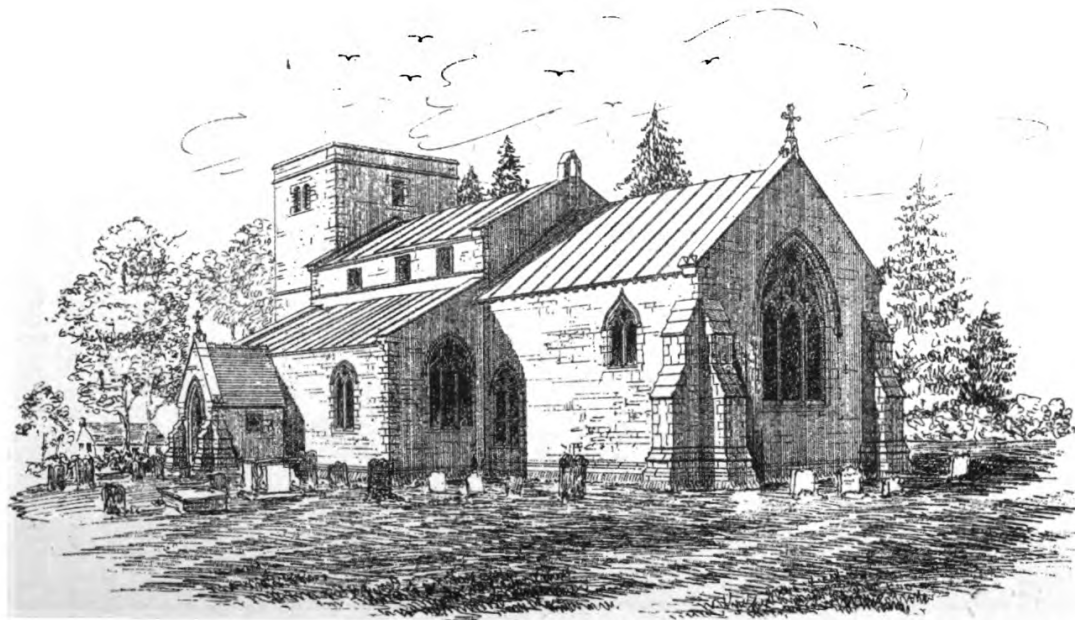


## PRESTON BISSETT.

The village of Preston Bissett is said to have derived its name from Villa Presbyteri, "Priest's Town," and its additional appellation of Bissett from a distinguished family who held it in early times. In the year 1207 the manor of Prestone was held by Bishop Odo, and on the forfeiture of that Prelate's estates, it was bestowed on the family of Bissett, who held it till the year 1290, when William Bissett sold the manors of Prestone and Cowley to Hugh de Broc, whose daughter Laura possessed these manors and that of Finmere in 1323. But Dugdale states that John Wentworth married the heiress of the Bissett's, and that family retained possession of the lands till the reign of Henry V.; since that time the families of Roos, Manners, Denton, Coke, and Grenville, with a few intervening possessors of less note, have been successively lords of the manor of Preston.

Notwithstanding its proximity to the town of Buckingham, Preston has even now an isolated character, but within living memory it was approachable only by field cartways, intersected by many gates; it had no school, the church was in a state of utter neglect, the graveyard open to the road, and the rectory had been almost untouched since 1627. Two non-resident rectors filled the

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
PRESTON BISSETT.



SOUTH-EAST VIEW AS RESTORED

J. HARRISON AND BROOK  
37 Bedford Place  
Russell Sq  
W.C.

Whitman & Bass Photo Litho to the Queen, Holborn, London

living from 1749 to 1823, and no squire has resided for two centuries, the manor having been absorbed in the Hillesden estate. The remains of the manor-house were demolished about twenty years since.

During the forty years incumbency of the Rev. J. E. Sabin, a change was effected; good schools and a new rectory were built, and the church twice underwent some measure of restoration, the first time in 1823, mainly with a view of preserving the fabric from entire ruin and rendering it more available for the poor; and again in 1853, when an unsightly gallery of the last century was removed, and several coats of yellow, blue, and black colouring disappeared from the pillars and arches, while some of the older features of the church were brought to light.

An entire restoration of the structure became an object of solicitude to the Rev. J. S. Bolden very soon after his institution in 1863, and this, with the aid of a few friends, he was enabled to effect before his recent resignation of the benefice. This church, which was reopened for worship on Easter Sunday, 1873, is an object of considerable interest to the archæologist, from the purity of the style of its architecture and its great age, apart from the consideration that the present building has supplanted a still more ancient structure, which must have been erected early in the twelfth century.

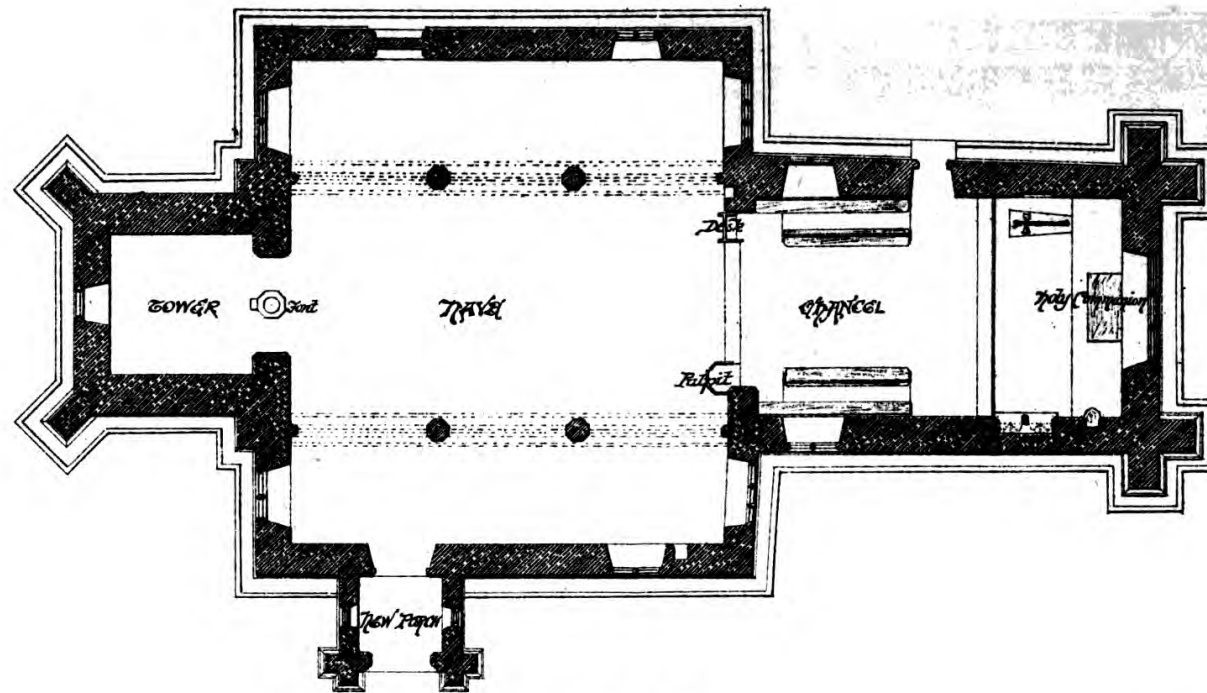
The church is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and consists of a nave, north and south aisles opening from the nave by Gothic arches, supported by octagonal piers with moulded caps and bases irregularly worked, a chancel with a wide arch, remarkable for two grotesque corbels, and a low western tower about thirty-three feet high.

The total length from west to east internally is seventy-eight feet.

There is a clerestory over the nave arches, having three irregular circular windows on each side, which, before the restoration, had been deprived of their tracery.

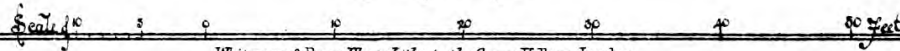
There had been a south porch to the nave, and an ancient vestry on the north side of the chancel. There are two or three plain piscinæ in the church, and in the chancel is a handsome sedilia of two bays, under fine carved arches with crocketed pinnacles. The corbels represent a king, a bishop, and a veiled nun.

CHURCH: OR: S<sup>t</sup>: JOHN: THE: BAPTIST  
 PRESTON: BISSSETT



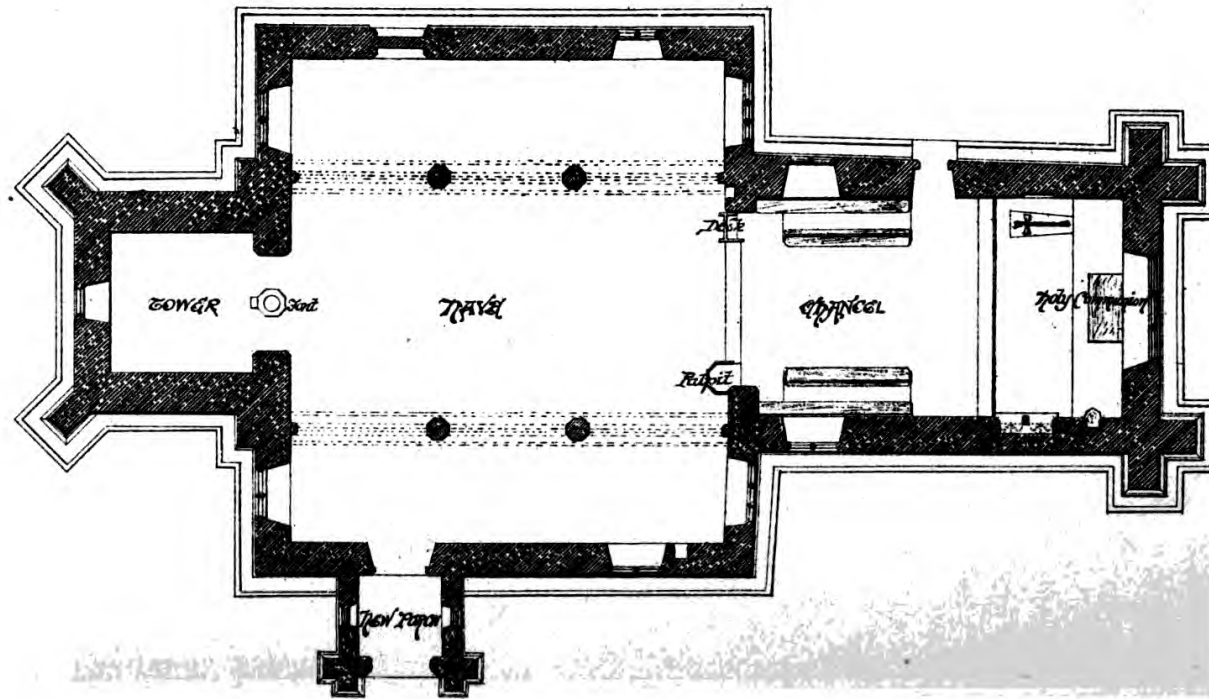
GROUND PLAN  
 AS RECORDED

G. THORNTON & BROS. ARCH<sup>s</sup>  
 37 BEDFORD PLACE  
 RUSSELL SQUARE



Whitman & Bass, Photo Litho to the Queen, Holborn, London.

CHURCH: OF: ST: JOHN: THE: BAPTIST  
 PRESTON: BISSSET



GROUND PLAN  
 AS RESTORED

Scale 1/4"

Whitman & Pass, Photo Engrs to the Crown, Eolborn, London.

G. THORNTON & BROS. ARCHT  
 37 BEDFORD SQUARE  
 LONDON W.C.1

The chancel is rather long in proportion to the nave, the latter being thirty-four feet long, apart from the length of the tower, and the former thirty feet. There is a small bell-cot, formerly used for the "Sanctus Bell," over the chancel-arch; this consists of a pointed arch, cut out of a single block of stone.

The church is remarkable for the beauty and purity of the tracery of the windows, there being a different pattern to each. The building is all of one date, and appears to have been erected about the year 1350.

The church stands on a rising ground at the entrance of the village, and is so screened by trees as to be almost invisible until the traveller from Buckingham is close to it, and the ivy, which, prior to the restoration, almost covered the walls, added considerably to its obscurity from a distance.

Before the works were commenced, its antiquity had caused sure signs of decay to be visible; the walls were sadly out of the perpendicular, and the effect of the elegant tracery of the windows twisted and bent was very unusual, the roofs were damp and decayed, and the seats were high and very close together.

All this is now changed; the worst of the walls have been rebuilt, either wholly or in part, and are now safe. The north side of the clerestory has been entirely rebuilt, while new tracery has been added to the windows on the south of the clerestory as well.

A new roof of open timber has been erected to the chancel, and this has been restored to its ancient height; while the large and handsome east window has been, with some of the other windows, taken out and reset.

New pavements of the old stone, and new open benches of uniform pattern, have been provided, and also new prayer-desk, and pulpit, and fittings for the Holy Communion.

The old rough cast and stopping has been entirely removed from the exterior walls, and the ancient stone facing revealed and pointed.

A porch over the old south door has been erected on the site of the former one. This is of stonework, to match the walling of the church, and in the same style.

Heating apparatus, new cathedral glass to the windows, and a new system of ventilation have been pro-

vided, to render the building well fitted for its uses ; and to prevent damp and to show the building in its ancient proportions, a large accumulation of earth that had been deposited by degrees all round the walls externally has been removed.

During the progress of the works, many traces of the former structure of the Norman period were met with in the walls of the present building : these consisted of small semi-circular window heads, and the base of a large column of peculiar design, and several fragments of zig-zag pattern. These have all been built up in the wall under the east window of the north aisle, to be preserved as memorials of the ancient church. A large stone slab with a plain cross was taken up, and has been relaid within the Communion rails ; this is also a memorial older than the date of the present church.

The works have been executed by Mr. Hawkins, of Brackley, under the superintendence of Messrs. Habershon and Brock, architects, of 37, Bedford-place, London, at a cost of about £900.

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