

All Saints Oakham history

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Other posts with an Oakham All Saints connection can be found in the Rutland collation.

The good, the bad and the grotesque – the decorated capitals of All Saints church in Oakham

February 3, 2024



[From Wikipedia](#)

Introduction and sources

One of the most interesting features of the parish church of All Saints in Oakham is the set of elaborately decorated capitals at the top of the pillars supporting the arches in the nave. The subject matter includes biblical stories, images of grotesque beasts, angels, devils and a green man. This blog posts will consider these capitals in some detail, trying to understand what is represented on each one, and speculating as to whether or not there are relationships between some or all of the individual designs.

There have been a number of descriptions of the capitals in the past – the Victoria County History for Rutland (1), Pevsner’s Buildings of England (2) and Aston’s Guide and history of the Church (3). These will be referred to as VCH, Pevsner and Guide in what follows. In addition, Lionel Wall has a web page on his “Great English Churches website (4), with many photographs of the capitals. These are significantly better than the photographs I have managed to take, and he has kindly given me permission to use them in this post. Thus nearly all the photographs in what follows are from this source, although they have all been rendered in greyscale for comparative purposes. However, I will use a few of my own photographs, which will be clearly distinguished in what follows, even if only by their poor quality.

I have adopted an identification system for the Capital carvings, and this is shown in figure 1 below, the underlying plan being taken from (1). T indicates the carvings on the Tower capitals, C those on the chancel, CA those on the chancel arch and P1, P2 and P3 those on the pillars. N indicates those on the north side of the church, and S those on the south side.

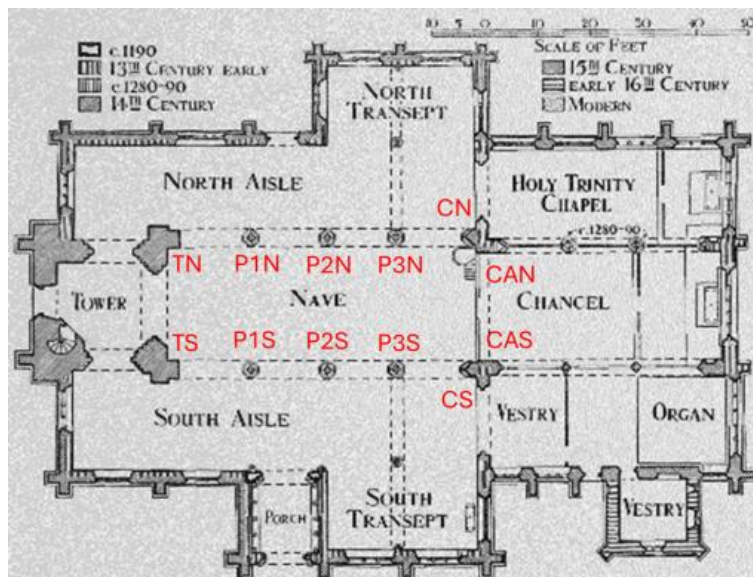


Figure 1. Key to the Capitals – plan taken from (1)

On P1N, P2N, P1S, P2S and P3S the carvings encircle the capitals, whilst on P3N the carving is only on the Nave side. TN, TS, CN, CS, CAN and CAS are, due to the local geometry, carved on one side only. CAN and CAS have been partially damaged by the installation, and possibly the later removal, of the Victorian rood screen.

I will begin by looking at the Capitals in turn, and then move on to speculating as to the nature of a possible overall arrangement with links between the individual designs.

Descriptions of the Capitals

Tower North (TN)

VCH – expulsion from Eden; Pevsner – expulsion from Eden; Guide – the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden



Figure 2. The Tower North Capital

The three earlier descriptions are clearly correct, but more can be said. The carving on the left of figure 2 shows Adam and Eve either side of either the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – there is debate amongst scholars as to whether or not these names refer to the same tree. The serpent can be seen between them (Genesis 3.1-6). Eve's arm is extended to Adam, perhaps offering him the apple from the tree. The figure on the right shows the pair being expelled from the garden, with the angel with flaming sword depicted blocking the way back (Genesis 3.23-24).

Pillar 1 North (P1N)

VCH – grotesque heads and hands; Pevsner – grotesque figures; Guide – grotesque heads and legs

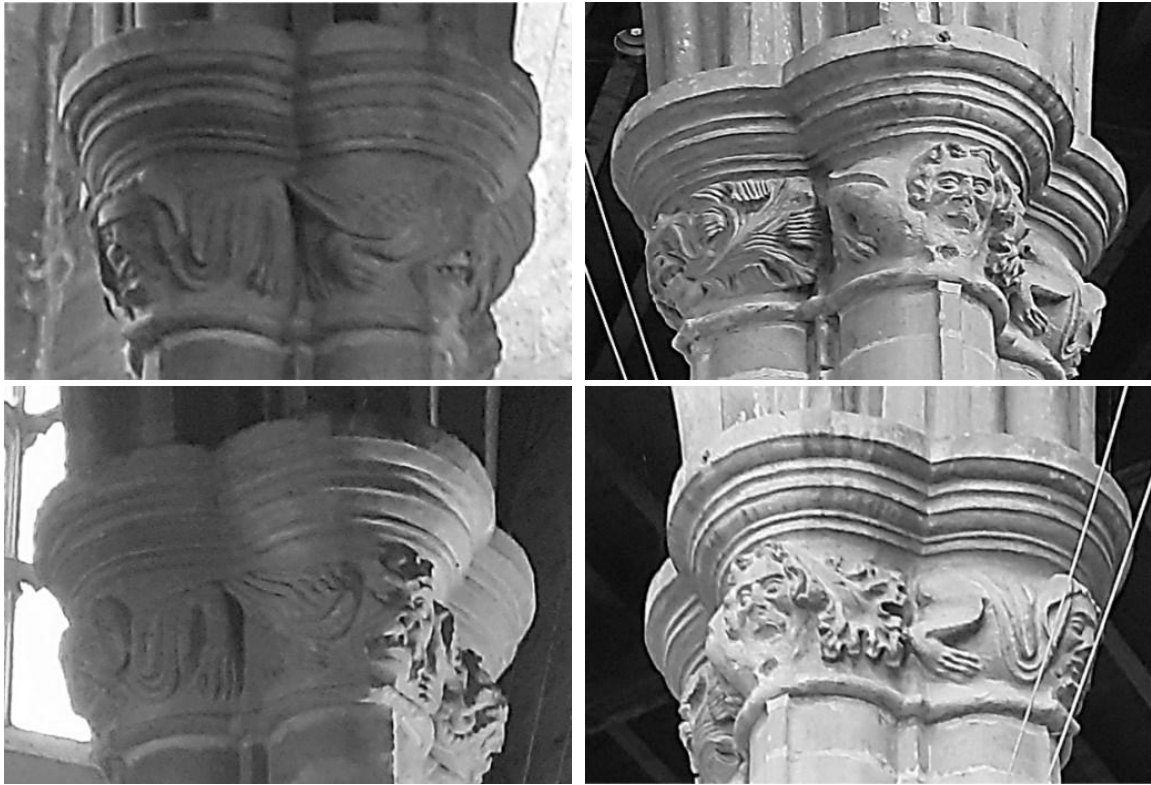


Figure 3 Pillar 1 North Capital (photographs by author)

The four figures are indeed grotesque, with faces showing a range of expressions from aggression to horror. If they represent anything at all other than the stonemason's fancy, they could represent the state of fallen humanity, or be representations of demons. This capital was very difficult to photograph because of the lighting conditions, and the pictures are not all that I would wish for.

Pillar 2 North (P2N)

VCH – grotesque heads and limbs with a dragon biting itself; Pevsner – dragon; Guide – grotesque heads and a dragon.



Figure 4. Pillar 2 North Capital

There are more grotesque heads on one side of the capital, a male and a female in my view, with a coiled dragon on the other. The dragon only occurs in scripture at several places in the book of Revelation, where it is unambiguously a representation of Satan. So perhaps we have here a picture of the oppression of humanity by the devil. The two faces have animal like bodies however, so perhaps these too are meant to represent demons or evil spirits.

Pillar 3 North (P3N)

VCH – foliage; Pevsner – leaves; Guide – the Green Man.



Figure 5. Pillar 3 North Capital

Oddly both VCH and Pevsner miss the main feature of this Capital – a rather fine Green Man with foliage sprouting from its mouth. This design is on one side of the capital only. The notion that the Green Man represents a survival from pagan worship has been thoroughly debunked in recent years (5), and historians have demonstrated an origin in India that came, via the Arab world to be used with a decorative function in European churches. In terms of Christian iconography, some think that Green Men with foliage springing from their mouths, such as the one here, reflected the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, from the 13th century, which describes how Seth, the third son of Adam, planted seeds from the Tree of Life in his dead father's mouth as he lies in his grave. The tree that grew from them became the tree of the true cross of the crucifixion. The figure could thus represent the death mask of Adam, with a foreshadowing of the cross and resurrection.

Chancel North (CN)

VCH – a beast-like figure playing upon a musical instrument, the figure ending in foliage; Pevsner – not described; Guide – a beast with a human head plays an instrument.



Figure 6. The Chancel North Capital

The decoration on the pillar next to the chancel show a winged beast with a human head playing an instrument that looks like a lyre, using a bow. The only meaning I can give to this is that it is a Siren of the legends of antiquity, that lured sailors to their death by the beauty of their song – the medieval period was much influenced by such classical legends. As such it may represent the alluring temptations of sin.

Chancel arch north (CAN)

VCH – not described; Pevsner – not described; Guide – not described.



Figure 7. The Chancel Arch North Capital (right hand photograph by author)

This carving was damaged by the installation of the Victorian rood screen, long since removed. Thank you, Gilbert Scott. The front figure shows two figures making faces, and there was presumably a third to the right. Around the back however, on the other side of the rood screen damage, there is a much more serious, although rather worn, person in prayer. What this all represents is beyond me – I am inclined to think it is simply the sense of humour of the mason.

Tower South (TS)

VCH – rich foliage and a pelican in piety; Pevsner – birds; Guide – the pelican in her piety – symbol of the sacrament.

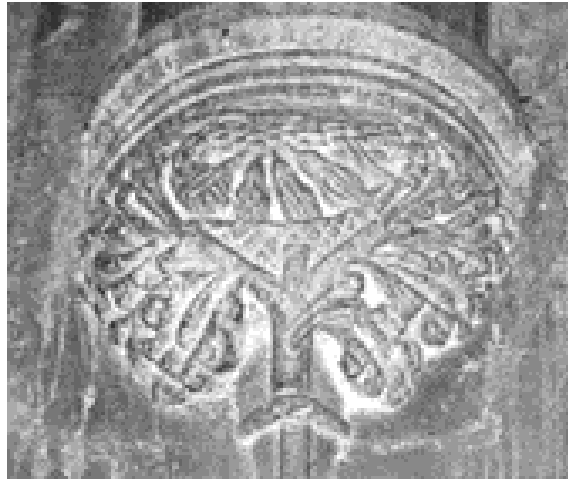


Figure 8. The Tower South Capital

The identification of the Pelican with Holy Communion is well set out in the following quote from the Catholic Education Resource Centre (6).

The symbolism of the mother pelican feeding her little baby pelicans is rooted in an ancient legend which preceded Christianity. The legend was that in time of famine, the mother pelican wounded herself, striking her breast with the beak to feed her young with her blood to prevent starvation. Another version of the legend was that the mother fed her dying young with her blood to revive them from death, but in turn lost her own life. Given this tradition, one can easily see why the early Christians adapted it to symbolize our Lord, Jesus Christ. The pelican symbolizes Jesus our Redeemer who gave His life for our redemption and the atonement He made through His passion and death. We were dead to sin and have found new life through the Blood of Christ. Moreover, Jesus continues to feed us with His body and blood in the holy Eucharist.

On the Capital we have the pelican and her chicks on a nest in a tree – perhaps again representing the Tree of Life.

Pillar 1 South (P1S)

VCH – fox stealing goose followed by goslings and man with a besom, and on the other side an ape with his clog; Pevsner – a fox, an ape with a chain ending in a clog; Guide – the legend of Reynard the Fox.



Figure 9. Pillar 1 South Capital

This is perhaps the most complex of the carvings and certainly the most difficult to interpret. VCH and Pevsner's descriptions are brief and partial, whilst that of the Guide makes quite a firm statement as to its content. The Guide goes on to give the following further explanation.

The carving of Reynard the Fox is similar to that at Tilton on the Hill, 8 miles west in Leicestershire. At Oakham Reynard is seen on the north side of the capital, with a goose in his jaws, followed by goslings. A man points his distaff at the fox. A fettered monkey is also depicted, and two snake-like creatures intertwine, each biting the others tail. The fox may represent the Abbot of Westminster making off with the great tithe, leaving only the small tithe for the local priest (the fettered monkey). Alternatively, it could be an illustration of Chaucer's Nun's Priest tale.

I find some of this very debatable indeed. Firstly, my reading of the medieval stories of Reynard the Fox suggests he is primarily a trickster, and I can find no reference to him stealing a goose. The Nuns Priest's tale is perhaps a better fit. A summary from the Harvard Geoffrey Chaucer web site (7) reads as follows.

In a chicken yard owned by a poor widow, the rooster Chanticleer lives in royal splendor with his seven wives, of whom his favorite is the fair Pertelote. He dreams that he is attacked by a strange beast (a fox, which he does not recognize because he has never seen one). Pertelote advises he forget the dream; dreams, she says, come from indigestion. Chanticleer insists on the power of dreams to predict the future. But he takes her advice. Later that day a fox appears and by trickery seizes Chanticleer and carries him off, pursued by all of the old widow's

household. Chaunticleer tells the fox to taunt his pursuers; the fox opens his mouth to do so, and Chaunticleer is free to fly into a tree. Chaunticleer, the fox, and the narrator all draw morals from the adventure.

The specific moral of interest is a warning against vanity – as demonstrated by both Chaunticleer and the fox.

As the fox seems to have dropped the “goose” from his mouth, and he is pursued by seven “goslings”, this would seem to fit with at least part of the Capital depiction, although how well a stonemason might be expected to know what was essentially a courtly tale is debatable. It could however be based on a folk tale that was used by Chaucer for his composition.

But, there are other characters in the carving that certainly don’t figure in the Nuns Priest’s tale: the recumbent man holding a distaff (but why should he be holding a distaff, usually the symbol of a women, is another issue); the creature with the chain around its neck which is almost certainly an ape or a monkey – the “weight” that seems to hang from it is a clog – a wooden block that was used to attach to a chain (although the animal appears unfettered); and the serpentine figure between the fox and the ape.

I presume the notion that this is representative of the disagreements between the clergy of Westminster Abbey and the local clergy has a source somewhere, but I have never come across it, and why the former should be represented by a fox and the latter by an ape / monkey is a bit of a mystery.

So what are we to make of this? Perhaps the answer lies in Christian symbolism. Foxes are occasionally mentioned in scripture, almost always negatively. Jesus refers to King Herod as “that fox” (Luke 13.32). In the Song of Solomon we read

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards (Song of Solomon 2.15)

Perhaps we have here the likely meaning – the fox is a symbol of and of the sins of church members that are the ruination of faith – in particular, if the Nuns Priest’s tale is referred to, the sin of vanity. In Christian iconography, monkeys or apes represent base instincts such as lust, greed and malice, particularly when unchained (8). The snakes might also be representations of the devil. So taken together we might have an allegorical representation of the sins that defile individuals and the church. But the level of speculation here is becoming excessive.

Pillar 2 South (P2S)

VCH – four angels; Pevsner – four angels; Guide – four angels facing the points of the compass.



Figure 10. Pillar 2 South Capital

The four angels are indeed facing in the four cardinal directions. They are all quite similar in form. Symbolically they may simply be an indication of the protection of God's people, or they might refer more explicitly to the four angels of Revelation 7.1.

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

The winds here indicate the coming judgement of God on the world, held back until the right time by the heavenly powers.

Pillar 3 South (P3S)

VCH – symbols of the four Evangelists; Pevsner – signs of the Evangelists; Guide – the four Evangelists



Figure 11. Pillar 3 South Capital (bottom two photographs by the author)

These figures do indeed represent the four gospel writers – Saint Luke (Ox – top left picture), Saint John (Eagle – top right picture) and St Mark (Lion – bottom left picture) and Saint Matthew (Angel – bottom right picture). These in turn reflect the natures of the four living creatures of Ezekiel’s vision from the Old Testament, the seraphim bearing the throne chariot of God each with the same four faces. Ezekiel 1.10 describes them as follows.

Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle.

This chapter, and its associated symbolism, was very influential in early Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature (9). These symbols then probably represent the Word of God, and the presence of God.

Chancel South (CS)

VCH – the Expulsion from Eden, the Annunciation, the Coronation of the Virgin; Pevsner – Adam and Eve, the Annunciation and the Coronation of the Virgin; Guide – Coronation of the Virgin – the Annunciation.



Figure 12. Chancel South Capital

This is perhaps the most intricately carved of all the capitals in All Saints. There are three scenes. The first shows a king crowning a queen, taken as being the Crowning of the Virgin Mary in heaven by either God the Father or her son Jesus, also crowned – a thoroughly non-biblical story. The very anthropomorphic nature of the scene suggests to me that this is based on a model of the coronation of a medieval queen. The second scene is a representation of the Annunciation – the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary to announce the coming birth of Christ. Between Mary and Gabriel, we can see the Lily – the symbol of Mary. Finally on the right we seem to have another Adam and Eve scene, accompanied by an angel with a scythe – perhaps representing the final harvest of souls, where the first couple are given a vision of the redemption of the world by the son of Mary.

Chancel arch south (CAS)

VCH – not described; Pevsner – not described; Guide – damaged by the Victorian rood screen



Figure 13. Chancel Arch South Capital (photograph by author)

As with the north chancel arch carving, this was damaged to install the Victorian rood screen. Its contents are not clear, but seem to be largely foliage. However it is perhaps possible that some of the foliage is actually small heads, and digits, but there is too much damage to be certain. Again, hearty thanks are due to Mr Scott for his contribution.

A bigger picture

So, having discussed all the Capital designs individually, is it possible that they fit into an overall scheme in some way? In what follows I will try to make the case that there is an

overarching theme that connects all the designs, although in doing so, I am conscious I might simply be reading too much into the available evidence – and that the collection simply represents the imagination and arbitrary decisions of the masons.

Figure 14 below is an annotated version of Figure 1 that will help to understand the musings that follow with relationships between the different capitals indicated by arrows. Firstly, there are clear similarities of them between TN and CS – the story of Adam and Eve, both at the creation and at the end of time. These are on a diagonal across the church. Moving clockwise PIN and P3S are clearly similar although opposites of each other. – grotesque animals and faces in the former, with a devilish aspect, with similar, but sanctified beasts in the latter representing the evangelists. P2N and P2S are also opposites – the devil in the former and the angels in the latter. Carrying on clockwise, we come to P3N (the Green Man) and P1S (the fox and his entourage). It is hard to see much in common or in opposition here, other than their ambiguity of meaning. Perhaps in the former we see good coming from evil, whilst the latter shows that evil is always aiming for a comeback. Then we come to CN and TS – both featuring birds or winged beast – the first luring humanity to sin, and the second showing the cure for sin – the eucharist. That leaves us with the chancel arch decorations – I can see no linkage here, and, if there is an overall plan to the other carvings, I do not think these are part of it.

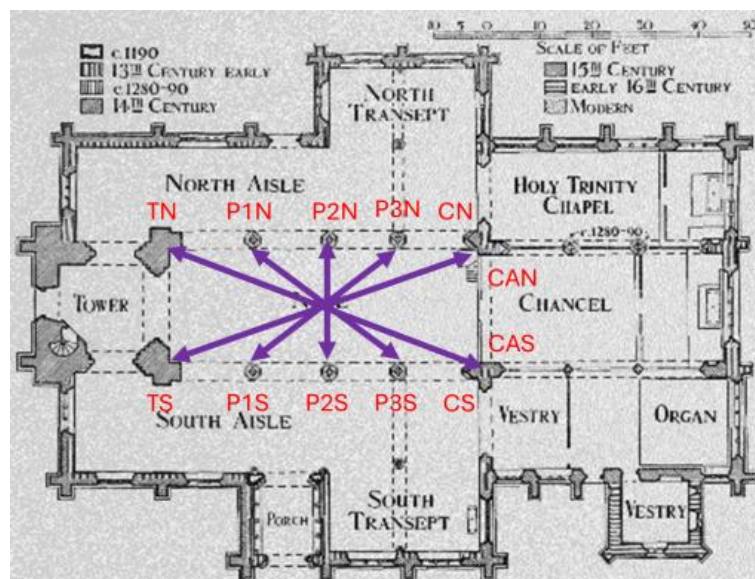


Figure 14. Relationships between Capitals

Overall then, these carvings seem to show a set of images in opposition to each other across the nave of the church – symbols of evil and darkness on the north and symbols of redemption and light on the south – which is quite consistent with many aspects of church and churchyard architecture.

One final puzzle however – nowhere in the carvings is there an unambiguous representation of Christ, unless that be in the scene of the Coronation of the Virgin. This seems to me odd, but perhaps the reader better versed in medieval symbolism might be able to enlighten me.

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Commemorating the 1000th Anniversary of the birth of Queen Edith

March 11, 2024

An address / sermon delivered by me at All Saints Oakham on March 10th 2024, at a Choral Evensong during [the Queen Edith Festival](#).

By way of introduction, you will see that in Worship for the Week I am referred to as a professor, which seems to give this address some level of academic respectability. And while that appellation is true enough, my actual title is Professor of Environmental Fluid Mechanics, and I have spent my career teaching civil engineering students. In terms of expertise on Queen Edith, I fear, ladies and gentlemen, you have an imposter in your midst. But let's see where we get to.

Edith of Wessex was born sometime around 1024 or 1025, so saying we are celebrating the 1000th anniversary of her birth is a bit of a guess, but not a bad one. Her father was one of the most powerful men in the country at that time – the Saxon Earl Godwin. Her mother was Danish, Gytha, a relative of Cnut, the then king of England, Norway and Denmark. England at that time was an ethnically and linguistically very diverse society with the undoubted tensions that resulted. Edith's brothers and sisters mostly had Danish names, and she too most probably was given a Danish name that was to be changed when she married. I think it likely her mother tongue was Danish. She was brought up and educated at Wilton Abbey near Salisbury, and came to speak Danish, English, Latin and Irish fluently. She also was very capable in weaving and embroidery and, we are told, in a work she commissioned, accomplished in grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic and astronomy.

After the death of Canute and his son Harthacnut, the Anglo-Saxon dynasty that their ancestors had forced into exile was re-established in 1043 with Edward, ultimately to be known as Edward the Confessor, taking the throne. Edith was married to Edward in 1045 and, unusually for the time consecrated as well crowned as queen. For the first few years of her marriage, she would have lived in the shadow of Edward's mother, the dowager queen, Emma of Normandy, the wife of Edward's father Aethelred, and then the wife of Canute, a redoubtable and quite ruthless lady. I would imagine there were mother-in-law issues. The marriage was childless, which no doubt caused both personal and political tensions. In 1051, Godwin came close to armed rebellion, and he and his family were forced into exile, with the loss of his titles and his lands. Edith also fell out of favour and was consigned to a nunnery, perhaps as a prelude to a planned divorce because of her childlessness. Just over a year later, the situation was reversed, and Edward, faced with the threat of an armed conflict that he could not win, was obliged to reinstate Godwin to his former titles and lordships, and over the next 13 years, the Godwins became very powerful, holding most of the large earldoms in England. Edith too was released from the convent and reinstated as Queen. She was to become a close confidante and advisor to her husband, a *de facto* if not *de jure* member of the Witan, his body

of counselors. We are told she took care to ensure that his royal dignity was appropriately displayed in his dress and his presentation. She acquired large estates and became a very wealthy woman – including most of Rutland, which were the dower lands of the later Mercian and Anglo-Saxon queens. That wealth was also used in generous benefactions to the church, particularly in Winchester and Abingdon.

The question of succession was ever apparent. Edward brought back to his court other members of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty who had been in exile following the Danish takeover, and Edith took on parental responsibilities for the young boy Edgar, named the Aetheling as being eligible for the throne, and his sister Margaret, who Edith arranged to be educated at Wilton. The latter was to marry Malcolm Canmore, King of Scotland in around 1070, for whom, allegedly, Birnam Wood to Dunsinane didst come, and it was through their descendant's marriage into the Norman royal line that the ruling family of England again came to be connected to Cerdic, the sixth century founder of the Wessex dynasty. In retrospect, Edith's care for the child Margaret was thus to be of major long-term significance.

Over the latter part of his reign, Edward became increasingly occupied by the building of the Abbey Church at Westminster, which was consecrated in December 1065, just before his death and burial there in January 1066. The succession question then became critical. The claims of Edgar the Aetheling were swept aside, and the throne was taken by Harold Godwinson, Edith's elder brother. This was disputed by both the King of Norway and, of course William of Normandy. By October that year, Edith had lost not just a husband, but her brother Tostig at the battle of Stamford Bridge, where he fought against Harold on the side of the Norwegian king, and three other brothers at the battle of Hastings. Edith submitted to William at Winchester and was allowed to keep her estates, the only surviving member of the Anglo-Saxon royal family to remain in England. In the years before her death in 1075, she continued to be a benefactor of various churches, and if some historians are correct, was instrumental in the design and production of the Bayeux Tapestry, or more properly the Bayeux embroidery. She also commissioned a book on the life of her husband and continued to manage his reputation after his death – and her actions were in large part responsible for his canonisation several hundred years later. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 1075, we read

Edith the Lady died seven nights before Christmas in Winchester, she was King Edward's wife and King William had her brought to Westminster with great honour and laid her near King Edward, her lord.

But what can we say about Edith as a person? Well, it depends upon what you read – the sources that we have can best be described as propaganda for various parties. They were either produced under the direction of Edith herself, or by those who saw her as a traitor. They describe her variously as moderate and wise, or hard and interfering. She is also alleged to have been involved in a number of church and court intrigues and was accused of rapaciously appropriating religious relics from churches around the kingdom and giving them to those she favoured. and of facilitating the murder of a Northumbrian noble, on behalf of her brother

Tostig, the then Earl of Northumbria. It is simply not possible to say whether these descriptions or the allegations were true, and most probably have the same level of historical reliability as the Marriott Edgar poem that sees, at the conclusion of the Battle of Hastings

King Harold so stately and grand, Sitting there with an eyeful of arrow, On his horse, with his hawk in his hand.

But, with regards to Edith, taking all things together, it is probably fair to say that she was no saint. The words of Dylan Thomas through the Rev Eli Jenkins of Llareggub seem applicable.

We are not wholly bad, or good, who live our lives under Milk Wood.

In our consideration of the life and times of Queen Edith, we see the emergence of much that contributes to our modern world, and many historical parallels and continuities. Our language is a direct descendent of the one of those that Edith spoke; our constitutional monarch is still a descendent of Cerdic; in the gathering of counsellors around the king on the Witan, we see a foreshadowing of our system of government; and the system of shire, shire reeves and shire courts that underpinned late Anglo-Saxon England, we see the foundations of our local government and legal systems. Indeed, the very existence of Rutland is due to it being Edith's dower lands, and she has left her name in one of its villages. And shire reeves are of course still around. Despite these solid foundations, English society in Edith's time was in a state of turbulence – divided by ethnicity, politics and language; threatened by external powers; at the mercy of the ambitions of powerful men, again foreshadowing something of current tensions in our own society and around the world. The life of Edith herself also evokes many modern issues some of which have a particular resonance for Mothering Sunday – the shame of childlessness, the struggles of an arranged marriage, the pain of loss of family and friends on the one hand and devotion to husband and adopted children on the other. And above all the simple struggle for a woman to survive in a male dominated society. And this is perhaps the most significant thing about Edith – she was a survivor – a woman who tried to hold things together as family and society were falling apart; something we see in the faces of women in refugee camps and war zones around the world.

But there is I would suggest a deeper continuity between Edith's times and ours, one that is perhaps not obvious in our secular age where religion is largely seen as a private pastime, and spiritual experiences and realities dismissed. But in Queen Edith's time that was not the case, and the spiritual was enmeshed in everyday life to a degree we would find hard to understand. Prof Richard North of University College London writes of the perceptions of the Anglo-Saxons in the pre-conversion era, with words that are equally applicable to Edith's time, that spiritual realities

...were varied and widespread, and to the heathen mind in the early seventh, if not our own blind folly in the twentieth century, the world was charged with their power.

It is perhaps the rhythms of our worship that are a clock through which we can come to a deeper understanding of Edith's times – as we go from Advent to Pentecost, from Lady Day to Michaelmas, we experience the unfolding of the scriptural and seasonal narratives with which those of Edith's day would have been familiar, rhythms that would have constrained and ordered her life. She would have experienced the daily rhythm of the nunnery – the Magnificat sung in Latin at Vespers and the Nunc Dimittis at Compline. And further, whilst there can be no certainty, it seems to me highly likely that at some stage in her 20 years of marriage, Edith would have visited her dower land in Rutland, and we can imagine her in one of her manorial churches in Ridlington, Hambleton or Oakham, and can picture her participating in the mass or Eucharist that has been regularly celebrated down the centuries in these churches, with very few breaks – perhaps only in the interdict of King John's Day, the turmoil of the Civil War, and most recently during the Covid lockdown. They were presided over by priest's wearing very similar vestments to those used today – indeed when it was suggested we dress up as Anglo-Saxons at yesterday's events, I thought about simply turning up wearing the Eucharist vestments! And the liturgy that she would have taken part in there would have been very similar indeed to the Eucharistic ceremonies of today – in Latin rather than English, but nonetheless essentially the same. God is praised, his saving work for the reconciliation of all things to himself is narrated, bread is broken, and wine is shared. I would suggest that it is in our worship that we can understand the rhythms of Edith's time, and in which we find the deepest continuities between past and present.

And the Eucharist of course points to a yet deeper continuity, a longer thread, a thousand years before Edith – to Jesus and his disciples eating the Passover meal in Jerusalem just before his death and, three days later his resurrection. And that Passover celebration itself points to an even more remote time perhaps twelve hundred years before that, in a time and culture that for us would be utterly strange, as the people of Israel fled from Egypt to worship their God Yahweh, I am what I am, in the cloud and the fire on Sinai.

As Edith, with all her flaws and ambiguities, watched the mass in her Rutland churches, as we, being all too aware of our inadequacies, similarly eat the bread and drink the wine of the Eucharist here in Oakham, as we move in the rhythm of the year towards Lady Day, Good Friday and Easter, we become part of that long thread of history that takes us back to Sinai and Jerusalem, and to the England of a 1000 years ago, in which we join with all God's children, alive and dead, the saintly and the not so saintly, and become part of the outworking of God's plan for the salvation of the world.

It thus seems appropriate to end with words of praise to God – the words of the earliest known English hymn – that of the Northumbrian cowherd Cadmaeon from the late 7th century.

*Nū scylun hergan hefaenrīcaes Uard,
metudæs maecti end his mōdgidanc,*

*Now we must praise – the protector of the heavenly kingdom
the might of the measurer – and his mind's purpose,
the work of the glory father – as he for each of his wonders,
the eternal Lord – established a beginning.
He shaped first – for the sons of the earth
heaven as a roof – the holy maker;
then the middle-earth – mankind's guardian,
the eternal Lord – made afterwards,
solid ground for men – the almighty Lord.*

A possible Anglo-Saxon church group at Oakham in Rutland

May 6, 2024

Amended on 8th May 2024 to include further details of Our Lady's Well.

In her book describing the architecture and liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church in England (1), Gittos describes, in some detail, the existence of what she calls “church groups”. By this she means the practice of constructing a number of churches close to each other in some sort of relationship, which can be demonstrated archaeologically at a number of sites around England, primarily from the early Anglo-Saxon period. These usually take the form of two or more churches aligned on one axis (usually approximately east / west), sometimes with other churches on a parallel axis a few hundred metres away. The alignments can also include crosses or other monuments. Typical examples can be found at St. Augustine’s Abbey in Canterbury, with the linear group of St Peter and St Paul, St Mary and St Pancras and the non-linear groups at Hexham and Ripon. These are of course from a monastic context. Gittos hypothesizes that these churches were used for different aspects of the liturgy, with processions between them. A similar linear arrangement can be shown to have existed at the secular Yeavinger site.



Figure 1. All Saints Oakham (from the south)

Readers of my blogs will know that I recently moved to Oakham in Rutland and have become a member of the parish church of All Saints (Figure 1). In looking at the layout of the church and its environs, it seems to me that there are some topographical hints (and I would put it no stronger than that), that this was the site of an Anglo-Saxon church group. The oldest part of

the current church, the south porch, visible at the left of the photograph of figure 1, dates from around 1190, but the church almost certainly stands on the site of an Anglo-Saxon predecessor (2). In the wall of the south porch, there is what was thought to be a consecration cross, but it is visually very similar to the one shown in Gittos (p 239) from Earls Barton in Northamptonshire, that is demonstrably Anglo-Saxon (Figure 2). If the Oakham cross is Anglo-Saxon, it was presumably taken from the Anglo-Saxon church in the rebuilding of the late 12th century.



Figure 2. The crosses at Earls Barton (left) and All Saints Oakham (right)

All Saints now consists of a nave, transepts and chancel, with side chapels to either side of the chancel – dedicated to the Holy Trinity to the north, and to the Virgin Mary to the south. The original Norman church just consisted of the nave with the current transepts, the latter acting as side chapels (the communion niches, which would have been next to the altars, can still be seen). The earlier Anglo-Saxon church was probably of similar shape and dimensions.

The first hint that the church might once have been part of a group arises from the fact that it lies within a substantial enclosure that now contains the Hall, inner bailey and outer bailey of Oakham Castle, as well as the church and church yard. This can be seen in Figure 3. The interesting fact is that the Great Hall of the Castle, regarded as possibly the best surviving example of Norman Domestic Architecture (Figure 4) lies fairly precisely on the same axis as the church, and eighteenth century maps show a postern gate in the wall on the alignment, offering access between the Great Hall and the church.. There seems to be no reason for these features, other than whatever was on the site before the hall was built was in some way associated with the church. Interestingly, early sources indicate that there was a chapel within the Great Hall (3) to which specific individuals held right of appointment, which suggests that it was more than simply a domestic chapel. One can thus conjecture that there was a church / chapel on this site before the castle was built in 1190.



Figure 3. The church and castle enclosure (from 1900 Ordnance Survey Map)



Figure 4. The Great Hall of the Castle from the south

The second indication that there was a church group comes from extending this alignment to the west. This takes it through the medieval site of Northgate, shown in Speed (4) as a large open area with a small drawing of a cross on a plinth (Figure 6). Whilst the cross is somewhat south of the strict alignment (although due west of All Saints), its presence is again suggestive. Note that alignment of the church and the castle shown on the map is not accurate and does not represent the situation on the ground. The area around Northgate was bisected by the building of the Midland Railway in the 1840s and, if the Speed map is accurate, the location of the cross was at the position of the current signal box. This is itself a grade II listed building and the prototype for model railway signal box construction kits (Figure 6). Whether or not this is enough to make up for the loss of the cross must be left for the reader to decide.



Figure 5. The Speed map of Oakham (the cross can be see on the left of the picture)



Figure 6. Oakham signal box at the site of the Northgate Cross

The third hint is the building to the north of the church, but on a roughly parallel axis that can also be seen in Figure 3. This is the original Oakham Grammar School, dating from just after the Reformation. It is built on the site of two former Guild chapels – one dedicated to St Mary, and one to St Michael the Archangel (3). The former included a toft, possibly the Guild Hall, and the latter at least was quite substantial, having dimensions of 60 feet by 30 feet. (3). Their topographical relationship to All Saints echoes that at Hexham and Ripon, referred to above. Perhaps here we have survivors of other ancient chapels that were part of the overall church group. Figure 7 shows a modern (i.e. May 2024) photograph of the castle (on the left), the old school (in the centre) and the church of All Saints (on the right) from the north side of Cutts Close Park (once the outer bailey of the castle). Visually they form quite a striking arrangement.

It also seems that there were another two pre-Reformation guilds at All Saints – one dedicated to All Saints itself, and presumably centred on the high altar, and one to the Holy Trinity, presumably centred on the chapel of that name within the church itself. How the Guild chapel of St Mary relates to the chapel with the same dedication in the church itself is not clear.



Figure 7. The castle, old school and church

Reference (3) also indicates that there were pre-Reformation processions to a well dedicated to St Mary a “quarter of a mile to the north of the church”, and to an image of St. Michael, possibly within the chapel of that name – another of the characteristics of church groups identified by Gittos. The well still exists. It is shown on the 1880 and subsequent Ordnance Survey maps as “Our Lady’s Well”, actually almost half a mile north east of the church (Figure 8) with a straight path across Cutts Close and the Burley Road forming a direct and prominent link between the church and the well. It is not currently accessible being in an overgrown area managed for wildlife. Our Lady’s Well and All Saints church are on quite an accurate midwinter sunset / midsummer sunrise alignment. Whether or not this was intentional I will leave for others to judge. If it was then it suggests some sort of ritual activity at the site that predates the Anglo-Saxon era.

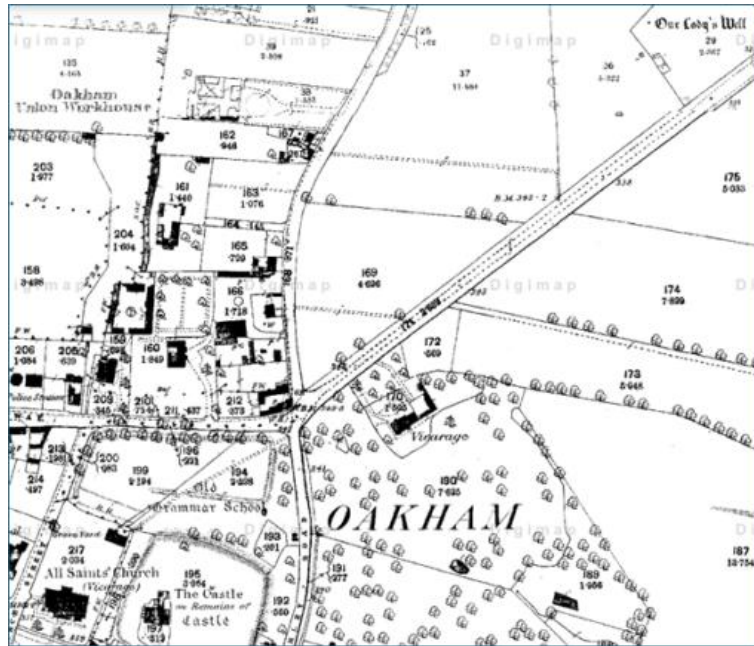


Figure 8. Our Lady's Well and All Saints Church (from an 1880s OS map – the church is in the bottom left and the well in the top right).

At this point it is also worth noting that there is another surviving chapel in Oakham – that of the medieval Alms Houses of St. John and St Anne. This is however, not on the same alignment as the cross, church and castle and is some distance to the south west, and not likely to be part of any group. Neither is it in any sort of solar alignment with All Saints, being too far north to lie on the All Saints / Lady Well alignment. But the dedication is rather odd and perhaps hints at an earlier history.

So we can conjecture that we have here the surviving topography of a church group, with one church on the site of the current church in a linear alignment with one on the site of the Castle Great Hall and a cross at Northgate, and two on the Old School site where the guild chapels once stood. A church or chapel on the site of the current chancel of the church of All Saints is also a possibility. In making this suggestion we are of course making major assumptions that all the current buildings stand on the site of Anglo-Saxon originals, for which the evidence, such as it is, is very weak. There is also no evidence that there was ever monastic activity at Oakham, which seems to have been the context of many early church groups. So the suggestion that we have here the remains of a church group, attractive as it is, must only be regarded as very speculative.

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The 1858 Restoration of All Saints church in Oakham – Part 1

October 8, 2024

Introduction

In this series of three related posts, I present transcripts of the press reports concerning the re-opening of All Saints church in Oakham in November 1858. This is done primarily to make the source documents for that event available and easily readable, and there is no discussion of their contents. That will come later. The material is all found in the British Newspaper Archive and the archive OCR text forms the basis of the transcripts, although. As with any OCR text, this has needed considerable editing, which, as I am sure the reader will find, has been imperfectly done. The material presented in the three parts is as follows.

- Part 1 contains the notice of the re-opening the from the Leicester Journal of 5th November 1858 and a report on the event itself from the Stamford Mercury of 12th November 1858. The latter contains the text of the report by Gilbert Scott that describes the state of the church before the restoration and what, in his view, needed to be done.
- [Part 2](#) contains a report of the opening from the Leicester Journal of 12th November 1858. This covers some of the same ground as the Stamford Mercury report, and whilst not including Scott's report, does give details of the opening event, including the sermon that was preached.
- [Part 3](#) is from the Lincolnshire Chronicle of August 24th 1860, and gives the text of a lecture that was given at Oakham Castle entitled "Gothic Architecture" by the Rev Canon James, one of the principal proponents of the Gothic in the region, where the changes that were made to the church are explained and justified.

Leicester Journal 5th November 1858

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, OAKHAM.

THE RESTORATION of this Church, in which great and general interest has been shown, is now so near completion that the of November may fixed for the RE-OPENING. It is purposed, therefore (D.V.), to have Divine Service, on WEDNESDAY, November 10th, Eleven o'clock am., Morning Prayer, with Sermon by

THE REV. E. MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.C.L,
Chaplain in ordinary to Her Majesty, and Minister Quebec Chapel, London;

Three o'clock, p.m., Evening Prayer, with Sermon by

THE REY. CANON JAMES, M.A.
Rural Dean, Vicar of Theddingworth and Sibbertoft.

On THURSDAY, November 11th, Seven o'clock p.m., Evening Prayer, with a Sermon by

THE BEV. J. R. WOODFORD, M.A.
Vicar of Kempford, Gloucestershire.

On SUNDAY, November 14th, Eleven o'clock, in, Morning Prayer and Holy Communion, with a
Sermon by

THE HON. and REV. CANON STUART, M.A.
Rector of Cottesmore.

6.30. p.m., Evening Prayer, with Sermon by

THE REV. THOMAS YARD, M.A.
Rural Dean and Rector of Ashwell.

A Collection will be made each service in aid the Restoration Fund. A deficit of about £300. remains this; to meet which the sum raised these Collections the only resource available. The presence and aid of all who take interest this important work is respectfully invited. In order to secure accommodation for those who reside out of the town, admission until 10.50 a.m. on Wednesday morning will be by cards only; at 10,50 the doors will be thrown open. Those who propose to attend, are requested to apply for as many Cards as they desire, to one of the Churchwardens ; or to any resident member of the Restoration Committee; or to the Secretary, the Rev. C. A Stevens.

Heneage Finch, Vicar

Rich. Davies, Churchwardens. William Ratcliff, Churchwardens

The Agricultural Hall will, by the kind permission of its managers, be thrown open to Visitors during Wednesday, the 10th November. Arrangements have been made for the supply of Refreshments there on the arrival of the Morning trains, and during the day.

Stamford Mercury 12th November 1858

For a considerable period the very filthy and dilapidated condition of the magnificent church of All Saints, at Oakham, was a subject for regret, not only to those who worshipped within its damp and dingy-looking walls, but to all admirers of Christian architecture. At length the noble sum of £800. was given through the Architectural Society of the Archdeaconry, by unknown donors, which originated the fund that has procured the restoration of the edifice, and which was re-opened for divine worship on Wednesday last. When there seemed to be no longer doubt respecting the raising sufficient amount for beautifying the church the services of Mr. G. G. Scott, the eminent architect, were sought, and after inspecting the fabric returned to London and drew up the following report, which he forwarded to the Rev. Heneage Finch, the Vicar.

I have made a careful survey of your parish church, with a view to forming an opinion as to the extent of the reparations and restorations which are requisite to putting it into a satisfactory

condition, and as to the probable cost of the work. The church is, as you are aware a remarkably fine one. It is the work of several different periods, extending from the end of the 12th to the commencement of the 16th century. I have not been able to trace out the course of alteration and addition which has brought to its present form but may mention that its earliest feature is the inner doorway of the porch which is of the end of the 12th century. The next date are the interior of the porch itself and the lower parts of the south wall, with blank recess or window in the east side of the south transept, which are of the first half of the 13th century. Then come the corresponding parts on the north side, with the single pillars in both transepts. The chancel arch, and some minor portions, which are the beginning of the 14th: and the tower, with perhaps the pillars and arches, of the same, and some other portions, which are of the latter part of the same century; while the chancel and the clerestory, and probably the north chancel aisle, are of the 15th, and the south chancel aisle of the 16th centuries. Various, however, as are the dates of these different portions the church, they unite to forming a symmetrical and harmonious whole, having generally the aspect of a church of the 15th century.

In describing the present condition of the church, I will commence with the roofs. The roof of the nave (which pretty good roof in design, though constructed as to press somewhat severely upon the clerestory walls) is a very sad state of decay : one half of it was repaired some years ago, and means were taken to reduce the pressure upon the walls, It will be necessary to do the same throughout; but at the same time the roof will require thorough reparation. I fear that it will be found that a very large proportion of the timbers are decayed. These must be replaced with new oak, the boarding and lead renewed, and the whole restored to a perfect condition. The roofs of the nave aisles are ancient, and better condition than that of the nave itself, but require considerable repairs, and the lead and boarding must be re-laid. The roofs of the transepts have been repaired some thirty years since, and much of the timbers concealed by plastering. I would recommend the substitution of oak panelling for this, and such general repairs as may be found necessary. The chancel has a roof of modern date concealed by a flat plaster ceiling which cuts across the chancel arch. The same roof extends over the north chancel aisle, thus deforming the east end, by placing two divisions under one gable. The north aisle has most beautiful oak panelled ceiling, which happily conceals its roof from within. The south aisle of the chancel has modern roof, of the very meanest description, so that in the interior of the chancel and its aisles we have first a plain flat plaster ceiling to the chancel itself; then to the north aisle a beautiful oak ceiling, showing the manner in which the ancient builders treated their work; and on the south aisle the roof of modern hedge-carpenter, such as would disgrace a cart-shed.

The mode of treatment I would recommend would as follows. First, as the chancel roof has been originally of high pitch, would renew it in that form, and in a manner suited to the beauty of the church. Secondly, I would thoroughly restore the ceiling the north aisle, bringing the external roof to its original level Thirdly, I would put over the south aisle a ceiling corresponding in some degree with that on the north aisle. The roof of the porch and vestry would also require reparation. The walls of the church seem generally pretty substantial, but have suffered much

from mutilation, and require careful reparation throughout. The cusps of the windows have nearly everywhere been cut out. The east window has been renewed on a most extraordinary design. Many of the mullions are shattered, and must be renewed, Generally, all mutilated and decayed parts must be renewed, the internal stonework cleaned, the plastering of the walls repaired or renewed as the case may be, the clerestory walls, which have been thrust out must be strengthened, the parapets reset where necessary, the pinnacles restored, and the whole rendered perfect and substantial The tower has either through settlement, or through the effects of lightening been somewhat split down its south-eastern angle, and has some few other defects. – These must be substantially repaired, and I would recommend the insertion of a tier of strong iron ties to prevent their re-appearance. The floor of the tower immediately over the church must be renewed, and the other floor and the bell timbers substantially repaired. Of the internal fittings I have but little to say. They exceed in meanness even what is usual in country churches. And there must be but one opinion about them – they must entirely cleared away, and the whole refitted in proper manner with good oak seats. There are numerous remnants of old screen work of very character, and some remains ancient seats. These will be useful guides in designing the new fittings The floors must almost entirely new. The doors must be new, excepting that to the south porch, which is ancient and ornamental, but requires restoration. The glazing should be renewed throughout, and stained glass introduced from time-to-time opportunity may offer. While these reparations are in hand, it would be very desirable that the church should be efficiently warmed.

I estimate the probable cost of the works as follows. Those connected with the church and tower with £2300; those to the chancel fabric £575 and fittings £225, (£800); those to the south aisle of the chancel, fittings £320, fittings £80 (£400); those to the north aisle of the chancel fabric £275, fittings £7L (£350): making in all about £3850. The above calculation is made on the supposition of everything being done the best manner, the roofs and the whole executed in a manner worthy of so fine a church, and need I hardly say that the church so restored would be a most noble and beautiful structure.

The above report was dated April 21, 1857, and on the 30th of the same month the Vicar convened a meeting of the inhabitants and others interested the restoration and re-seating the church. Geo. Finch Esq. presided. Mr. Scott's report having been read, the following resolution was passed "That this meeting having heard the report of Mr. Scott on the state of the parish church, and acknowledging the liberal offer of donations to the amount of 800L towards carrying it into effect, is of the opinion that thus opportunity should be taken advantage of and make an immediate and strenuous effort to restore the church to condition befitting its high purposes. A committee was immediately formed. Mr. Scott was employed as architect and subscriptions to the restoration fund solicited., the Rev. C. A. Stevens accepting the arduous office of honorary secretary.

The call has been liberally responded to as the following subscriptions will show.

Geo. Finch Esq. £1000

Anonymous, £400

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster, £300

The Rev. Heneage Finch, the Vicar, £200

The late Wm Ades, Esq., £150

The Church Building Society, £150

The Marquis of Exeter, Lord Aveland, the honourable Colonel Lowther, Miss Jones, Miss B. Jones Mrs. Doria, Mrs. Bicknell, the Rev. Brown (Lyndon), the Church Building Society of the Archdeaconry of Northampton, and the Governors of Oakham Grammar-school and Hospital, £100 each

The Hon. G. H. Heathcote, the Rev. J. Jones (Burley), the Hon G. J. Noel S. Parke, Esq. (Spalding), the Hon. and Rev. A. G. Stewart (Cottesmore), the Rev Thos. Yard (Ashwell), Mr. Adam, and Mrs. Hicks (Jermyn-terrace), £50 each

Messrs. Crowson and Sons, £40

Mrs-Fydell Morcott, £35L

Messrs. Eaton, Cayley, and Co., (Stamford) £30 Major-General Fludye Zr (Ayston), Col. Freer (Leamington), Miss Thompson (Ketton), Colonel and Mrs. Talbot Clifton, Mr. Hough, Mr. F. King, Mr. Mackinder, Mr. Clarke Morris, Messrs. Morris and Co., Mr. Samson, and the Rev. W. S. Wood, £25 each

The Rev. c. S. Elbcott (Whitwll), Chiselden Henson, Esq. (Cheltenham), Wm. Hopkinson, Esq. (Stamford), Mr. and Miss Hunt and friends (Clapton), F.J. Mould, Esq. (Brompton) the Hon. and Rev. Noel (Exton), the Misses Wingfield (South Luffenham), Mr. Dain, Mr. Churchwarden Davies, Mr. Hawley, Miss Mason, and Mr. Wellington, £20 each

H. W. Baker, Esq. (Cottesmore), and Ayscough Smith, Esq. (Leesthorpe Hall), £10 10s each Miss Belgrave (Preston), the Rev. F. G. Burnabv (Barkestone), General Johnson (Wytham on the Hill), John Keal, Esq. (London), Thos. Lawrence, Esq. (Preston), the Rev D. Royce (Netherswell), Colonel and Mrs. R. W. Wood, Mr. Brown (Melton-road), the Rev. T. Byers, Miss Jane Layng, Mr. Morton (Egleton), Miss Mould, Mrs Rawlings, Mr. R. Simpson, the Rev. C. A. Stevens, Mr. Tirrell (Egleton), and Mr. S. C. Turner, £10 each

The Rev. Thos. Field (Cambridge), the Rev. G. H. Parker (London), Mr. Brown (Ashwell-road), Mr. Burn, Mr. Churchwarden Ratcliff and Mr. Thos. Shuttlewood, £5 5s each

The Rev. H. Applebee (Whissendine), the Rev. Canon Argles (Barnack), the Rev. C. Atlay (Barrowden), the Rev. Jas. Atlay (Cambridge). the Rev. the Master Catherine Hall, Edw. Conder Esq (London), the Hon. and Rev. K Cust (Belton), the Yen. Archdeacon Davys (Peterborough), Mrs. Decker (Lyndon), the Rev T. Dove Dove (Frome Solwood), the Rev. C. J. Ellicott (Cambridge), Mrs. Hayton (Kimbolton), the Rev. Canon James (Peterborough), the Rev. H. Jones (Greetham), the Rev. J. Pullein (Kirkthorpe), Wm. Sheild, Esq. (Uppingham), Mr. E. Wright (Melton), N. W. Wyer, Esq. (Bedford), anonymous, Mr. W. Burnett, Mr. Bell, .Mr. Bruce, Miss Butt Mr. D. Cooke, Mr. E. Cunnington (Barleythorpe), Mr. Furley, Mr. W. Keal jun., Miss Emma Keal, Mr. S. and Mr. J. Tirrell (Egleton), and Mrs. Whyers, £5 each.

Of the £800 which formed the ground-work of the undertaking, £440 now appears in the

subscription list as an anonymous donation, and £100 to each the names of the four daughters of the late J. E. Jones, Esq., of Oakham. The Earl of Gainsborough gave £125 to the fund: the north chantry belongs to his Lordship, and in consideration of the above donation the expense of its adornment will be paid out of the general fund.

For the execution the works several firms were solicited send in tenders, and that of Messrs. Ruddle and Thompson, of Peterborough was accepted, the amount of contract being £4400. In a few days afterwards the unsightly furniture was removed from the church, and the restoration proceeded with. In carrying out the undertaking Mr. Scott has strictly preserved every mediaeval detail; even the triangular lines over the tower arch which show gable form of the roof of the earlier church have not been allowed to be erased. He considers that such details show to some extent the history of the church. A portion of the capital the north pillar of the chancel arch was cut away to admit of the erection of the roodscreen, perhaps in the 15th century: the capital illustrated a subject from scripture, but there is not sufficient of the sculpture left enable Mr. Scott effect a faithful restoration he has left the capital in its mutilated form, believing that course be preferable to inserting that which would not be a simile of that chiselled the 14th century. Amongst the improvements effected are— the chancel is floored with Mutton's encaustic tiles of a rich design, given by the Rev. Lord A. Compton; the aisles are paved with red and black tiles, in pattern ; the interesting Norman font has been removed and re-fixed; the parapet of the nave clerestory has been taken down and re-fixed; the chancel gable and that of the north aisle the chancel have been taken down and re-built; the debased east window has been replaced by a new one of five lights, having deeply sunk and moulded tracery and arches, with columns of polished Derbyshire marble and moulded caps and bases; the pillars, bases, caps, arches, and seats the south porch arcade have been restored; all the windows, cuspings, defective mullions, tracery, jambs, arches, etc. have been carefully restored; the windows have been reglazed with diamond quarries of cathedral glass; all the carvings have been scraped; the whole of the internal stone-dressings of the doorways and windows, pillars, and arches, including tower arches, corbels, stringcourses, quoins, and other dressings have had all the mortar, whitewash etc. taken off; the two galleries over the tower arch have been taken away, and the arch re-opened; and all the piscinas, lockers, tabernacles, etc. restored. The new seats are plain, low, and open: they are three feet high, the poppy-heads being richly carved, the design being similar to several seat ends found in the church before the restoration, and probably the first introduced here after the Reformation. On the seat ends are carvings from natural foliage, including the vine, oak, holly, ivy, maple, hop, thorn, convolvulus, filbert, fig, etc. The fronts of the seats are filled with tracery, having carved spandrils, Ac. The stalls in the chancel have moulded standards, with richly carved finials and arm rests of varied design, and moulded fronts and book rests. The octagonal pulpit is made of the finest wainscot, having traceried panels, the design being in perfect unison with the fittings. The screen (height 3 feet 4 inches) dividing the nave and chancel is formed of a series of trefoiled headed arches deeply moulded and sunk, the cornice being moulded and tilled with bosses. The two screens at the easternmost end, under archways dividing aisles from chancel, have

rich tracery heads, supported by circular shafts and moulded caps and bases. The cornice is moulded and embattled, and enriched with carved bosses, the lower part being solid moulded framing. The altar rail and table are of wainscot, and in keeping with the other fittings. The roofs have been thoroughly restored in English oak. The chancel roof is entirely new, the ceiling of which is panelled, and takes the form of the pointed arch, having moulded ribs and carved bosses at the intersections, the part of the roof over the altar being filled with extremely rich wrought tracery. The whole of the roofs are oak boarded and leaded. The gas fittings have been supplied by Mr. Skidmore, of Coventry: the standards are of blue and gold, four of them being erected in the chancel. The warming apparatus has been erected by firm at Birmingham.



Mr. Dent, of the Strand, the maker of the great Parliamentary and other clocks, has been employed to make a clock for the tower of this church, the cost of which, with its erection, will be about £190. It will chime three of the quarters, but not the hour. The time will be ascertained from dials erected under the belfry windows, on the west and south sides of the tower. The design of the hon dials is quite new: they are perforated throughout and might, with a little extra outlay, be adapted for illumination. The belfry contains six bells: two them have been recast by Mr. Mears of London. About the middle the 17th century peals of were re-introduced into churches to a very great extent. The most celebrated founder this part of the kingdom was Tobie Norris, of Stamford, and plate of bell metal in St George's church, in that town, thus records the interment of his remains there "*Here lieth the body of Tobie Norris, bell-founder.*" On one of the bells in the tower of Oakham church is this inscription "*Tobie Norris cast me, 1677. God Save the King, T. Meekings.*" And on a larger bell, "*Tobie Norris, 1677. G. Burton, A. Burton.*" Another bell has this inscription "*Henry Perm made me, 1723. Francis Cleeve, W. M. Maidwell, churchwardens.*" Many towers this district contain bells cast by Tobie and Thomas Norns, at Stamford, but the site of their foundry is not now known.

The subscribers to the restoration fund have the satisfaction of knowing that the committee secured the services of gentlemen eminent their calling to carry out the important work now on the eve of being completed. Mr. G. G. Scott, the architect, is one of the leading men the profession, his services being sought in most parts of the kingdom on the most important and extensive ecclesiastical edifices. The contractors, Messrs. Ruddle and Thompson, of Peterborough, have carried out with satisfaction great undertakings at various cathedral and parish churches: they are now executing the extensive restoration at Higham Ferrers church, and only few days ago the contract entered into by them for the roofing and internal fittings at St. George's church, Doncaster, for the sum of £10,259*, was completed. Messrs. Minton and Co., who supplied the flooring tiles, Mr. Mears, bell founder, who re cast two of the bells, Mr. Skidmore, of Coventry, who supplied the gas standards, and Mr. Dent, the manufacturer of the new clock, are firms known throughout the kingdom.

Wednesday last will be a "red letter day" in the history of the county town of Rutland. As early as six o'clock the church bells reminded the inhabitants of Oakham that the anxiously looked for day had arrived when they were again to possess the privilege of worshipping their Maker in their own parish church. The Agricultural Hall was thrown open for the reception of distant visitors on their arrival, where a supply refreshments and good fires had been provided by direction of the committee. By 10 o'clock the workmen had ceased their labours; the committee of management were seen to be busily engaged; and the police were attendance to prevent the pressure of the crowd at the entrances. At half past ten the visitors began to assemble and were conducted to the seats by the committee. The clergy, in their gowns entered in procession. At ten minutes before eleven the doors were thrown open, when those who had not procured tickets were admitted, and the church was quickly filled.

At eleven the service commenced by the Rev. H. Wingfield reading the service for the day: the Psalms having been chanted, the Rev. R. King read the first and the Rev W P Wood the second lesson; the Litany was read the Rev. R. Sorsbia, the communion service by the Rev H Finch the Epistle for the day by the Rev. J.R Woodford, the Gospel by the Rev. C. Stuart, and the Creed by the Rev T Yard The sermon was preached by the Rev. E. M. Goulburn D.C.L., of London. The text was taken from Exodus iii 5. The sermon was eloquent and appropriate; and the choir (from Leicester) efficient and powerful. The church was well warmed and the arrangements excellent. The inconvenience experienced by the strong sun light through the cathedral glass during the morning service will, it is hoped, at no distant day lead to the introduction of stained glass, which is much wanted to subdue the light.

Amongst the congregation were Lord Wensleydale, the Hon. Calthrop, the Hon. Colonel and Miss Lowther, H. Lowther, Esq., MP. Geo. Finch, Esq., Lady Louisa Finch, the Misses Finch, John and Lady Trollope, Colonel R. and Mrs. Wood, the Hon Hy. and Mrs Noel. Miss Noel and friends, J. M. Wingfield Esq. the Misses Wingfield, H. Wingfield, Esq., the Hon. Evans Freke, Captain Doria, General Fludyer. Miss Fludyer, Mrs. Jackson, W. A. Pochin Esq and friends, Mrs. and Miss Baker, J. F. Mould, Esq. the Misses Arnold (Tinwell), W. Sheild, Esq., E. Cayley, Esq, R. de Capel

Brooke Esq., Mr and Mrs. Barnard, Mr. and Mrs. Latham, Mrs. Whitchurch and friends, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison; the Rev. Hon. Leland Noel and family, Hon. A. Stewart and family, H. Fludyer, F. E. Gretton, W .J. Williams, C. Nevinson, Lovick Cooper, N. Twopeny, E. Cayley, H. Jones, S. Rolleston, W. Belgrave, H. Yard, C E. Prichard S. Walters P.J. E. Miles, T. Hoskins, M. Garrett, W. Metcalfe, J Noyes, W Ostler, F P Johnson, E. Brown, T. James J. R Woodford, W. S. Wood, T. Byers, R. King, R. Sorsbie J. W. Sherrington, G. E Gillett, G. A. Poole, W. Jay, H. J. Bigg c. A. Stevens, Prescott, T. Peake, T. Cooke, J. Beresford.

In the afternoon the sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon James, Vicar of Theddingworth and Sibbertoft, from 11th chapter of Luke and 25th verse. The collections in the morning amounted to £174i 0s 6d and in the afternoon to to £31 7s. 1½d, total £205 7s 7½d.

The early hour at which the first train leaves Peterborough in the morning prevented many from attending the re-opening of the above church.

The 1858 Restoration of All Saints church in Oakham – Part 2

October 8, 2024

Introduction

In this series of three related posts, I present transcripts of the press reports concerning the re-opening of All Saints church in Oakham in November 1858. This is done primarily to make the source documents for that event available and easily readable, and there is no discussion of their contents. That will come later. The material is all found in the British Newspaper Archive and the archive OCR text forms the basis of the transcripts, although. As with any OCR text, this has needed considerable editing, which, as I am sure the reader will find, has been imperfectly done. The material presented in the three parts is as follows.

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- [Part 3](#) is from the Lincolnshire Chronicle of August 24th 1860, and gives the text of a lecture that was given at Oakham Castle entitled "Gothic Architecture" by the Rev Canon James, one of the principal proponents of the Gothic in the region, where the changes that were made to the church are explained and justified.

Leicester Journal 12th November 1858

Amidst the numerous church restorations which have recently been made in this county and district, the one at Oakham is certainly one of the most complete and perfect every detail. The church had for some time past fallen into a sad state of decay, and the worthy vicar, the Rev. Heneage Finch, determined, with other friends, if possible, to restore the fabric throughout, besides giving more seat accommodation. The old fashioned, high-backed pews, and west end gallery having long proved inefficient for the requirements of the parish, it was determined once to remove them. After some delay, sufficient sum was raised by subscription to warrant the commencement of the work, Mr. G. Pinch having headed the list with the handsome sum of £1000, the Vicar and others also contributing largely.



The church itself is mostly in the Perpendicular style, having been built in the 15th century, and is considered to be the finest specimen of ecclesiastical architecture in the county. The roof had fallen into a fearful state of decay and has been thoroughly restored. The Chancel has had entirely a new roof, composed of English oak, very richly panelled in the Decorated style, and contains some very fine tracery. The groundwork of the altar consists of very fine traceried carved bosses, which has a fine appearance. The nave, aisle, and transept have also been entirely restored with English oak. The south chapel has an exceedingly beautiful ceiling in oak, enriched with moulded ribs and carved bosses intersections, with traceried panels. The whole of the roofs are covered with new lead, the old being entirely removed. The western entrance, which was formerly blocked up, only being used the ringers, is now made the principal entrance. The first stage of the tower has now a new ringing floor, and the bells, which are six in number, have been re-hung in new oak frames. Two of the bells have been re-cast by Mears, of London. A new clock is also in course of erection, by Dent, of London, which is to have two faces, one looking south and the other west, and is to strike the quarters. A new east window of five lights has been put into the chancel, glazed with diamond quarries of cathedral glass, with cast-iron saddle bars. The shafts of this window are of fine Derbyshire polished marble. The interior of the church has undergone a thorough reseating, open seats having (as before stated) been substituted for pews, whereby 300 additional free sittings have been gained for the poor. The seats are made of the finest wainscot oak, with moulded ends, having carved terminations. The low screen dividing the chancel from the nave, is also of oak, filled with open tracery, richly carved. The pulpit, which is also of oak, is supported by a bracketed pedestal, the panels being filled with rich tracery. The north and south screens, separating the aisles from the chancel, have very rich moulded tracery and embattled cornices. The stalls in the chancel, and reading desks are exceedingly rich in detail, having foliage, representing the holly, oak, vine, and hop, beautifully carved on the terminations. The altar-rail is also of oak, with lozenge-formed compartments, and the table itself is of massive oak, supported on six

octagon shafts, richly moulded. The old South doors have also undergone a thorough restoration, according to their original features, and are of a very massive character. The West and North doors are of oak, framed in small compartments, covered with rustic bordering, with ornamental hinges, &c. The body of the church is laid with black and red Staffordshire quarries, and the chancel and sacrarium are paved with Minton's encaustic tiles, from designs furnished by the Rev. Lord Alwyne Compton, and are exquisitely beautiful. The south side of the sacrarium is furnished with a credence table in Caen stone. The glazing is entirely new throughout the church, the windows being all filled in with cathedral glass of a light green tint, and of a small lozenge pattern. All the stonework has been thoroughly cleaned from whitewash, and brought to its original colour, as well as entirely restored. The old stoves have been done away with, and a new apparatus on the most approved principle of warming by water, has been erected by Messrs. Rosser, of Millbank-street, Westminster. The church is beautifully lighted with rich metal gas standards, of 20 jets each, the two chancel lights being extremely elegant in design and workmanship, every alternate burner forming a star. They were supplied by Messrs. Skidmore, of Coventry. The whole of the woodwork and carving has been done by Mr. Ruddell of Peterborough, in his usual style of excellence; and the masonry has been executed in a very superior style by Mr. Thomson, also Peterborough. Both these gentlemen were the contractors for St. George's Church at Doncaster. The total cost has been between six and seven thousand pounds, the whole having been subscribed, with the exception of about £300. We had almost forgotten to mention that the old Norman font, which is evidently older than the present church, has been cleaned and restored, and refixed at the west entrance. The whole the work has been carried out under the direction that talented ecclesiastical architect, G. G. Scott, Esq., of Spring Gardens, London; and Mr. Geo. Clarke, clerk of the works of the Lichfield cathedra], has had the superintending of the works.

The re-opening of the church was fixed for Wednesday and Thursday last. Morning service commenced Wednesday, at 11 o'clock, when the church was filled a very large congregation, the admission up ten minutes to eleven being ticket only. At eleven o'clock a procession was formed from the new grammar-school to the church, in the following order:

Sexton

Choir boys

Choir

Committee

Churchwardens, Messrs. Davis and Ratcliffe

Clergy in gowns

Clergy in surplices – Rev. W. L. Wood, Rev. W. King, Hon. and Rev. A. G. Stuart, Rev. Thos. Yard, Rev. Heneage Pinch, and Rev. E. Meyrick Goulbourn.

The clergymen in the procession numbered about 50.

The choir of St. John's church, Leicester, attended, and Herr Schneider, organist of St. John's, presided at the harmonium, there being no organ at present.

Morning prayers were read by the Rev. W. Wingfield, assisted the Rev. R. Sorsbie, the Rev. W. J. Wood, the Rev. Heneage Finch, the Rev. J. R. Woodford, the Rev. A. O. Stuart, and the Rev. T. Yard. The offertory was read by the Rev. J. R. Woodward.

Amongst those who were present we noticed the Hon. H. Noel and party, Hon. Colonel Lowther and party. Lord Wensleydale, Mr. George and Lady Louisa Finch, Sir John and Lady Trollope, Sir R. Sheffield, Edwd. Cayley, Esq. (Stamford), W. A. Pochin, Esq., W. Rudkin, Esq., W. Sharrard, Esq., J. Painter, Esq., Mr. Buftress(Wymondham),. Messrs. Wellington (Oakham), Hawthorn (Uppingham), the Rev. H. Finch (vicar). Dr. Goulbourn, Hon. and Rev. A. G. Stuart, Rev. Thos. Yard, Hon. and Rev. Leland Noel, Rev. Thos. James, Rev. J. R. Woodford, Rev. W. S. Wood, Bev. R. King, Rev. C. A. Stevens, Rev. C. E. Pritchard, Rev. Nowell Twopenny, Rev. C. H. Atlay, Rev. H. Wingfield, Rev. R. Sorsbie, Rev. J. W. Skevingham. Rev. J. H. Milne, Rev. G. E. Gillett, Rev. H. J. Rev. G. A. Poole, Rev. C. E. Prescott, Rev. J. H. Noyes, Rev. Lovick Cooper, Rev. S. E. Gretton, Rev. Si, G. Bellairs, &c.

The sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Goulbourn. of Quebec Chapel, Loudon, from the 3rd chapter of Exodus, and the 5th verse “ Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The rev. gentleman said, in the passage he had just read was wrapt up the doctrine of sacred places. Now, what was a sacred place – in what sense could one place be more sacred than another No doubt the popular answer would be, that wherever Christ was present was sacred. Now such a meaning would have the strictest sanction of scripture. It was true that the Lord Jesus was present in every Christian congregation, but was it not also true, that God was present in every district of the universe? Go where you would, you could not escape from Him; He was there. If he scaled the tops of the highest mountains or descended into the bowels of the earth. He was there also. If he took the wings of the morning and remained in the uttermost parts of the seas. He was there. God was present everywhere. How then did it come to pass that such passages as these harmonised with what had been said that his presence was limited to certain places? The answer was very simple. When God was spoken of present certain places. His manifested presence was meant. The definition of sacred place was, where God manifested Himself the eye of the body or the eye of the mind. The rev. gentleman then went on to speak respecting the consecration of churches. He said, as regarded the consecration of a building, it did not make it, it only recognised it as holy. Just the coronation of king did not make that person king, for he was king soon as the breath had left the body of his predecessor; it only made him responsible for his office. In the same way, when a church was consecrated it could only be used for sacred purposes, and the building was made sacred in the truest and highest sense of the word. The ordinary manifestation of the Divine Being was made in the Church. He would now turn to the extraordinary. He then instanced the appearance of the angel to Joshua, and Jacob’s vision, as extraordinary manifestations. But it was not accordance with our new dispensation that such manifestations should now be carried on; yet God manifested himself in Christ even now to the conscience and heart of the true Christian. This was a much higher manifestation than the preceding one. It was the manifestation of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit which

impressed the house of prayer with that sanctity which possessed. The rev. gentleman then went to refer to the practice that was required be adopted holy places under the old dispensation, The custom was to take off the shoes, on entering a sacred plane, to show allegiance to God; but the custom in our day was different. Instead of uncovering the feet, we uncover the head. The postures also should be distinctly preserved, standing and kneeling at the proper time. This should be attended by all, except those who are prevented by age or bodily infirmity. All communication with each other while in church should avoided milch possible. But the most important point of outward reverential conduct, was to join in the service in an audible voice. It was not at all proper to lay the burden upon few; but let them all join together seeing that the service of prayer and praise, in which they all had common interest, were properly carried out. Let it not thought that this class of duties were as trifling they might seem first sight. They rested upon the purest and most important principles. Man was bound to yield to God the homage of bis entire nature; and the homage of the body ought to be subservient to that of the spirit. But if they merely bowed the head, and had no corresponding feeling at the heart, It was the worst of mockeries. The rev. gentleman concluded bis sermon, of which this is the merest outline, by some observations respecting the restoration of the church. He said great advantages had been rained the alteration, and this above all others, that several hundred free sittings had been secured for the use of the poor by the substitution of open seats for pews. To see a church choked up with high pews, only occupied the higher classes, could not but be revolting to every right mind. But now the case was different; rich and poor could all worship together without any distinction. All grades ought to be on a level while in church. He was sure it must be highly gratifying to those persons who had subscribed towards the alterations, to think that they had been the means of contributing something towards affording greater accommodation for the population of the parish. But the same time there was a deficit on the restoration fund of about £300, which he hoped they would remove.

At the close of the sermon, a collection was made, and the handsome sum of £174. 1s. 6d. obtained. At the afternoon service, the church was again filled with a respectable congregation. Prayers were read the Rev. M. Wingfield, Rev. Robt. Sorsbie, Rev. Timothy and the Rev. J. A very impressive sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon James, of Theddingworth, who took for his text the 11th chapter of St. Luke, and the 25th vers " And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished." At the close, the sum of £31.7s 1 ½d was obtained.

Services were to be held yesterday (Thursday), and also next Sunday, but we have not been able to obtain the amount collected.

We might mention that every accommodation was provided for visitors, refreshments being set out the Agricultural Hall, which was thrown open for free inspection during the day.

On Friday night last, the committee, contractors, and workmen to the number of 60, supped together in the Agricultural Hall, Mr. B. Adam, solicitor, Oakham, presiding, supported by Mr. Wellington and Mr. Mortin. The usual loyal toasts were given, and the health of the Bishop and

Clergy of the Diocese was very ably responded to by the Rev. W. S. Wood, head master of the Grammar School.

The 1858 Restoration of All Saints church in Oakham – Part 3

October 8, 2024

Introduction

In this series of three related posts, I present transcripts of the press reports concerning the re-opening of All Saints church in Oakham in November 1858. This is done primarily to make the source documents for that event available and easily readable, and there is no discussion of their contents. That will come later. The material is all found in the British Newspaper Archive and the archive OCR text forms the basis of the transcripts, although. As with any OCR text, this has needed considerable editing, which, as I am sure the reader will find, has been imperfectly done. The material presented in the three parts is as follows.

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Lincolnshire Chronicle 24th August 1860

LECTURE AT OAKHAM. ON "GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE," by the RE V. CANON JAMES.

Last Wednesday afternoon, the Rev. Thomas James., M.A.- hon. canon of Peterborough, vicar of Theddingworth, and one the secretaries of Architectural Court of the Archdeaconry of Northampton—a gentleman extensively known as an accomplished ecclesiologist and erudite and painstaking antiquary—delivered a lecture at the Old Castle Hall of Oakham, on "Gothic Architecture," with especial reference to the history and arrangements of the Church and Castle Hall in Oakham. The lecture was for the benefit of the Oakham Literary Institute—a young but progressing association, having for its object the advancement literature, art, and science, and the improvement the humbler classes of society. The weather, unfortunately, was of the most dreary and cheerless character, heavy searching rain descending during the whole of the day. Notwithstanding this very material draw back, a numerous and fashionable audience assembled in the Hall at the hour announced for the lecture at three o'clock. Geo.

Finch, Esq., of Burley Hall, the owner of the Castle, presided on this occasion, and amongst the ladies and gentlemen present we noticed the following :—The Rev. W. S. Wood, the Rev. T. Byers, the Rev. J. E. Prescott, the Rev. J. M. Wingfield, the Rev. H. Jones, the Rev. C. Palmer, the Rev. H. J. Biggs, the Rev. R. T. King, the Rev. Scudamore, Lord Campden, – Barnard, Esq., B. Adam, Esq., R. Harvey, Esq., J. Morton, Esq., H. Samson, Esq., &c, &c. The Oakham brass band was in attendance, and intervals played selections of music.

The Chairman opened the proceedings by observing that they had met in that venerable fabric for the purpose of hearing a lecture from the Rev. Mr. James, on Archaeology, as more especially connected with the Church of Oakham and the Old Castle in which they were at that time assembled. The date of its erection, which they saw upon the wall, was, he believed, incorrect, the hall having, in all probability, been constructed about the time William Rufus. It was a remnant of time when the country, both as regarded laity and clergy, were intently interested in the Crusades to the Holy Land—at a time when the country groaned under the Norman tyranny, and the people were the victims of regal despotism and of feudal violence. that age, the custom was to wear long-pointed shoes, and as the people had a very peculiar art of interpreting Scripture, they connected the prevailing fashion with the text, that ” No man can add one cubit to his stature,” and during the reigns Kings Henry the Second and John, the populace were firm believers in the long-pointed shoes as having something to do with religion. (Laughter.) But, happily, these ages of darkness and superstition had long since passed away, and the country no longer trembled ‘neath regal tyranny or baronial oppression. (Hear, hear.) Civil and religious liberty now prevailed through the length and breadth our highly favoured land, and all that now remained visible of these dark ages were splendid specimens of architecture. He would only mention that four out of the possessors of the Castle in which they were assembled had been executed for high treason ; the first was the Earl of Kent, in the reign of King Edward the Third, the second, the Duke Buckingham, in the reign Richard the Third; of whose fate Shakespere had informed them when he wrote :

“The Duke of Buckingham, my lord. Then off with his head “

— a second Duke of Buckingham in the reign of Henry the Eighth; and the fourth, Lord Thomas Cromwell, beheaded in the year 1540. He could only say that he sincerely trusted that the present and future possessors might never meet with a similar fate. (Loud cheers.) He might go much further in referring to the history and associations of Oakham Castle, but he would not intrench upon the province so erudite and able lecturer as Mr. James, who was, he was quite sure, much better qualified interest them. He begged to introduce to the meeting Mr. James. (Loud applause.)

The Rev. T. James then entered upon a most elaborate, instructive, and interesting lecture on the character, progress, arrangement, and utility gothic architecture, divided as it were into two parts, the first being illustrated by references to the Castle of Oakham, and the second descriptions of the church which has been recently restored, and which is one the finest specimens of gothic architecture to be found among the churches of England. The Committee

of the Oakham Literary Institute desire to publish the lecture in its entirety for the benefit of the society, and therefore, their request, we only present our readers with a brief outline of Mr. James' paper. He commenced by observing at one of their architectural meetings, a gentleman had accosted him by the enquiry whether he was Mr. James the architect and of course he told him, as he now told them, that he was not Mr. James the architect or the architect either. He much regretted that in undertaking a subject of such magnitude his knowledge of it was so superficial ; and he might as well tell them at the outset that he should in the course of his lecture draw largely upon the researches which the eminent knowledge of his friends (Mr. Poole and Mr. Hartshorn) had enabled them to make ; and he did this with the more confidence because he should not think for one moment of placing himself on a level with those gentlemen. As its name implied, architecture was the mistress art. With the gentleman who addressed him as an architect, many believed that the name architecture was derived from its connection with arches; but this was not so, although it might be said to begin with the arch. In fact, there could be architecture without the span of the arch stretching from pillar to pillar. The lecturer referred to some diagrams illustrating the early and progressive styles architecture, commencing with the stones placed one upon another as at Stonehenge, next the Saxon, then the Norman, and finally the Gothic. These styles he lucidly described and illustrated. He observed that the various styles of architecture, more or less, ran into one another. It was quite impossible for anyone to say —here the Norman ends, and here the Saxon begins. Our forefathers never paid attention to styles—they went on building, putting the very best materials they could find into the best possible forms, just the same as they used to write, without any regard to the rules of grammar. Mr. James then pointed out that the arches of the windows inside the Castle Hall were round, while outside they were pointed. Oakham Hall marked the transitional period in architecture. It was the site of a Royal Hall, for a hall at Oakham was mentioned when King Edward the Confessor made his survey. Referring to the remarks of the chairman, the lecturer gave some interesting details of the early possession of the Castle of Oakham. Of these he made special mention of Walcheline de Ferrars, a younger son the Earl of Derby, to whom Henry II. granted the manor, and created Baron of Oakham. This same Walcheline de Ferrars was a bit of poacher and a bit of a roystjer, having displayed a fondness for hunting the Royal game, while many time he Old Hall in which they sat had been the scene of feasting and merriment. De Ferrars joined King Richard I. in his crusade to the Holy Land and was last heard of the romantic siege of Acre, where he died. Alluding to the fact that four possessors of the Castle of Oakham had been executed for treason, the lecturer said it was not at all improbable that more than these had been guilty of treasonable practices, although they were not perhaps detected

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason? When it doth prosper, Men don't call it treason.

After describing the persons through whose hands the Castle of Oakham successively passed until it came into the possession of its present most worthy and respected owner, Mr. James said it had been supposed some that the Castle was a chapel to some great building, but that was a most erroneous impression, formed through a notion that the piers and arches were

peculiar to ecclesiastical edifices. They were not so, the Gothic in olden times being the prevailing style for buildings domestic as well as ecclesiastic. Oakham Castle Hall regarded as the finest domestic room in England, and, in all probability, it was the finest part of the Castle. They must not suppose that the ancient Castle was fortified with keep, bastions, and towers, as in the neighbouring Castle of Rockingham. Oakham Castle never had any defensive works, except the outer wall. The entrance door in the hall, he observed, was not now in the proper place. It was mentioned in Wright's History of Rutlandshire that the door was in the corner, but it had been removed to the centre of the building- At the end of the hall which he stood the King's chamber, all probability, existed, and he had been told Mr. Heneage Finch that in dry summers—which, of course, this was not—traces of buildings were to be found on the west as well as the east side. Mr. Heneage Finch had also told him that remembered a tower on the east wall, and there probably existed the postern which connected the Castle with the town. Mr. H. Finch also remembered a round tower on the westside. The lecturer next went on to describe the purposes for the hall had been used in olden times and gave a graphic word picture of what he supposed it to be in the days of Walcheline de Ferrars. There, in all probability, a sort of rough justice was administered the Baron, and there also the reveling and feasting took place. They must imagine the hall cleared of its present furniture, and substitute stout oaken benches for seats, with boards placed upon plain for tables, the only deviation from the arrangement being an arras of tapestry at the west end, where the lord sat. The windows were unglazed; the fire was placed on a raised platform in the centre of the hall, the smoke escaping by the windows after the fashion prevalent in the cabins of the Irish. In the evening the custom was to put wooden shutters to the windows, which it would be observed be admirably shaped for the purpose, and this they did at an early hour, showing that in those days they were supporters of the early closing movement. (Laughter.) The hounds crouched by their masters' side, and their hawks perched above their heads. Here they quaffed wines from Greece and Cyprus and feasted upon lamprey and herring pies. The ladies and gentlemen sat at tables alternately, and it was the height of refinement then to eat off the same plate. (Laughter.) The only knife used was the claspknife, which the gentleman most likely took unsheathed from his girdle, and napkins would be in considerable request considering that large proportion of the food had to taken with the fingers. He (the lecturer) observed that it was well known that finger napkins were commonly used as early as the 13th and century. The chief Personages in those days sat at the upper end the table, and the humbler ones at the lower end—the salt cellar—which by way ought to spelled with the s and not the c—dividing the upper and under crusts of society. (Laughter.) He had thus endeavoured to introduce a few somewhat interesting details with the dry dish which he had to place before them; and determined to do so as soon as he knew he was to speak in hall, which was to them all so rich in association. (Applause)



Chancel, showing pulpit, screens between side chapels, choir stall, altar and reredos (from 1898), prayer desk and lectern

The lecturer then proceeded to the more direct portion of his subject, pointing out on the diagrams the three styles of architecture, viz., Early English, 13th century; Decorated, 14th century; Perpendicular, 15th century. The first or early English arch they would observe was round, from one centre, the second or decorated arch, sprung from two centres; and the third arch he believed came from four centres- These styles were all to be found in the church of Oakham- enumerated the different parts of the church in which the three styles of Gothic architecture were observable, specially, remarking upon the pillar-shafts in the chancel, which were the 14th century, while the capitals and bases were Tudor work, at least 150 years later. The lecturer quoted some elaborate remarks of the Rev. A. Poole's on this subject, as also a translation from the Latin, referring to the transfer of Simon de Langham (who was not very popular) from the see of Ely to Canterbury. About the middle the 16th century, strict attention to ecclesiastical architecture ceased, and modern commenced. People had their attention occupied in ways. Gothic architecture was essentially un-Romish in its character, and he believed there was only one church in Rom which affects this style. The great Papal Church of St. Peter's at Rome is in the classic style of architecture, and not in the Gothic, to which it is totally opposed. If faith were judged by architecture, then it would be more proper to condemn St. Paul's than Westminster Abbey, for the former was far more in the Romish style. (Hear, hear.) He then adverted to the arrangements of Oakham Church and congratulated the inhabitants on the good feeling they had manifested in the restoration of the church. They had now obtained a building most suitable for the proper and reverential worship of Almighty God. No square room could ever have been appropriate, or of half so much utility. They had a church of which they ought to be indeed proud, and any apology for a beautiful structure would very much like Bishop Watson's apology for the Bible. He contended that Gothic churches had tendency to produce devotional feeling in the hearts the worshippers. Alluding to the arrangements of Gothic churches, the lecturer said originally the porch of the church was intended for the unbaptised, the nave for the great body of the people, and the chancel for the clergy for the celebration of the Holy Communion; the upper part being the presbytery, and the lower part was apportioned to the choir. These churches were built in the form of the Greek cross, plans which he pointed out to the audience. minutely referred to the general

arrangements and particular features in Gothic churches, ably associating his remark with Oakham church. He alluded to its condition before its restoration, and said in that respect its history was the history of nearly every church in the country. Pleasantly touching upon bygone days when it was said that old ladies sat in church with their umbrellas up, and the pulpit to the last in mourning for George III. Mr. James drew attention to two plans—one of the church before the restoration with its high boxed-up pews, and the other since its improvement, remarking that they had, indeed, much cause for thankfulness and congratulation at such a pleasing change. As they entered the church they would observe the font, emblematical of regeneration; at the east end the altar, devoted to the second and higher sacrament, not shutout from the laity. Reverently guarded the pulpit on the north or gospel side (called from the Gospel being read on the north side of the altar) not hiding the Communion table; the Bible desk or lectern standing facing the people in order that all might hear the words addressed to them ; the Prayer desk more lowly as in accordance with the spirit of prayer, and not facing the as if the supplication was to them and not to God; the congregation seated themselves in the nave in open and uniform seats that there should be no distinction in God's house; and so there might be no distraction all looked to the east, from where the Sun Righteousness arose. (Hear). And while on subject he might observe that the practice of placing the altar the east end of churches was copied from the Primitive and not from the Romish church. The altar in most Romish places of worship was placed at the west end, as at St. Peter's Rome. Some slight divergence from the east was observable in the chancel of Oakham church, for which several reasons had been given, but they were not worthy of credence. The triple divisions of nave, chancel, and altar were still preserved but no rood screen now shut out the laity—it was open alike to all. (Applause.) It was held by some that the multiplied pillars in gothic churches were an obstruction to properly seeing what was going on, but he thought broken church induced feelings more reverential, more solemn, and more able for worship than would be produced by four square walls like a concert room. (Hear, hear.) In speaking of the costly decorations in Oakham church, the lecturer mentioned masks, &c, to be found there; and also, a very curious representation of a fox running away with a goose on its back followed the disconsolate goslings, and a man running after Reynard with a broom in his hand. All the carving in the church with one exception—which he had himself detected was of the 14th and 15th century. He mentioned that a cupboard in the eastern wall, behind the altar, which might have been used as a receptacle for relics, or for receiving the stoup of holy water which stood at the chancel door*. This receptacle was often confounded with the piscina, —which as they were doubtless aware of had a drain connected with it — used for washing out the chalice from the communion table. The tower of the church was what is called engaged tower from the fact of the east side being within the church. On the exterior there were figures in niches in the toner, which in days of fanatical excitement were rarely spared. The vestry was two storied, in all probability it was formerly used as the dwelling of an anchorite, that being a prevailing custom at one time. There was a similar instance of a two storied room attached to the church at Barnack, near Stamford. Of Gilbert Scott he must say that had carried out the work restoration in the most Conservative spirit, preserving thing interesting and valuable, clearing

away only what was unseemly and unnecessary. The restoration committee did everything in their power to promote the work, and they the satisfaction of having their labours crowned with success. He had the more pleasure in speaking upon this subject, ' much as he was asked to take part in the work, which, the exception of his own church, afforded him more pleasure than any labour he was ever engaged in. (Applause.). There were yet a few matters to be done to place the church in finished state which they all desired to see-; and he felt sure that the energy and liberality of private individuals would not leave them long to wait. (Hear, hear.) Among other matters, he should like to see two official pews for the church wardens, who held a high and responsible office in the church (Hear, hear.) Oakham Church, as a whole, was very effective and beautiful, and there could be no better proof than that of its architectural excellence. The various styles in the combined to make one effective whole, and he quite with Mr. Scott that it ought not to be spoiled by superfluity ornamentation. (Hear, hear.) After some further observations, Mr. James concluded by reiterating the pleasure he received from being permitted to take part in the work restoring that noble church, which he regarded with unmitigated satisfaction.

The Rev. W. S. Wood (headmaster of Oakham Grammar School) as president of the Literary Institute, proposed a vote of to the Rev. Mr. James for his able lecture, and the vote was accorded with acclamation.

The Chairman, in announcing that the meeting was closed, expressed the great interest and gratification he had received from the lecture which Mr. James had just delivered to and for which they all thanked him so much. He (the Chairman) was glad Mr. James had set him right as to the date of the hall, which would be 1100. In the other remarks made relative to the hall, it appeared that he was in the main correct. Mr. James, to whose valuable and zealous labours in the work of restoring the church he could bear testimony, had given them a most complete history of Gothic architecture. – many valuable interesting details of that old hall and their noble church. He was very glad that its arrangements more after the Primitive than the Romish Church, although if the Papal church erred in no graver matters than its architecture, it would be well (Loud applause.)

The band then played the National Anthem, and the company left the hall.

* There is a similar receptacle in the east wall, behind the altar, in the parish church of Navenby by Lincoln.

The chancel and chapels of All Saints church Oakham – Gilbert Scott's legacy

November 5, 2024

Three recent blog posts [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), contain transcripts of newspaper reports that describe the restoration of All Saints Church in Oakham in 1858, under the direction of Gilbert Scott. It is clear from these reports that at the time the church was in a very bad state of repair and most of the restoration was concerned with repairing defects, particularly to the roofs, renovating historical features and replacing much of the internal furnishings. However there was one major area of the church where significant work was carried out that went far beyond simple repairs – to the chancel and to the east end in general. In his condition assessment Scott (1) wrote

The chancel has a roof of modern date concealed by a flat plaster ceiling which cuts across the chancel arch. The same roof extends over the north chancel aisle, thus deforming the east end, by placing two divisions under one gable. The north aisle has most beautiful oak panelled ceiling, which happily conceals its roof from within. The south aisle of the chancel has modern roof, of the very meanest description, so that in the interior of the chancel and its aisles we have first a plain flat plaster ceiling to the chancel itself; then to the north aisle a beautiful oak ceiling, showing the manner in which the ancient builders treated their work; and on the south aisle the roof of modern hedge-carpenter, such as would disgrace a cart-shed.

It is not altogether clear what is being described here, particularly in the first sentence, and this is the aspect of the work that will be considered in this post. First of all, let us consider the current (2024) state of that area of the church. A plan is given in figure 1 and shows the chancel, with the 13th century Holy Trinity chapel to the north and the Lady Chapel (built around 1480) to the south (the chapels are the north and south aisles referred to in the above quotation) (2). Figure 2a,b,c,d shows views of chancel and the chapels from the west end of the church. The chancel arch, referred to by Scott can be seen in figure 2d. It can be seen that the chancel itself is higher than the chapels to either side and certainly higher than the chancel arch, so the ceiling that Scott took exception to has been removed.

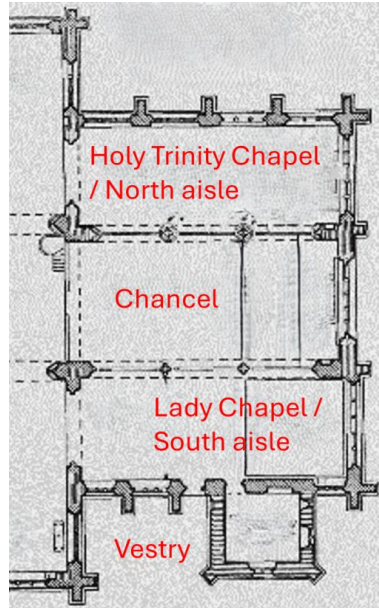


Figure 1. Plan of the east end of the church



a



b



c



d

Figure 2. a – North aisle / Holy Trinity chapel; b -Chancel; c – South aisle / Lady chapel; d – view from nave showing chancel arch.

Photographs of the east end of the church from the outside are shown in figure 3. There is no natural viewing point to take an overall photograph and the view is obstructed by trees in the churchyard, but, despite the odd perspective, both chapels and the chancel can be seen. The change in stonework around and above the chancel window shows the rebuilding of the 1850s.



a. Lady chapel and chancel



Chancel and Holy Trinity chapel

Figure 3. The east end of the church

Happily we can gain an understanding of what this end of the church looked like before the restoration from an 1851 model kept in the church (3). This is in a glass display case, currently in the north transept, and was not altogether easy to photograph, largely because this entailed standing on a pew, turning through ninety degrees and trying to photograph something in a glass case next to a window, with multiple reflections. Nonetheless, a rather poor quality photograph is shown in figure 4. The caption on the display case reads

In loving memory of Mary Grinter who passed to her rest on 10th February 1950. Age 87 years. This model was made by her father John Pitt Coulam (1833-1898)



Figure 4. The 1851 model



Figure 5. Photograph of the east end of the church showing the roof line of the 1851 model.

The east end in this photograph can be seen to be very different from the photographs of figure 3. Figure 5 shows the 1851 roof line from figure 4 superimposed on the photograph of figure 3b. And from this one can understand what Scott meant. The chancel seems to have been reduced from its original height (which the height of the chancel arch suggest was similar to today), and a pitched roof added over both the north aisle / Holy Trinity, chapel and the chancel itself. Thus, the two chapels indeed share a gable, and the roof / ceiling of the chancel would cut across the chancel arch in a very un-elegant fashion. The window at the east end would also seem to have been deliberately lowered to fit into the new arrangement. Figure 6 shows, in an edited version of figure 2b, how Scott would have seen the interior of the church, with the top of the chancel arch blocked, a lower flat ceiling in place, and a smaller east window



Figure 6. The chancel as would have been seen by Scott, with chancel arch blocked, lowered flat ceiling and smaller east window

Scott's work changed all this, restoring the chancel to its original height and adding sound roofs and spectacular internal ceilings. A new east window was inserted, which, the 2003 church guide (3) tells us, was criticised at the time for being of "decorated" rather than "perpendicular" form. Funny what folk get upset about.

So why on earth did this happen – why was the original rather elegant design of the chancel and chapel changed in this way, presumably sometime in the 15th to 17th centuries. I can think of two possible reasons. The first is wholly utilitarian – the chancel, and in particular the roof, may have been in a very poor state of repair, and required extensive renovation and repair. The arrangement criticised by Scott could have been a cheap way of making that end of the church reasonably sound, if rather ugly. The second reason has a more theological basis. After the Reformation, the Elizabethan settlement enforced conformity of practice – in particular taking down the altars at the east ends of chancels and replacing them, for the purpose of celebrating holy communion, with a table placed lengthways in the chancel, around which communicants would have gathered, with the celebrant on the north (long) side of the table. The combined chancel and north chapel would thus have provided a typical Elizabethan "communion room". A surviving example of such an arrangement can be seen locally at Brooke. (figure 7) where the spacious chancel is separated from a north chapel by a simple screen. This arrangement was only temporary and after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, with the Laudians in the ascendency, the altars at the east ends of chancels were reinstated with little opposition. Some clergy however continued to celebrate from the north end even with the altar in the new positions, and indeed, this is still the case in a few places.



Figure 7. Interior of Brooke church showing chancel from adjacent north chapel (from Wikipedia [File:St Peter's Church, Brooke, Rutland 13539728115.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Peter's_Church,_Brooke,_Rutland_13539728115.jpg) – Wikimedia Commons)

Whatever the reason, I have to admit (albeit grudgingly) that Scott was correct in this case in his desire to restore the chancel to its gothic glory from what seems to have been a somewhat botched Elizabethan / Stuart arrangement.

One further point arises. In the north aisle / Holy Trinity chapel there is a large chest tomb, with no dedication, placed lengthways next to the chancel (figure 8). It is said in (2) to be early 16th century – perhaps around the time of the Reformation. The images of sheep bells or wool weights on the side have led to the suggestion that it might be the tomb of a wool merchant. In the chancel arrangement before Scott’s restoration this would have been very prominent – indeed in the centre of the gable, possibly between two altar positions. One can speculate that the tomb was either placed in this position deliberately or indeed whoever was responsible might also have rebuilt the chancel / chapel to give the tomb such a prominence.



Figure 7. Chest tomb in Holy Trinity chapel.

1. Re-opening of Oakham Church. Stamford Mercury 12th November 1858
2. [‘Parishes: Oakham’](#), in *A History of the County of Rutland: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London, 1935), *British History Online* [accessed 21 October 2024].
3. Aston N (2003) All Saints Oakham, Rutland. A guide and history.

Relics and hermits

November 25, 2024

Introduction

In August 1860 the Rev. Thomas James., M.A.- honorary canon of Peterborough, vicar of Theddingworth, and one the secretaries of Architectural Court of the Archdeaconry of Northampton delivered a lecture to Oakham Literary Institute at the Old Castle Hall of Oakham, on "Gothic Architecture," particularly with regard to the history and arrangements of the [Church and Castle Hall in Oakham](#) (1). The speaker was described as "an accomplished ecclesiologist and erudite and painstaking antiquary" and was clearly a major proponent of gothic church architecture in the area.

In his talk he mentions two speculations that I wish to consider briefly in this post. Firstly he stated that there was "*a cupboard in the eastern wall, behind the altar, which might have been used as a receptacle for relics, or for receiving the stoup of holy water which stood at the chancel door.*" Secondly, with regard to the clergy vestry he said, obviously referring to some past time "*...the vestry was two storied, in all probability it was formerly used as the dwelling of an anchorite, that being a prevailing custom at one time. There was a similar instance of a two storied room attached to the church at Barnack, near Stamford*". We consider each of these two statements below.

The altar cupboard

The east end of the church was extensively modified by Gilbert Scott in 1858, but probably only from the bottom of the east window upwards, and it would seem, from the description by James, that the altar cupboard, whatever it was, was still in place in 1860. The area was further extensively modified in 1898 when the current Reredos was installed, and the walling and flooring renewed. However there is still a slot behind the altar which almost certainly was created to mark the position of the cupboard (figure 1). So what was it – a reliquary, a place for storage of holy water, or perhaps an aumbry, where the consecrated bread and wine would be kept? There are as far as I know, no historical mention of any relics in All Saints, but a church of its size and significance may well have been graced with them. There is of course evidence of relics at the priory cell at Brooke to the south of Oakham and the [Reliquary can be seen in Rutland County Museum](#). If it were an aumbry for consecrated bread and wine or a storage place for holy water, then it would need to be opened fairly regularly, and its location behind the altar, which would have been standing against the east wall would have made it relatively inaccessible. So it is possible that it was a reliquary, which would not have been opened regularly, but this must remain as speculation.



Figure 1. The slot in the wall at the east end marking the position of the “cupboard”

The Vestry

[The vestry is thought to have been built around 1480](#) at the same time as the adjoining Lady Chapel, although this is not certain. It is certainly tall, and could have accommodated a second floor, although there is no current structural evidence for that. One potential feature could be consistent with the idea that an Anchorite hermit (or an anchoress) resided there, is that there is a blocked up “window” structure in the wall between the vestry and the Lady chapel, which could possibly have been used by the resident hermit to observe the celebration of the mass at the altar below (figure 2). As it stands, the lower edge of this recess is rather too low for it to have been at the level of the floor above, so this might have involved a step down, or perhaps was first built to match the height of an earlier structure on the site of the current vestry. So this perhaps goes some way to bolstering the claim made by Wood, but again there is no certainty.



Figure 2. The blocked up window structure. a – from the Lady chapel; b – from the vestry. The bottom edge is at the same level in each case.

So to conclude. Whist the presence of relics and hermits in All Saints is a possibility, this is far from certain. As with many Victorian ecclesiologists and antiquarians, the Revd. James may well have let his speculations outrun the evidence.

Additional Note (29/11/24)

After reading the above blog, the Vicar of Oakham, Revd. Stephen Griffiths, sent me the photograph shown in Figure 3 below. This shows two blocked up windows on the east side of the Vestry. From the inside, the lower window corresponds with a recessed cupboard in the wall, which has the appearance of a door, and from the photograph, there seems to be a break in the stone work beneath the window that might indeed suggest it was originally a door. The upper window is similar in form to the stair windows in the tower. Taken together they perhaps suggest a separate entrance with access to an upper level in the vestry. How this relates to the issues addressed in the above blog is not, however, at all clear. All a bit of a mystery.



Figure 3. The east side of the vestry (photograph by Revd. Stephen Griffiths)

The Oakham Parish Chest

March 31, 2025



In the north transept at All Saints church in Oakham, there is a large wooden chest, shown in the photograph above. This is the Oakham Parish chest, which is encompassed by iron bands, with three locks. It is well described by a framed description close by, written by an unknown author, and dated 2007.

The earliest Parish Chests are of Norman or even Saxon date. In the early 16th century the Vicar General, Thomas Cromwell issued a mandate to the effect that every parson, vicar or curate had to enter in a book every christening, marriage and burial in his parish, with the names of the parties. In addition to these records documents relating to the day to day running of the parish would have been stored in the Chest, including the Churchwarden's accounts, Removal and Settlement Certificates Poor Rate and Poor Law records.

The parish was to provide a `sure coffer' with two locks, the incumbent having the custody of one key and the Churchwarden having the other. _ The safety of the documents was assured by there being two locks and therefore the opening of the Chest had to be approved by the incumbent and the Churchwarden together. The chests were usually made of oak, early ones having been `dug out' of a substantial log. Later chests became more refined being made of boards secured with iron nails. Some were decorated with iron banding. These were common from the early part of the fourteenth century. Some had slots pierced in their lids possibly to receive monetary offerings.

An injunction in the thirteenth century was that in every church a chest should be provided fastened with THREE keys, to be kept by the Bishop, the Priest and a religious layman. It will be noted that the Parish Chest here at All Saints, Oakham has three such fastenings. Whilst an exact date cannot be made as to its origin it would appear that this Parish Chest may date from the early years of the Church.

There is little more that can be added, with perhaps one exception. In a blog post by Nick Thorne entitled "[Parish Chest – A Sure Coffer for the parish records](#)" he writes

By the mid-1500's the parishioners in every parish of the land were instructed by law to provide a strong chest with a hole in the upper part thereof, and having three keys, for holding the alms

for the poor. Another chest may have been used to keep safe the church's plate and this or the first chest would also double up as a place where the parish registers and other parish documents could be kept safe. In some places only one chest would have sufficed for both purposes, while in other parishes two or more may have been used.

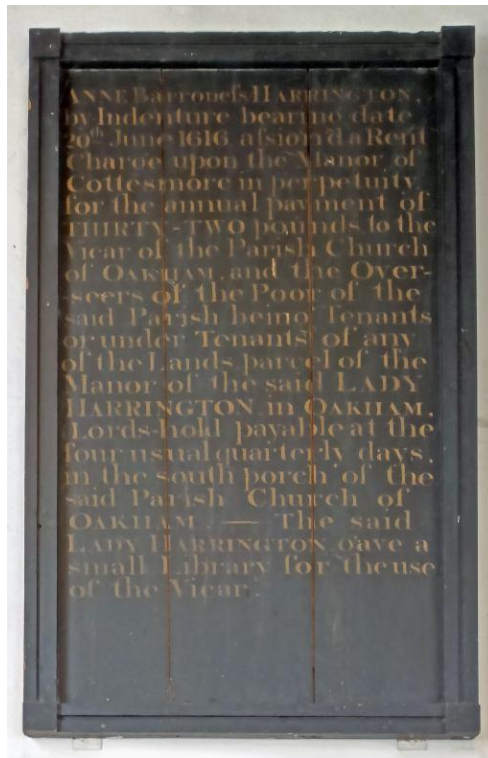
So there is a possibility that the three locks might indicate a 16th century rather than a thirteenth century date.

Of course, confronted by an old oak chest, the immediate question that comes to mind, is what mysteries does it still contain. The Oakham chest opens without much effort, although the lid is a bit weighty, so that question can easily be answered. And the mystery turns out to be quite mundane as can be seen from the photograph below – a crown of thorns, presumably for the Holy Week liturgy and an assortment of large and votive candles. Pretty much the sort of stuff that would be found in a cupboard in any parish church! The mysteries are long gone (and probably deposited in Leicester Archives).



The Harrington bequest – Part 1, The Charity

March 31, 2025



ANNE Barroness HARRINGTON, by Indenture bearing date 20th June 1616 assign'd a Rent Charge upon he Manor of Cottesmore in perpetuity for the annual payment of THIRTY-TWO pounds to the Vicar of the Parish Church of OAKHAM, and the Overseers of the Poor of the said Parish being Tenants or under Tenants of any of the Lands parcel of the Manor of the said LADY HARRINGTON in Oakham Lords-hold payable at the four usual quarterly days, in the south porch of the said Parish Church of OAKHAM. – The said LADY HARRINGTON gave a small Library for the use of the Vicar.

The inscribed board in the vestry of All Saints church in Oakham (photograph by Richard Adams)

Anne, Lady Harrington

Anne Keilway was a daughter of [Robert Keilway](#) of Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire. She married [John Harrington, 1st Baron Harrington of Exton](#), in 1573. After the Union of the Crowns in 1603, she was appointed as a Lady of the Bedchamber and was made Governess to Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James 1, travelling with Elizabeth in 1613 to Heidelberg for her wedding to Frederick V of the Palatinate. Anne died in May 1620. The younger Anne is depicted on a memorial to her Father in Exton parish church (right).

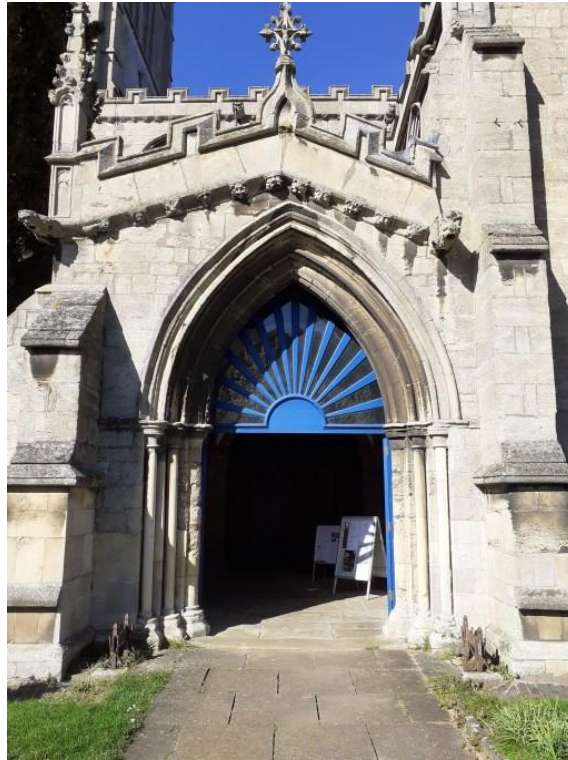


The Harrington bequest

In 1616 Lady Anne made a two part bequest, which is recorded on an inscribed wooden board in the vestry of All Saints Parish church in Oakham shown above. This involved an annual bequest of £32 to support the poor of the township of Oakham Lordshold, and the bequest of a small library for the use of the vicar of All Saints church. This post describes the first part of the bequest. The library bequest is addressed in a [related post](#).

The Harrington Charity

As set out on the board in the vestry of All Saints church shown above, the original bequest was for £32 per annum to the vicar of All Saints and to the Overseers of the Poor, to be distributed to the poor in the township of Oakham Lords-hold. The distinction between Oakham Lords-hold and Oakham Deans-hold is an ancient one and is well described by [T H McK Clough in "Oakham Lordshold in 1787"](#). The distribution was to be made on the quarter days from the south porch of the church. In 1915 the administration of the bequest was formalised by the Charity Commission. The Trustees of the Charity were to be the Vicar of All Saints, and four others appointed by the (then) Urban District Council. Procedures for meetings of the Trustees and for their appointment are also set out. The income is specified as £32 per year from the Earl of Gainsborough, which shall be spent as follows



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I. Grants or contributions for or towards the the provision of Nurses, and of medical and surgical assistance for the Sick and Infirm, including medical and surgical appliances, medicines, and comforts or necessaries :

II The supply of

(a) Clothes. Linen. Bedding, Fuel, or Food or other articles in kind

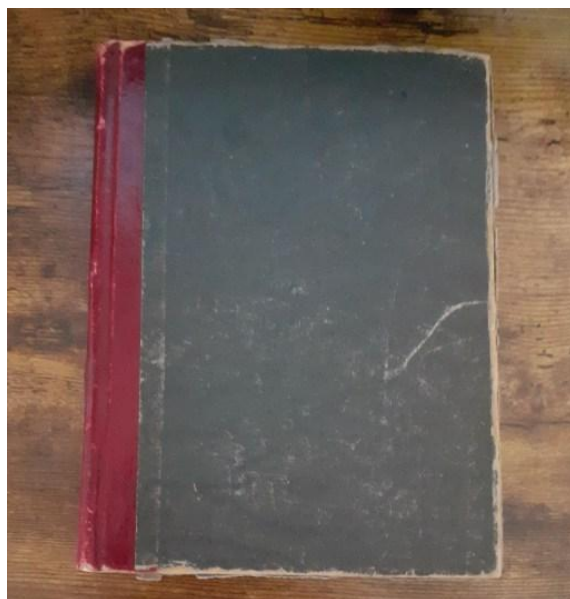
(b) Temporary assistance in money by way of loan or otherwise.

III Weekly allowances. being in no case, except with the approval of the Charity

Commissioners, less in value than 1s 6d a week or more than 3s a week, during the pleasure of the Trustees, to or for the benefit or persons qualified, as aforesaid, and not in receipt of Poor-law relief other than medical relief, who have attained the age of 60 years, and become wholly or part unable to maintain themselves by their own exertions, in augmentation of any means of support possessed by the beneficiaries – which shall be proved to the satisfaction of the

Trustees to be reasonably assured. and to be sufficient, when so augmented, to enable the beneficiaries to live in reasonable comfort.

The Minute Book 1925 to 2000

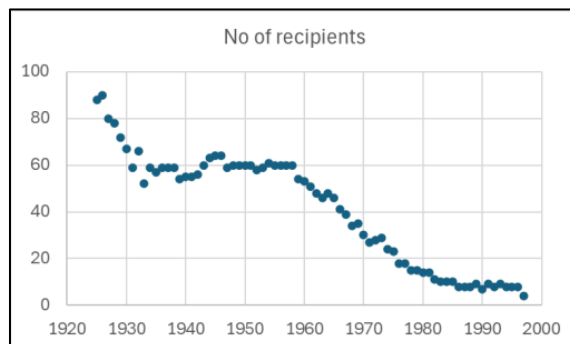


A minute book for the Harrington charity has recently come to light, during a clear out of old financial documents. this runs from 1925 to 2000, and contains some interesting information on the development, and the running down of the charity over that period. In this section we will look at the general trends over that period. In the following section we will look in more detail at the entries for 1925.

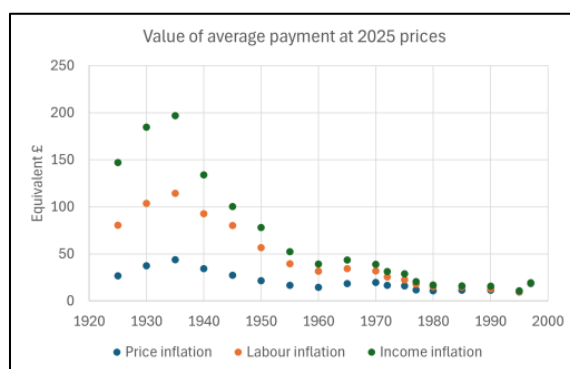
The annual entries in the minute book are largely routine, reporting the appointment of trustees, and giving a list of those to whom payments were made. Each year from 1925 to 2001 the total payments were close to the income of £32. There were a few other points of interest however. In 1933, it was decided to make payments directly to individuals rather than requiring them to congregate in the Church School – which had replaced the south Porch of the church as the distribution centre at some point. In 1935 grocery vouchers worth 2s 6d and redeemable at G. W. Peesgood, were also distributed alongside the cash dole. In 1954 enquiries were made as to whether it was possible to support those outside the Lordshold area, which seem to have been inconclusive. No meetings were held in 1998, 1999 and 2000 and the final meeting in 2001 discussed the possibility of amalgamation with the Morren charity. It also resolved to request the last three years payment from the Exton Estate (still of £32 / year). How these two issues were, or were not resolved is not recorded. Note however that the distribution in this form is not a good match with that specified in the 1915 document – and indeed there are no indications that regular weekly payments were made over the period.

The minute book also enables us to look in more detail at some aspects of the dole. The figure to the right shows the number of recipients of the dole over the years. It can be seen that this falls from just under 90 in 1925 to around 60 by 1930, and remains at that number until 1960,

when a gradual decline sets in. Up until 1930, different amounts were given to different people – either 2s 6d, 5s, 7s 6d or 10s. From 1933 a standard amount was paid. this was 10s to each recipient to 1960, and then increasing gradually as the number of recipients fell from then on. In the mid 1990s £8 was paid to each four recipients.



The number of recipients of the Harrington dole from 1925 to 1997



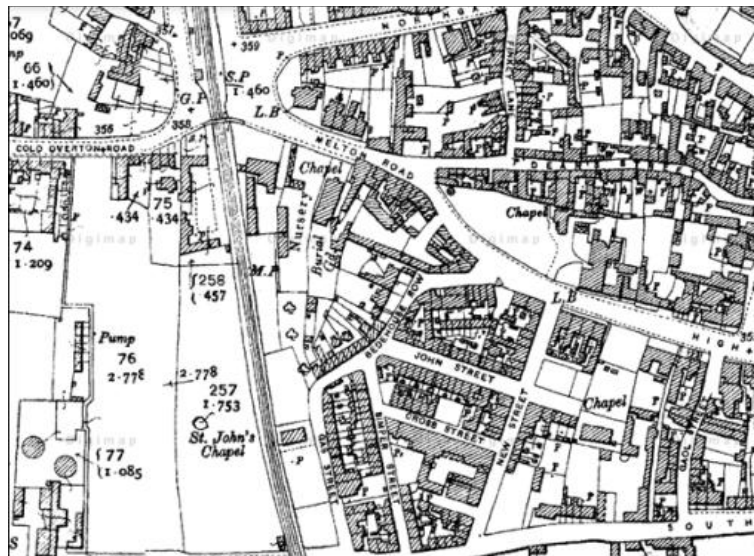
Value of the average dole between 1925 and 1997 in today's prices, using three different inflation measures.

But how much were such payments worth in today's prices? There are various ways of calculating this as set out by the [Measuring Worth website](#). The right hand figure shows the value of the average dole payment from 1925 onwards at today's prices, as calculated using price inflation, labour cost inflation and income inflation. The last two are probably the most relevant to this study. These show that the average dole payment in the 1920s and 1930 was worth somewhere between £100 and £200 in today's terms – not a massive amount, but perhaps something like the Winter Fuel allowance. Using the same method, the value of £32 in 1603 when the charity was set up was £127,000 based on labour cost inflation and £228,000 based on income inflation. On the assumption that there were around 100 recipients of the dole, this gives the worth of an average payment of between £1000 and £2000 in today's terms, which would be quite substantial.

The 1925 Dole

We now look at the information for the 1925 payments in more detail. This year is on the limit of the 100 year period usually applied to the release of individual names, and the entries in the minute book may be of interest to Family Historians.

The 1925 pages have been scanned and transcribed. The original writing is not easy to read, so I can't be certain about the accuracy of the transcripts – but I have done my best! In general terms, the large majority of the recipients were women, usually identified as Widows.



Oakham 1910

Brooke Rd	1	Mill St	3
Cold Overton Rd	7	Mount Pleasant	2
Cross St	3	New St	2
Crown St	5	Northgate St	5
Gaol St	4	Park Lane	1
Gas St	7	Pullins Yard	1
John St	10	Simper St	10
Johns court	7	South St	5
Jubilee Buildings	3	Westgate	10

A breakdown of the streets where those who received the 1925 lived is given above. Most of these are shown on the map from 1910 above. Some of these streets no longer exist, specifically those streets in the area between New St., Melton Rd. and the railway line – Cross St., Gas St., and Simper St., with John St. being much curtailed. Others cannot be precisely located – Pullins Yard and Johns Court, although they are likely to be in the same area. Bedehouse Row on the map is referred to as Westgate in the minute book. In total 58 of the dole recipients (around two thirds of the total) lived in the area bounded by South St, Gaol St., High St., Melton Rd. and the railway.

The Harrington bequest – Part 2. The Oakham Parish Library

March 31, 2025

This post is a continuation of [the previous one](#), which introduce Lady Anne Harrington and her bequest.

The Oakham Parish Library

In 1616 Anne bequeathed a collection of books to All Saints Oakham, and these formed the core of the parish library. a number of volumes were added to the library over the years, mainly service books and bibles, This collection, numbering 115 volumes was transferred in October 1980 on indefinite loan into the custody of the Department of Special Collections of Nottingham University Library. The Oakham Parish Library is well described in the paper "[Oakham Parish Library](#)" by Anne Herbert. This paper is however not easily available (unless one has a University Library access or is prepared to pay £35 for a copy), so I quote below the most relevant passages.

.....Until their removal to Nottingham the books were housed in two oak presses 176 cm. in height, 183 cm. in width and 39 cm. in depth, with three shelves apiece and a central vertical divide of a later date. The craftsman ship is rather crude and lacking in decoration with the exception of a single strip of carving along the top of each press.....

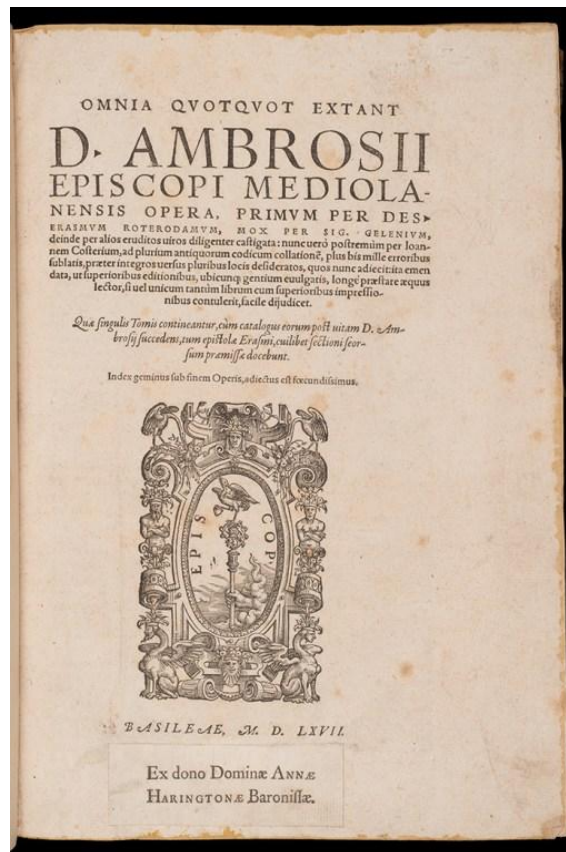
.....Oakham parish library comprises almost exclusively works of theology with a sprinkling of history, mainly ecclesiastical, and canon law..... It is strongest in the Greek and Latin fathers-Athanasius, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, John of Damascus, Origen; Augustine, Gregory, Hilary, Jerome, Tertullian..... But the medieval schoolmen, the Protestant reformers and pre-Reformation theology and law are also represented....

.....The books were originally shelved with the spines innermost but there is no evidence to suggest they were ever chained. All but the late additions to the library have fore-edge numbers and some also have author and title information on the fore-edge.....

.....A printed book label, which survives in 46 of the volumes, pasted at the base of the title-page, commemorates Lady Harington's bequest and bears the inscription 'Ex dono Dominae ANNAE HARINGTONAE Baronissae....

.....The books are for the most part fairly uniformly bound in calf decorated only with fillets round the edges of the covers. The incunables and early sixteenth century volumes, however, have blind-stamped leather bindings over wooden boards.....

....Oakham parish library seems to have been rather neglected during the subsequent centuries. There is very little documentation relating to its establishment or history-no extant loan records and little evidence that it was ever used by the incumbents of Oakham for whose benefit the books were originally given.....



In an appendix to her paper, Herbert lists 67 books that belong to or were contemporary with the Harrington bequest, the remaining items being later additions to the library. The library is also discussed by [Aaron T Pratt “A Baroness and her books”](#) which contains a photograph of the printed book label shown to the left, and also some examples from elsewhere that show how the books might have looked on their shelves.

The library at the University of Nottingham

81 items from the Oakham Parish Library are listed in the [Nottingham University Catalogue](#). As Herbert states that 115 volumes were transferred in 1980, it is likely that some catalogue entries relate to multiple documents – most likely those referring to bibles or prayer books.

From Oakham to Mandalay

April 1, 2025

All Saints Church in Oakham is a long term supporter of the Church Mission Society (CMS). It has recently been allocated two new mission partners, both working in Myanmar (formerly Burma). CMS have requested that the church does not publicise these links, as the partners work in a dangerous and sensitive situation. Nonetheless we pray for them and support them as best we can. Very recently, after a service of Morning Prayer in which the mission partners were remembered, I happened to look at a plaque on the wall of the chancel just behind the pulpit, over one of the clergy stalls. The plaque's location, and the plaque itself are shown in the photographs below.



The typography of the plaque makes it quite difficult to read, which is presumably the reason I have never done so in the past, despite the fact that I have sat in front of it on numerous

occasions. But on reading it, I noted that the church in 1906 already had a link with Burma. The plaque reads as follows.

To the glory of God and in memory of Henry Arthur Jerwood, scholar and prefect of Oakham School; a faithful and beloved curate of this parish and a zealous missionary. The lamps in the chancel and sanctuary are erected by his schoolfellows, friends and parishioners. He died serving in obedience to his Master's call at Mandalay on March 26th 1906.

Mandalay is the second largest city in Myanmar, 600km north of the capital Yangon (formerly Rangoon) and is the centre of a largely Buddhist area. Our current mission partners are thus not the first links that the church has had in that area.

Henry Arthur Jerwood

Can we say any more about Henry Jerwood? His basic biographical details can easily be traced on Ancestry. He was born in 1878, the eldest child of Rev. Thomas Frederick Jerwood (1846-1926), Rector of Little Bowden and Dorothea Elizabeth Longsdon (1853-1942) who were married in Yorkshire in 1877. The couple had a number of other children, amongst them Helen Dorothea Jerwood (1880-1965), who will be mentioned below, Rev. Frederick Harold Jerwood (1885-1971) who was to become Chaplain at Oakham School, and Major Hugh John Jerwood MC (1890-1918) who was killed in action. The latter had a son, born in 1918 after his death – [John Michael Jerwood \(1918-1991\)](#), a businessman and philanthropist, who was to become a [significant benefactor of Oakham School](#), and a number of the school facilities bear his name.



St. Nicholas, Little Bowden, Northants



Oakham School

Henry Arthur attended Oakham School, as his father had done before him, and his brothers were later to follow him there. He matriculated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in 1897, taking his BA in 1902 and his MA in 1905. He took some time out just before he graduated to fight in the South African (i.e. Boer) War from 1900 to 1902 with the Suffolk Regiment.

Clergyman and Missionary

After graduation, Henry Jerwood attended the Clergy Training School in Cambridge (the early name of [Wescott House](#)) and was ordained deacon in 1902 and took up the curacy at All Saints church in Oakham, a town with which he would have been very familiar from his schooldays. The chronology of his training and ordination as deacon and priest is not wholly clear from the sources. In 1905 he applied to become a missionary to Burma. We can trace his short career there through the pages of the Quarterly Paper of the Rangoon Diocesan Association (RQP), a nationwide organisation that supported the work of missionaries in Burma, and was affiliated to the Society for the Promulgation of the Gospel (SPG). These are all available as pdfs in the SOAS missionary archive. As an aside, those who, like myself, dabble in historical matters, are hugely indebted to the patience and the perseverance of the archivists who made such material available. In [RQP 34, June 1905](#) we read the following under the heading *Reinforcements*, which says something of the military mindset of the organisation.

.....The Rev. Henry Arthur Jerwood, B.A., of Sidney Sussex 'College, Cambridge, and the Clergy Training School, was ordained in 1902, to the Curacy at All Saints, Oakham, in the Diocese of Peterborough.....

The Rev. A. Jerwood, at present an assistant Curate at Oakham, will join Mr. Fyffe at Mandalay~ a man stout and , vigorous in body and stout of heart, who went to South Africa when the war broke out, and did his part there man fully, and will carry to his work in Burma the same vigour he gave to South Africa and Oakham.

In the next edition ([RQP 35, September 1905](#)) we read that, as a consequence of Jerwood's departure, Rev H J C Knight, the Commissary of the Rangoon Diocesan Association (who recruited for the Association and was living in Jesus Lane in Cambridge), preached at All Saints on Sunday July 30th. The collection of £3 4s was given to the R.D.A.



[From Wikipedia](#)

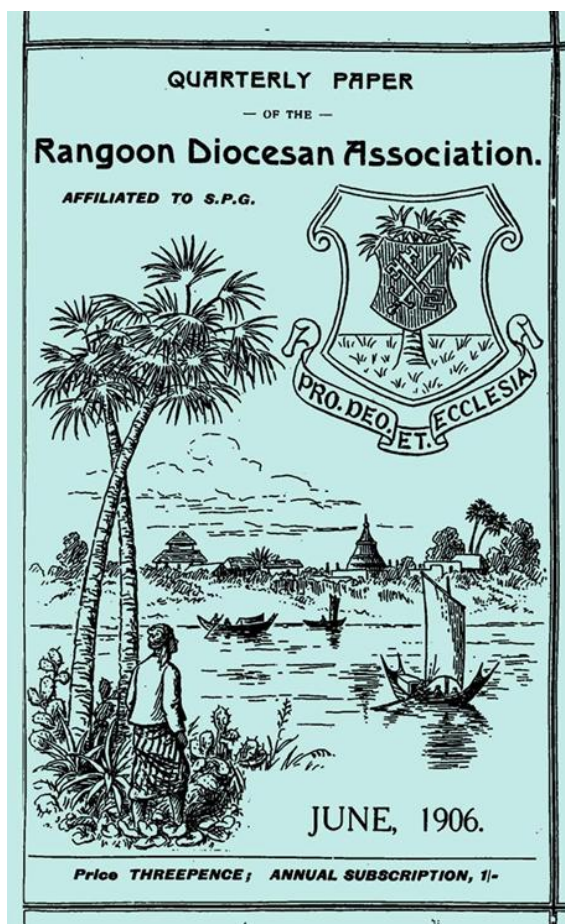
Then in [RQP 36 from December 1905](#) Jerwood's arrival in Burma is noted, under the heading *News from the Front*, again another military metaphor.

The newcomers have arrived, and are settling down to work, the Rev. H. A. Jerwood and Mr. Hart with Mr. Fyffe at Mandalay, the Rev. R. J. Stone at Bishop's Court as Chaplain, the Rev. R. G. Fairhurst at S. Luke's, Toungoo, and the Rev. W. H. C. Pope at Rangoon .

We also have the following description of the work in Mandalay,

The Buddhist Field – The Winchester Brotherhood has been founded at Mandalay, on the general lines of the Indian Community Missions, for systematic study of Buddhism and work in the field. The Head, Rev. R. S. Fyffe, has at present only one Brother (Rev. H. A. Jerwood). These two men are the only English Clergy for Missionary work in the chief town of Upper Burma, a city of 180,000 souls. They need at once two men of (if possible) a studious type, of patience, hope, and brotherliness. There is work to do while learning Burmese. The Brothers have passage and outfit paid, maintenance, lodging together, and £40 a year.

The mention of Jerwood in [RQP 37 for March 1906](#) is very brief and simply says that he had taken over the role of Principal at the School run by the Winchester Brotherhood from Mr. Hart, who arrived in Burma at the same time as he did. Jerwood died on March 28th 1906. We read his obituary in [RGA 38 June 2006](#), written by the Commissary Rev H. J. C. Knight.



Though most of our readers will have read the Bishop's notice of Mr. Jerwood in the Mission Field for June, our R. Q. P. ought to have some notice of him. He was born on February 25th, 1878, the eldest son of the Rev. Thomas Frederick Jerwood, Rector of Little Bowden. He must have owed much to his home. On hearing from Bishop Montgomery that he had fallen asleep, his father was able to write "we hope to send another son." and assuredly in homes that can speak thus:

"The father's passion arms the son, And the great work goes on, goes on."

All his school days were spent at Oakham School; thence he entered Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. While yet an undergraduate he served in the S. A. war. On his return he graduated, entered the Clergy Training School, and was ordained to Oakham in 1902. Last autumn he went to Burma, calling at Delhi {where his sister was working under S. P. G. in the Cambridge Mission), and other Brotherhoods, and joined Mr. Fyffe at Mandalay in December. On the 28th March last he passed from us. The cause of his death was a rare type of paralysis – nothing climatic. The Bishop and the Rev. R. J. Stone, who was with him at the C. T. S., were in Mandalay at the time. His body rests near the graves of the Colbecks.

We had looked for great things from his ministry in Burma. His qualities of simple manliness, unaffected and robust piety, a very-single-hearted devotion, unselfishness, courage and affection, drew men to him. These, and his unfailing cheerfulness, promised much for our Winchester Brotherhood. He went out "for life," and so his home gave him. His letters from Mandalay were always touched with humour, and were full of hope and determination. It is easy to pray "Thy will be done," while we have no disappointments or reversing of our purposes; but it is hard really to bow to the surrender of such a man. When Bishop Maples was drowned on Lake Nyassa. on the very day of his arrival as Bishop of Likoma, Augustine Ambati wrote, "God liked to take him, to make white (i.e., consecrate) so the waters of the lake." Even so may Mr. Jerwood's death in Mandalay be one more consecration of the city. To his friends – there and here – it will be one more tie binding us to the missionary spirit, and the forward march of the Church. It is good to know that Mr. Garrad, whom God has moved to carry on his torch, will be, we believe, in every way a brother to Mr. Fyffe. Those who loved H. A. J. will pray "The Lord bless his going out and coming in. "

H. J. C. K.

The sister in Dehli that is referred to is Helen Dorothea. At the time she worked for the Cambridge Mission of SPG, but was later to work for the East India Company in Dehli. She remained in India all her life, dying in 1965.

Some final thoughts

Interesting as it is to find that All Saints had a link with Myanmar one hundred and twenty years before our current one, and to read Arthur Jerwood's interesting and ultimately tragic story the aspect that has struck me most in the preparation of this post, is how very different our current

Christian culture is to that of 1906. As noted above, military metaphors are often used in the RQP, and indeed the whole publication shows an extremely ordered and extensive organisation that itself has a military flavour. The form of Christianity that one finds in its pages is a very muscular and forceful one and whilst one can admire the earnestness and zeal of those determined to bring the gospel to those who had never heard it, the tone of the publication reflects the colonial era of its time, and the implicit superiority of European (and particularly British) civilisation and culture to that of the “natives”. However, whilst I find this aspect more than a little repellent, I do wonder if we have lost something over the last century, in terms of our zeal and enthusiasm for the mission of the church, both at home and overseas. The words of Revelation 3.15-16 come uncomfortably to mind.

Stephen Glynne's church notes – Oakham All Saints

April 21, 2025

Preamble

The Glynne Baronetcy dates back to 1661, with its main estate at Hawarden in Flintshire. The 8th Baronet, Sir Stephen Glynne (1780 to 1815) married Mary Griffin, daughter of Lord Braybrooke. After his early death, he was succeeded by his son Sir Stephen Richard Glynne, the 9th Baronet (1807-1874). I first came across him as the owner of the Oak Farm Iron Works in the Black Country, which was the subject of a spectacular financial crash. Glynne was saved from financial ruin by the efforts of his brother-in-law, the future Prime Minister William Gladstone, at very considerable expense to the latter.



Sir Stephen Glynne

More widely, Stephen Glynne is best known as a church antiquarian. Over the course of his adult lifetime he visited over 5000 churches in England and Wales, making notes, and in some cases sketches of their architecture, plans and furnishings. These notes can be found in 106 volumes now housed in the [Gladstone Library at Hawarden](#). A small minority of these have been transcribed and published, but unfortunately this does not include the volumes containing the Rutland churches. This blog post goes some way towards remedying this, by presenting a transcription of the entry for All Saints Oakham. It is intended as the first fruits of a project to do the same for all the churches in the Oakham Team Ministry that were visited by Glynne. However, this may simply result in the creation of paving slabs for the road to hell.

Stephen Glynne's description of All Saints Oakham

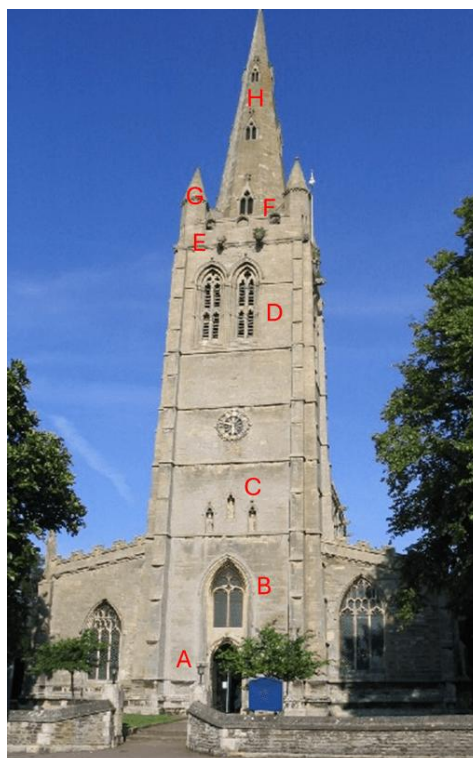
The text of Glynne's entry for All Saints Oakham is given below, from [Volume 33 of his Church Notes](#), one of three covering Leicestershire and Rutland. It is not dated, but other entries in the same volume indicate the year 1849, and it is likely this applies to the Oakham entry too. Certainly it was written before the restoration of 1858 – see earlier blogs [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) that deal with that. As written, it was all in one long paragraph,

with somewhat dubious punctuation – almost a stream of consciousness approach. I have divided it up into sections with my own headings, and added consistent punctuation, which hopefully makes it a little easier to understand. The letters in brackets refer to the captions on the photographs, which illustrate the text. Numbers in brackets refer to the explanatory notes given at the end of the transcript.

The transcript

General

This is a very large and fine church with large portions of Curvilinear work (1) and some of the later style. It consists of a large and lofty Nave with wide aisles, Clerestory, North and South Transepts, each with one aisle, and a chancel with side aisles.



The tower and the spire

The tower and spire

The steeple is at the west end of the nave. Included within the aisles, it is a remarkably fine composition consisting of a tower with pinnacles at the angles, surmounted by a beautiful spire connecting to the pinnacles by flying buttresses, the work of the Curvilinear period. On the west side of the tower is the door (A) and over it a two light windows included within one pointed arch (B). In the next stage are three small trefoiled niches on the west side (C) (2). The belfry storey has, on each side, two long windows each of two lights divided by a transom and having deep architrave moulding and shafts (D). Just above the nave a rich band filled with heads and foliage (E) (3). The parapet of the tower is pierced at rectangular intervals with small ogee openings (F). At each angle is a small octagonal turret covered by a large pinnacle from there

being flying buttresses to the spire (G) (4), which is well proportioned and has several lights of small canopied windows (H).

The body of the church

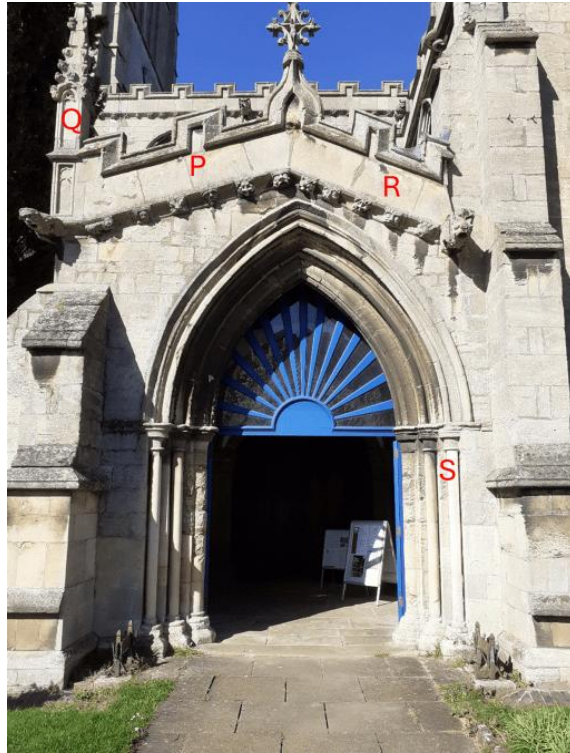
The whole of the body of the Chancel is embattled (I), there being beneath the parapet at some positions a cornice of heads etc (J) (5). The apex of the gable of Chancel, Transepts and Clerestory is in each crowned with an ogee canopy (K) (6). That of the Clerestory has a fine ornamental cross (L). The Transept ends are enriched with large crocketed pinnacles (M). The northern one is plainer externally than the corresponding one and has much blank wall. The windows of the Nave, Clerestory and Transepts are all Rectilinear (N) (1) but the walls are earlier. Some of the buttresses on the south have crocketed triangular canopies (O).



Transept, Nave and Clerestory

The South Porch

The South Porch has an embattled gable (P) with pinnacles (Q) and cornices of heads (R) (7). The doorway is large and has deep mouldings and shafts of early English character having the nail head in the capital (S). Within the porch are niches on each side.



South Porch

Nave and aisles

The tower opens to the Nave and each aisle has a pointed arch springing from chamfered shafts (S), but much concealed by clumsy boarded partitions and lumber (8). Some of the windows are of three, others of four lights. The Nave and aisles are of considerable width and the divisions are formed by a double row of lofty pointed arches, four on each side (T). The pillars consists of four clustered shafts in lozenge form with the capitals sculptured with heads (U) (9).



The nave and aisles looking towards west end

Transepts

The Transepts are each divided into two aisles by two pointed arches with octagonal pillars (V). The ends of the transept have each two windows under one gable. In the South Transept is the niche with a contracted arch and shafts of early English character, with the piscina (W). On the east side of the same Transept, between the arch opening to the South Aisle and chancel is a window in an arch in the wall of early English work with toothed ornaments in the mouldings (X) (10). In the north transept is a Rectilinear corniced niche in the east wall (Y) and beneath it a trefoiled niche with drain of Curvilinear work (Z).



The South (left) and North (right) transepts

Chancel and chapels

The Chancel with its Aisles has a great portion of Rectilinear work (11). The three east windows are large fine ones of four or five lights but only one retains its tracery. The side windows are of three lights. There are three pointed arches on each side of the Chancel (AA). Those in the south are rectilinear, the piers having fine mouldings carried down the ?? with shafts attached. On the sides on the north the piers resemble those of the nave but have the Tudor flower in the capitals (AB). The north aisle (12) has had a good panelled wood ceiling but now somewhat mutilated. On the north side (13) of the chancel is a rectilinear vestry which has no battlement but the gable is finished by a rich canopied niche and cross. The windows east of the chancel and south arch are under one gable and between their heads is a quatrefoiled circle. There is a niche and stoop near the South door of the chancel externally.



The chancel

The font

The font is Norman of circular form with intersecting arches and shafts (14). The base is square but with corners chamfered off, and moulded with small trefoil arches. There are traces of some fine ??.



Closing remarks

Altogether the interior is not so well kept as it deserves to be. The pews and galleries are shabby and the whole dirty and untidy but the exterior is in good preservation and the stone of excellent quality (15).

Notes

1. The architectural periods referred to in the transcript are Early English (1190 to 1250); Curvilinear (or Decorated (1250 to 1350) and Rectilinear or Perpendicular (1330 to 1530).
2. No mention is made of the statues now in these niches, so it is most likely these were added during the 1858 restoration.
3. This band is above the belfry rather than the nave, so Glynne probably made a mistake here. It is possible however that the carvings were moved during the restoration, but the order of the text suggest that the first explanation is most likely.
4. These might be better described a low flying buttresses – it is difficult to observe them from ground level.
5. The heads cannot be seen on the large scale photograph. However there are some wonderful close up pictures of them on the [Great English Churches website](#).
6. Shown here on the South Transept gable.
7. Again, detailed pictures can be found on the [Great English Churches website](#).
8. This is very much inline with the description given by Gilbert Scott in his survey before the 1858 restoration. However his language was somewhat more robust. The aisles referred to are behind the west wall of the nave in the photo.
9. The capitals are perhaps the most significant heritage aspect of All Saints. I have discussed them at length [here](#).
10. The wording is unclear here, but probably refers to the blind window which now houses the ten commandments.
11. The Chancel and side chapels were the most altered part of the church in the 1858 restoration, and much of what is described by Glynne no longer exists.
12. The current Holy Trinity Chapel. The southern aisle (the current Lady Chapel) is not mentioned.
13. This is a mistake – the vestry is on the south side.
14. The order of text here suggest the font was in the chancel area. However, it now stands close to the west door. Whether that has always been the case, or whether it was moved during the restoration to a more ecclesiastically acceptable position is not clear. I am inclined to think it was moved, as it would have been very awkwardly placed under the gallery if it were at the west end before the restoration.
15. Again, this finds and echo in the condition report of Gilbert Scott before the restoration.

Kinetic Water Power

April 25, 2025



Recently, whilst waiting for a service to begin at All Saints church in Oakham, I stood in the Lady Chapel idly reading the memorials attached to the wall (as one does). I came across the one above. The inscription reads

**To the Glory of GOD and in Memory of
Richard Tryon J.P. of this County.
late Captain Rifle Brigade.
son of Thomas Tryon Esq, of Bulwick Park
Northamptonshire,
Born August 31st 1837, Died December 12th 1905.
The Kinetic Water Power was given by his
widow Jane Anna Lucy Tryon.**

Ricard Tryon was one of the great and the good of Rutland society in the late 19th century, and even has his own [Wikipedia](#) page. There we read the following.

Richard Tryon DL JP (31 August 1837 — 12 December 1905) was an English first-class cricketer and British Army officer. The son of Thomas Tryon and Anne Trollope, he was born in August 1837 at Bulwick Park in the Northamptonshire village of Bulwick. He was commissioned into the British Army as an ensign in the Rifle Brigade in November 1854. Shortly after he was promoted to lieutenant in February 1855. Tryon purchased the rank of captain in July 1858, later retiring from active service nearly a decade later in May 1867. Tryon made a single appearance in first-class cricket for the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), captained by W. G. Grace, against Kent at Lord's in 1871. Batting once in the match, he was dismissed by Bob Lipscomb for 7 runs in the MCC first innings. A resident of The Lodge, Oakham in the

County of Rutland, Tryon was nominated to be Sheriff of Rutland in November 1880. He was unsuccessful, with Francis Pierremont Cecil being made Sheriff; however, Cecil went on active naval service and was replaced by Tryon in April 1881. He was made a deputy lieutenant of Rutland in December 1901. He additionally served as a justice of the peace for Rutland. Tryon died at Marylebone in December 1905, following a short illness. He married Jane Anna Lucy Johnson, daughter of General William Augustus Johnson, in 1867. Two sons, Henry and Richard, were killed in the First World War. A brother was the Royal Navy Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon.

So he was an interesting character in his own right. However it was the words *The Kinetic Water Power* was given by his widow Jane Anna Lucy Tryon that caught my eye. What on earth was this about? Kinetic Water Power are words I would associate more with my first year fluid mechanics lectures to engineering undergraduates than to the interior of churches. However, when I did a quick search of the British Newspaper Archive things became a little clearer.

Grantham Journal 23/11/1907 ... o. *The Parish Church Organ. Through the munificence of Mrs. Rd. Tryon, the Lodge, Oakham, and the Earl Lonsdale, Kinetic water-power apparatus and pneumatic pedal-action have been added to the organ of All Saints* Church, in addition to which the instrument ...*

Stamford Mercury 22/11/1907 ... *just undergone complete renovation, the work being carried out by Messrs. Brindley and Foster, of Sheffield. hydraulic kinetic water-power has also been added. Near the instrument brass plate bears the following inscription : To the glory of God, and in memory ...*

It seems the words Kinetic Water Power refer to the method for powering the church organ, which at that period was housed at the East end of the Lady Chapel, close to the location of the memorial to Richard Tryon. But what was the memorial referring to? Basically, water power was used to operate the bellows of organs when a mains water supply become available, and date back to the 1870s. This was used to fill two pistons sequentially that drove the rod that pumped the bellows. One such hydraulic engine has recently been restored at Moccas church in Herefordshire – see the photo below, the [Facebook page](#) and the [church website here](#). More information on hydraulic engines can also be found [here](#).



[The Moccas Water Engine](#)

But there is still something of a puzzle. The Stamford Mercury extract above indicates that the apparatus was installed by [Brindley and Foster of Sheffield, who installed the original organ in 1872](#). However the word Kinetic suggest some sort of association with the Kinetic Organ Blower Company, an offshoot of [Cousans of Lincoln](#) (1), However by 1907, this company was busy building Kinetic Blowers – fan blowers operated by electricity. It may be that the Kinetic company also produced hydraulic apparatus, or it may be that there was a somewhat loose usage of the word *kinetic* on the memorial, particularly as it refers to water power rather than air blowers. But interestingly it would seem that hydraulic engines were old and somewhat out of date technology by 1907.

1. Elvin L. (1995) Pipes and Actions. Some Organ Builders in the Midlands and beyond, Published by Laurence Elvin, Lincoln.

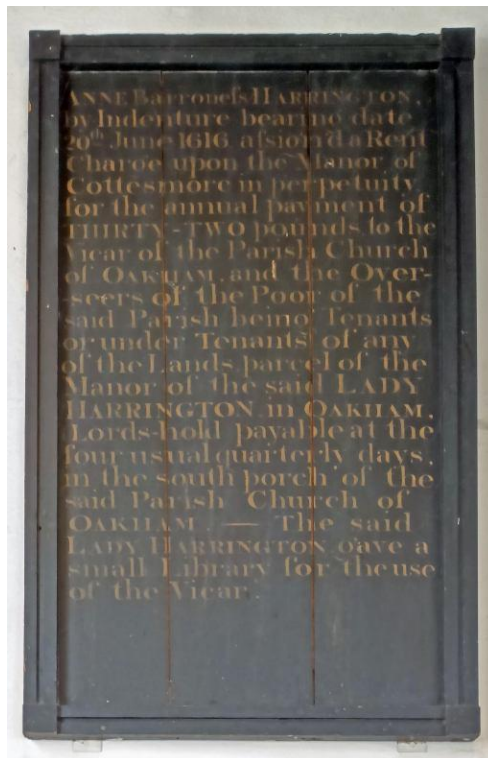
The memorials of All Saints Oakham

May 19, 2025

All Saints church in Oakham is not particularly well endowed with memorials to individuals and events, and there are no spectacular carvings. However some of those that do exist enable interesting stories to be told. In this post I present a number of these, with links to more information, and highlight those memorials that require further investigation. The post is very much a work in progress, and I will edit it as more information becomes available.

Note – to read some of the inscriptions below readers may well need to magnify them. Even then, some will take a little patience to read, particularly the brasses where it is difficult to take photographs without reflections obscuring the text.

Vestry



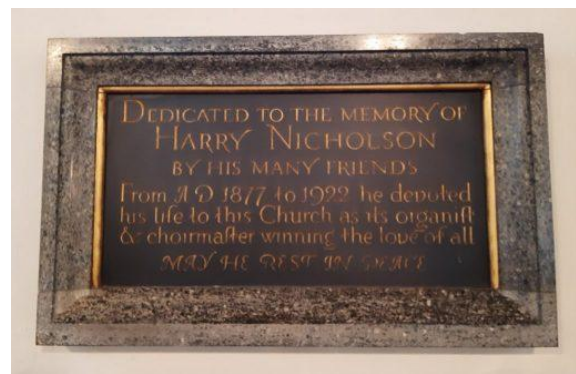
I have discussed the wooden memorial of the Lady Harrington bequest – money for the relief of the poor and a donation of a Parish Library – in two earlier blog posts [here](#) and [here](#). The memorial is in the vestry on the south side of the church and is not usually publicly accessible.

Chancel

A transcript of this plaque in the Chancel is given in the post [From Oakham to Mandalay](#) and a little more information is given on the career of Henry Jerwood.



Lady Chapel



A transcript of this plaque in the Lady Chapel is given in the post "[Kinetic Water Power](#)," and information is given there about Richard Tryon and (at some length) the Kinematic Water Power apparatus.

The life and times of long term organist of All Saints church and the founder of the Oakham Choral Society are well described in a blog from the [Rutland County Museum](#).

Pulpit

The pulpit has a dedicatory plaque, very low down near the foot of the steps. It reads as follows *To the Glory of god and in remembrance of Charles Knowlton Morris, who was born in Oakham March 18 1841 and died there April 4 1905. This pulpit was erected by his widow Judith Emily in accordance with his wish expressed during his lifetime.*

Charles Morris was a brewer and a coal merchant. [A window in the church has a similar dedication](#) from his wife and is described in the following way

Depicting Endurance, Humility, Innocence, Love, Principle, Sympathy, Fortitude, Charity and Justice, as mostly portrayed by scenes from Jesus' life. The badge of the Vale of Catmose lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows is at the bottom.



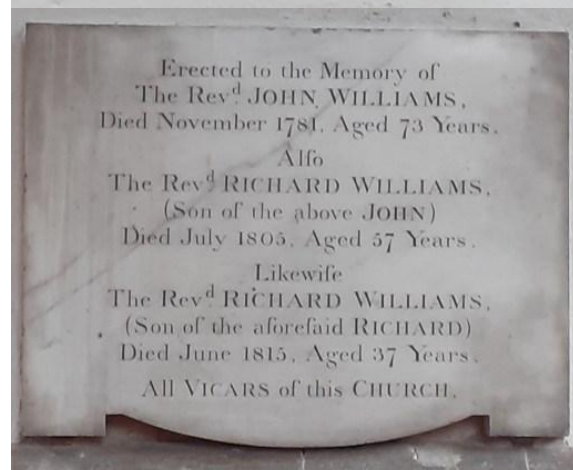
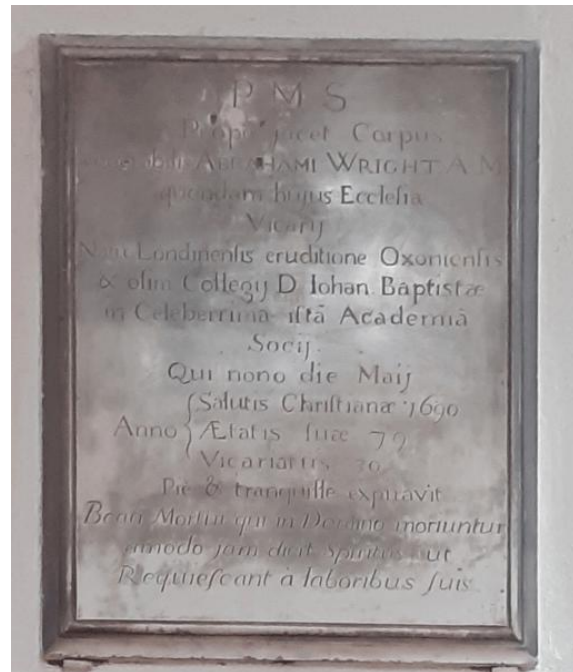
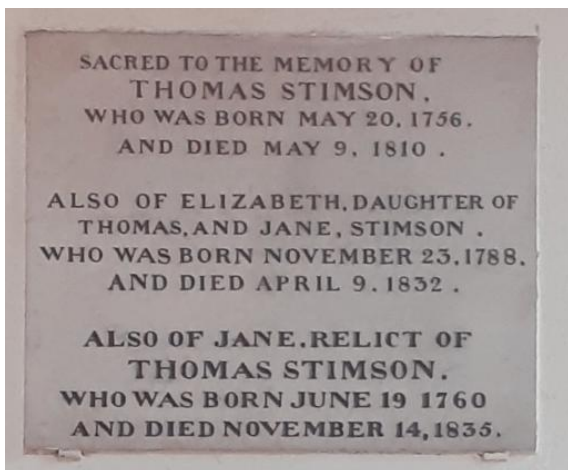
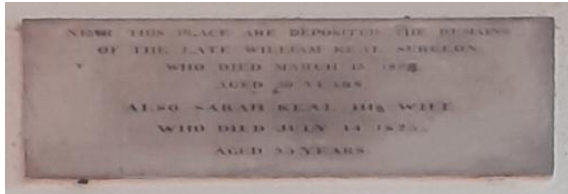
South Transept



This difficult to read memorial is to Benjamin Adam (1808-1890?), his wife Sara (1816-1895?) and their son Reginald Brookes Adam (1846-1871?). We are told that Benjamin and Sara were worshippers at All Saints for over 50 years, and that Benjamin was Clerk of the Peace for the County (a legal officer) for over 40, and that he also held other important positions.

The [Church of England Clergy database](#) reveals that Bartin Burton was born in Oakham and served as Curate in the parish of Rockingham, Rector at Oxendon (both in Peterborough diocese) from 1728 to 1729 and Vicar of Ravenstone in Buckinghamshire (Lincoln diocese) from 1747 to 1764.

North Transept



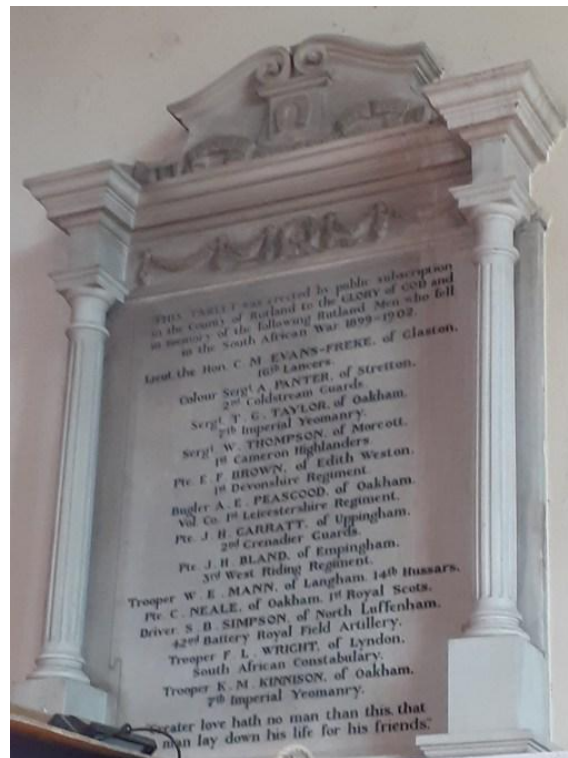
These four memorials in the north transept are placed one above the other in the order shown to the left. The top one commemorates William Keal, a surgeon (d1824?) and his wife Sara (d1825). The one below it commemorates the lives of Thomas Stimson (1756-1810), his wife (relict) Jane (1760-1835) and their daughter Elizabeth (1788-1832).

The third is in Latin and commemorates John Abraham Wright (d1690) aged 79, vicar for 30 years, during and after the Commonwealth period. In the first instance he served only one year (1644-5) before he was and replaced by the parliamentary favourite Benjamin King. He took up his post again after the Restoration in 1660.

The lower memorial is to three generations of Vicars of the parish – John Williams (d1781), Richard Williams (d1805) and Richard Williams (d1815). More details of their appointments at Oakham and elsewhere can be found in the [Church of England Clergy Database](#).

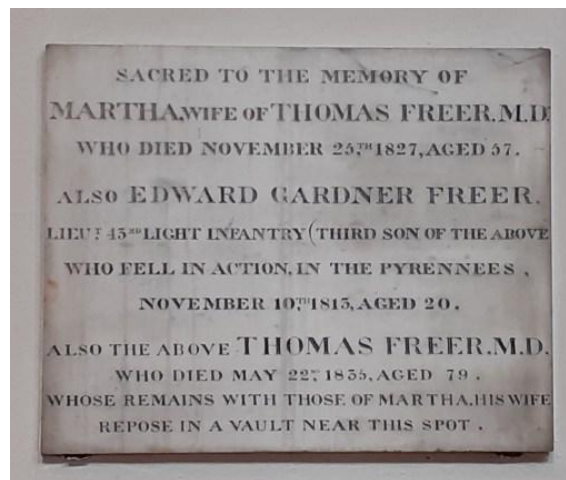
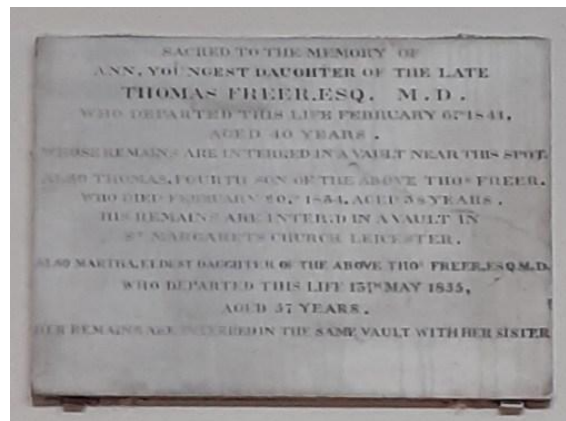
South Aisle

This Boer War monument is now above the choir vestry in the South aisle and not easily accessible – or indeed to photograph. A full description of the dedication service is given in [Rutland County Magazine and Historical Record Volume 2](#), which includes brief biographies of some of those named.



The monument above was both difficult to photograph (to avoid reflections) and difficult to read. It is shown in two forms – as originally taken, and with an attempt made to remove the effect of perspective. It commemorates the 100th anniversary celebration of the Sunday School movement, which around 1000 people attended, and commemorates its founder, [Robert Raikes](#) of Gloucester.

North aisle



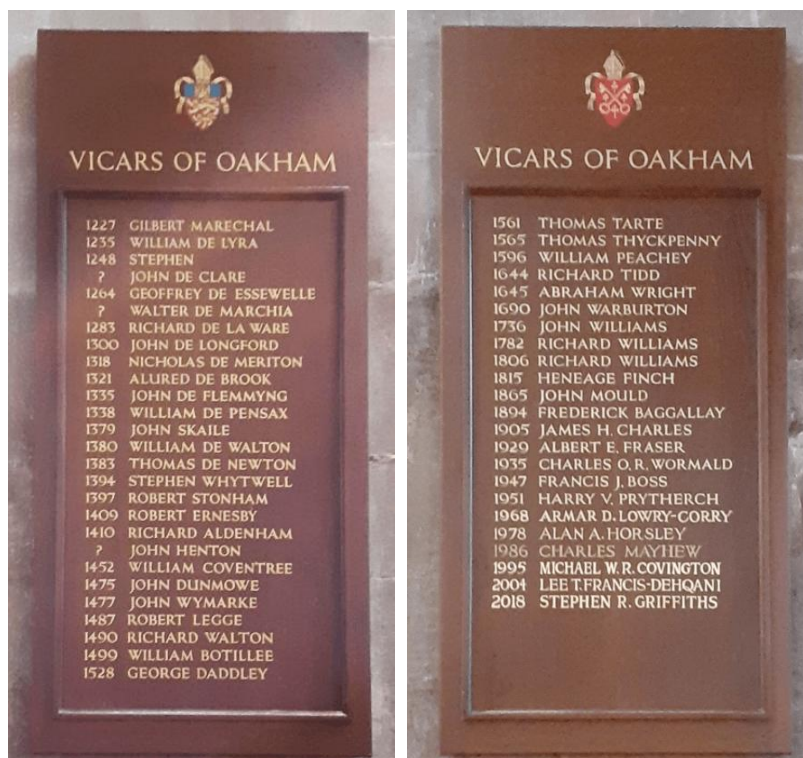
These three monuments are placed above each other in the north aisle in the order shown. The top one is too small to read easily from ground level. They all refer to the Freer family from the early 19th century. The bottom memorial is to Thomas Freer, a doctor, who died in 1835, his wife Martha who died in 1827, and his third son, Edward Gardner who fell in action in the Pyrennees in 1813 aged 20. The second memorial commemorates Thomas and Matha's youngest daughter Ann (d 1844), their fourth son Thomas (d 1834) and buried in Leicester, and

their eldest daughter Martha (d 1835). Finally the upper memorial describes in very small text, Lt. Colonel William Garner Freer who died in Corfu in 1836, whilst commanding the 10th Infantry Regiment. His long military career is outlined, including the loss of his right arm at the storming of Badajos. He is buried in Corfu.

The Freer's are also commemorated in two tiles in the nave aisle – much faded as they are on the main thoroughfare through church. They are dedicated to Ann and John who, as far as I can make out, died in the early 1800s.



West End



More details of the Vicars of Oakham can be found in the [church guide](#). [The Church of England Clergy Database](#) also includes records for both vicars and curates of the parish, and of the surrounding chapels from the mid-sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries.

The Morris memorials in All Saints Church in Oakham

June 5, 2025

Pulpit and window

Memorials in churches can be in some really odd places. I recently noticed a brass plaque almost at ground level on the base of the pulpit at All Saints in Oakham. Even sitting on the floor in close proximity I was unable to make out much of it, but by taking some photographs and enhancing the contrast, I was able to get the image on the right. This reads

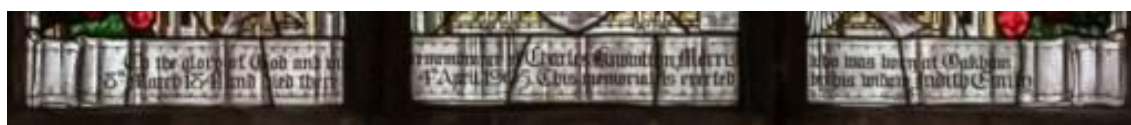
To the Glory of god and in remembrance of Charles Knowlton Morris, who was born at Oakham March 18 1841 and died there April 4 1905. This pulpit was erected by his widow Judith Emily in accordance with his wish expressed during his lifetime.



Pulpit memorial tablet

The name rang a bell in my mind – there is a very similar dedication on the stained glass window in the south transept.

To the glory of God and in remembrance of Charles Knowlton Morris who was born at Oakham 8th March 1841 and died there 4th April 1905. This memorial is erected by his widow Judith Emily.



Window memorial dedication

Charles Knowlton Morris

So who was this Charles Knowlton Morris? He turned out to be quite easy to trace through the historical record. He was born in 1841, the son of Clarke and Francis Morris (nee Hare) of Catmose Street in Oakham, one of at least six children. Clarke Morris was a brewer in Northgate in Oakham. Two of his sons – William Clarke Morris and Charles Knowlton Morris took over the business after Clarke's death in 1857. The brewery moved to Cross St / New St in 1866 and in censuses and trade directories, the business is usually described as Morris' Rutland Brewery, and they were also listed as coal, salt and seed merchants at the railway station wharf. William Clark died in 1895 and it appears that the business passed directly to his brother. The Reredos and Marble flooring in the chancel at All Saints were donated by Charles in memory of his brother in 1898.



All Saints Reredos



Reredos dedication plate

Charles married late in life, in 1898 aged 57 to Judith Emily Tiptaft, the daughter of a Northamptonshire farmer, who was seventeen years his junior. There were no children. Charles died on 4/4/1905, leaving a very considerable business and effects worth £19448. The business was sold off by auction fairly soon after his death. It is described in the Grantham

Journal of 25/11/1905 as consisting of the brewery in New Street, and nineteen public houses in Oakham and the surrounding area. Those in Oakham included the Railway Hotel on Station Road, the Roebuck Inn on Church Street, the Bell Inn on Catmose Street, the Royal Duke Inn on West Road, Oakham, the Angel Inn on Northgate Street, and two off licenses, the Rutland Arms in New St and the Britannia Inn on Northgate Street. The estate was bought for £28,250 by Warwicks & Richardsons Ltd, Newark. Brewing ceased in 1907, but Warwicks continued to use the name Morris Rutland Brewery on Guinness bottled in Newark until 1962.



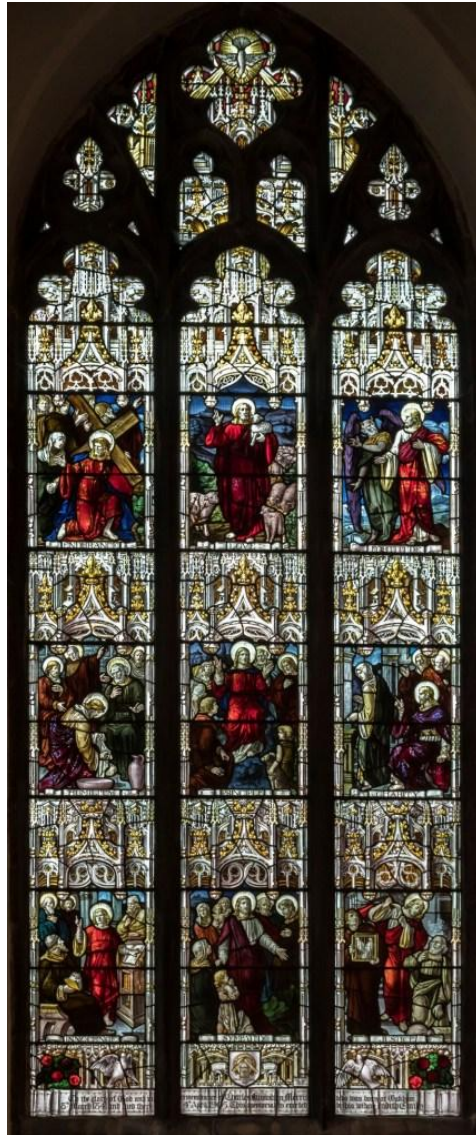
Comapny banner



The Brewery in New St in 1980

The dedication service

On 6/9/1896 at a service at All Saints church in Oakham, a new pulpit and stained glass window were dedicated to the memory of Charles. These are described at length in the Grantham Journal of 8/9/1906 as follows.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oakham,_All_Saints%27_church,_S._transept_window_\(39714446545\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oakham,_All_Saints%27_church,_S._transept_window_(39714446545).jpg)

The window composed of three long lights, surmounted by beautiful tracery, and is now the best of the many fine windows in this Church. The stained-glass design is governed by the architectural features, which are typical 14th century work, demanding small subjects and canopies. The subjects are nine in number, massed in rich deep colours, all contributing to the design of three bands running laterally through the tall lights in the window, and are set off by the intercepting canopies, which are soft, and display a silvery effect. Incidents in the life of our Lord with which all are familiar are represented, and portray, respectively, "Endurance," "Love," "Fortitude," "Humility," "Principle," "Charity," "Innocence," "Sympathy," and "Justice." These help to illustrate, in their appropriateness, the beautiful life of Charles Knowlton Morris, whose memory they will perpetuated..... Flowers and birds are delicately introduced as emblems, and the Past Masters' jewel and badge of the Vale of Catmos Lodge (No. 1265) of Freemasons are shown a small shield at the foot of the centre light.

The apex of the window contains the dove, and rays emanate from it into the surrounding side lights, and disappear behind the finials of the canopy, which runs out from main design below. The window was designed and executed by Mr. Dudley Forsyth, 335, Finchley-road, Hampstead, London

The new pulpit, as detailed on the inscription panel at fulfils wish expressed by the late Mr. Morris during his lifetime. It is in the Gothic style, and has been carefully designed so as to harmonise with its surroundings. The steps and the stone base by which the pulpit is supported are green Chilmark stone. A large moulded corbel, springing from the base, carries the pulpit, which is, in shape, five sides octagon. The material used is Austrian oak, slightly tongued, in order that it may resemble the existing oak fittings in the Church. Each side of the octagon is divided into two panels, the lower part of each carved, the upper part pierced; and care has been taken vary the design of the carving, as avoid monotony and give interest work. The cornice which crowns the pulpit is variously carved to represent the of the Passion of our Lord. The balustrade to the steps is similarly treated panels, and the whole, including the brass memorial tablet, reading-desk, and black fittings, has been designed Messrs. Forsyth and Maale, architects, of London, and carried out for the pulpit by J. P. White, of Bedford, and for metal work by Messrs. J. Elsley, of London.



Later years

Judith Morris must have spent a considerable part of her inheritance on these monuments to her husband. She was later to marry Dr Henry Drew in London in 1922. She died in 1945 at the

age of 87. Pictures are available of her [here](#) and [here](#), although an Ancestry subscription will be required to access these.

After her death in 1945 we read in the Leicester Evening Mail of 16/3/1945

Under the will of the late Mr. Charles Knowlton Morris, a former Oakham brewer, the vicar and churchwardens of Oakham receive a legacy, following the death of his widow, Mrs, Judith Emily Drew. of Leadenham House, Braunston Road. Oakham, to provide pensions for members of the Church of England. The sum is £30 annually. to provide three £10 pensions for three poor persons of good character of the age of 85 and upwards residing in the town, and being members of the Church. It will be called the "Morris Gift."

So it can be seen that much of what can now be seen at the "business" end of the church – around the altar where the Eucharist is celebrated, and the pulpit where sermons are preached was donated by the Morris family. Now the late 19th century was a time when the Teetotaler movement was very strong in reaction to the obvious ill effects of excess alcohol consumption, mainly on the poor. But clearly the Church of England in Oakham had no scruples about accepted considerable donations from a brewer. But, even in this more moderate age (at least in terms of alcohol consumption) the fact that Sunday services take place on structures funded by the receipts of nineteen public houses in Rutland might manage to raise a few eyebrows.

An ancient solar alignment in Oakham?

September 19, 2025

Preamble

In a post “[A possible Anglo-Saxon church group at Oakham in Rutland](#)” from May 2024, I noted that All Saints Church in Oakham, and Our Lady’s Well to the north east were on what could be a mid-summer sunrise / mid-winter sunset solar alignment. I went no further than simply noting this, and didn’t speculate further about what it might imply. One always needs to be cautious about such alignments – they can be simple coincidences, and, if they are being looked for, can be found in the most unlikely places. For example from Borrowcop Hill in Lichfield, possibly an ancient burial mound, there was until recently a perfect alignment with the medieval spires of Lichfield Cathedral and the cooling towers of Rugeley power station, the latter sadly now demolished, which can hardly be of ancient origin. That being said, a reader of the May 2024 post sent me some further information that suggests that a cluster of Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age remains have been found to the north east of Our Lady’s well that could also be on the same alignment. Looking at this further, I realised that several kilometres to the north east of that, and again on much the same alignment, we have Alstoe Mount, another historic monument. These are all shown on the Ordnance Survey map extract of Figure 1 below. The nature of this possible alignment, along the axis of the mid-summer sunrise and mid-winter sunset is discussed further in this post.

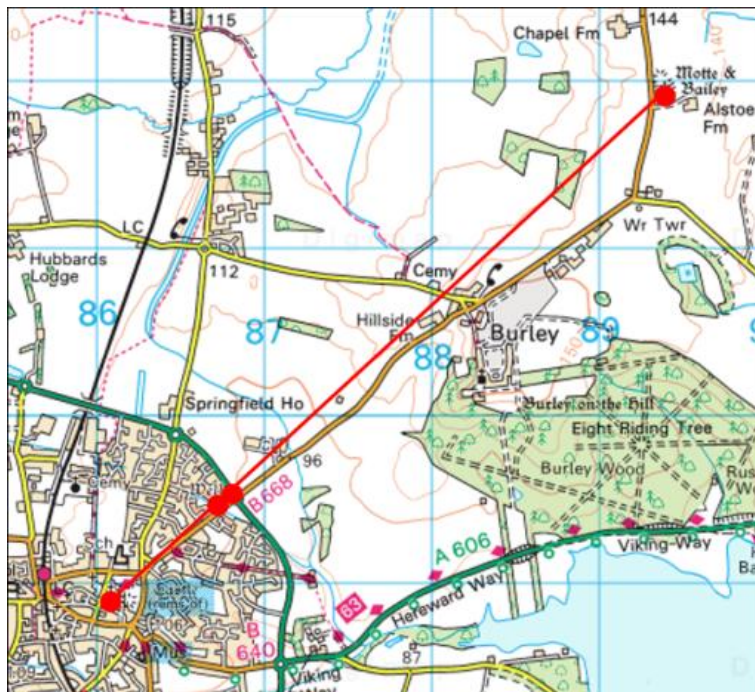


Figure 1. The possible alignment. The sites are shown as red circles – from the south west to the north east these are All Saints church in Oakham, Our Lady’s Well, the historic monuments and Alstoe Mount.

The sites

All Saints church, Oakham

All Saints Church in Oakham (Figure 2) is a twelfth century church with thirteenth to fifteenth century additions. Internally it is pure Victorian, having been restored by Gilbert Scott. However it almost certainly stands on the site of an Anglo-Saxon church, and a church in Oakham is mentioned in the [Domesday book](#). A [compendium of historical information](#) is given on the church website.



Figure 2. All Saints Oakham and Oakham Castle (photograph by the author)

Our Lady's Well

Our Lady's Well is a historically well-attested pilgrim site to the north east of All Saints church – see Figure 3. To quote from [Leicestershire and Rutland's Holy Wells](#) by Bob Trubshaw from 2004;

Our Lady's Well was once famed for curing sore eyes – providing that a pin was thrown in first. In 1291 indulgences could be obtained by visiting Oakham Church during its patronal festival and, for a price, joining a pilgrimage to Our Lady's Well. In 1881 it was visited by the future Queen Alexandra. The well is to the north-east of the town, in a somewhat overgrown area between the Cottesmore road and a modern housing estate (NGR SK:866095).

It's current condition is no better, and it is now impossible to access the well, in an overgrown plot of wasteland, which seems a shame.

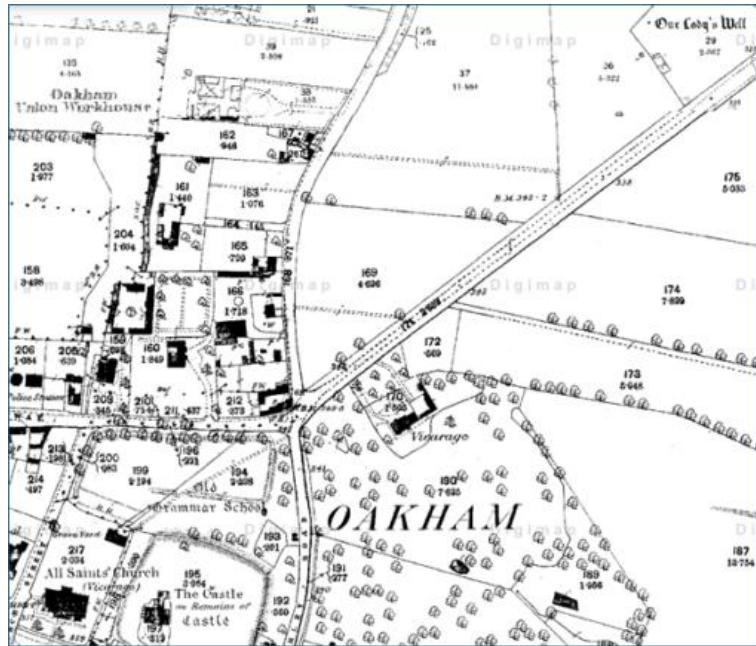


Figure 3. Location of Our Lady’s Well from the 1880 Ordnance survey Map (All Saints church is at the bottom left, and the well at the top right.)

The Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age monuments

The material I was sent concerning the Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age monuments came from “[Land off Burley Road Oakham, Vision and Delivery Document](#)” produced by Pigeon Investment Management with regard to a proposed housing development. Figure 4 is taken from that document and shows the location of Our Lady’s Well and the relevant monuments.



Figure 5. Alstoe Mount (photograph from [Historic England](#) by Alan Murray-Rust, 2016)

The possible solar alignment

A current mid-summer sunrise / midwinter sunset direction from Oakham is 47.5 degrees east of north (from [SunCalc](#)). However obtaining a precise value to compare with the possible alignment shown in Figure 1 is difficult for two reasons. Firstly the actual direction of sunrise and sunset has varied over the millennia – and as things stand, we have no date for which a calculation can be made. This change is however small – of the order of 0.2 to 0.5 degrees. Also the apparent direction from any point depends upon the precise topography of the horizon over which the sunrise / sunset is observed – and as we know nothing about the observation point or the direction of observation, this is again not possible to specify. This again results in an uncertainty of around 0.5 degrees. So all we can probably say is that we are looking for an alignment of 47.5 +/-1.0 degrees east of north.

The actual directions between All Saints Oakham and the other sites is as follows.

Oakham to Our Lady's Well – 46.3 degrees

Oakham to Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age monuments – 47.1 degrees

Oakham to Alstoe Mount – 47.8 degrees

Again there is uncertainty here – particularly in the specification of the precise site at Our Lady's Well of any structure that might have been visible from All Saints, and similarly the precise position of any relevant structure in the monument field. The location point for All Saints (taken as the centre of the building) could be around 10m to the east or west. This can have an effect of the bearings of Our Lady's Well and the monuments by around 0.25 degrees. Considering these uncertainties the above bearings and a sunrise / sunset direction of 47.5 degrees seem broadly consistent, and thus there does seem to be some evidence for all four sites lying along a solar alignment of some significance.

But there is another issue – that of elevation. A cross section along the proposed alignment is shown in Figure 6. From this it is clear that Alstoe Mount would not be visible from Our Lady's Well or from the Monument field, and would only just be visible from All Saints if any

observation platforms that existed there and at Alstoe were raised off the ground by a metre or so. Beacons however would have been visible.

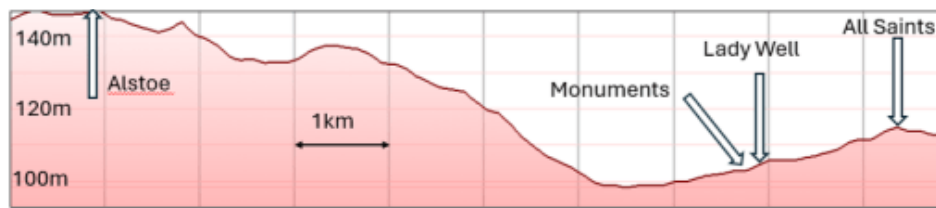


Figure 6. Section through the proposed alignment (from Google Earth Pro.).

Discussion

So what does the above analysis lead to. Firstly I think there is plausible (but far from conclusive) evidence for a mid-summer sunrise / mid-winter sunset alignment, at least between the Monument field / Our Lady's Well and All Saints, and possibly between Alstoe Mount and All Saints. but the available evidence gives us no chronological information as to when the alignment might have been of significance. Our Lady's Well is first mentioned in the late Middle Ages and All Saints and Alstoe Mount can only be said to become of important in the pre-conquest period. There is no evidence at all, except in the monument field, for the other sites being important in the Stone Age / Bronze Age / Iron Age. So in my view it is probably better to stop at this point – acknowledging that there may be a solar alignment, but not taking speculation any further. The boring, cautious approach I guess, but I don't think there is much more to be said.

All Saints Oakham Flower Festival 1996

December 18, 2025

In 1996, All Saints church in Oakham, organised a flower festival. Some photographs from this event were deposited in the church safe for safe keeping, and I have recently come across these whilst searching the safe for other items. It seems to me that these photos are well worth sharing – both for the flower displays but also for the glimpse they give of the church from 30 years ago. Please click on the photos below for larger versions of the pictures. The colours aren't marvellous – they can only be as good as the prints – but they will be of interest to some.



Holy Trinity Chapel



Holy Trinity Chapel



North Transept



High altar



South Transept



South Transept



South Transept



Lady Chapel



Lady Chapel



Area near North Door



Central Crossing



Central Crossing



North Transept



Near pulpit



Entrance to Lady Chapel



West End



The floor memorials in the Lady Chapel of All Saints Oakham

December 18, 2025

Introduction

The Lady Chapel at All Saints Church in Oakham is to the south of the chancel and is entered from the south transept. It is a high roofed open space [dating from around 1480](#), that has had a number of functions in the recent past – as a location for the organ, as a choir vestry, and as a small side chapel. Indeed there is still an altar with its associated communion rails at the east end of the chapel. It is currently mainly used as an area for after church coffee, small meetings etc.

The floor of the chapel consists of memorial slabs from the late 17th to the early 19th centuries, a number of which contain inscriptions indicating that there are burials beneath them. Thus it would seem that in the 18th century this area was an internal burial space of some sort. Why this area was used in this way and what determined who was buried in this area is not clear. Now over the years some of the memorials have been worn down very badly, particularly those between the priest's entrance and the vicar's vestry on the south side of the chapel and the entrance to the chancel on the north side. With its current use as a fellowship area, it is likely that the other memorial slabs will experience a rapid deterioration over the coming years. Thus the purpose of this post is twofold – firstly to record the current layout and inscriptions that are still visible, and secondly to try to come to some understanding as to why the area was used as a mortuary space.

The layout of the Lady Chapel

Figure 1 shows a view of the Lady Chapel from its entrance from the south transept, looking east. The altar and communion rail can be seen in the background. It can be seen that the floor consists of a regular grid of memorial slabs, separated by a pattern of tiles. In total there are seven rows of slabs between the entrance and the communion rail (which will be denoted by the letters A to G, with A being at the transept entrance). There are five columns of slabs, which will be denoted by the letters A to E, with A being on the south side to the right of the view of Figure 1. Thus, for example, slab AC is the one in the near centre of figure 1 – row A and column C. Most of the slabs are a soft brown stone, with the exception of AA and BA (to the right of the view in Figure 1) which are of a darker colour, although they are both badly worn.. The grid of memorials is regular in columns B, C and D, but the rows are displaced somewhat in columns A and E due to the presence of structural columns at the transept end.



Figure 1. The layout of the Lady Chapel

Figure 2 shows a view of columns B to D in rows F and G from just in front of the altar rail at the east end of the chancel. It can be seen that the rail cuts across a number of slabs, and there is a carpeted area that obscures part of columns B and D and all of columns A and E. Indeed very little can be seen of the slabs in row G, which extend beneath the altar. In this region the regularity of the grid in columns B to D is lost and the slabs become staggered – presumably to fit into the space available at the east end of the chapel beneath the current altar.



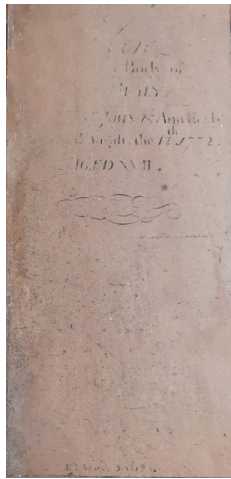
Figure 2 Detailed view of the slabs in front of the Lady Chapel altar

The memorials

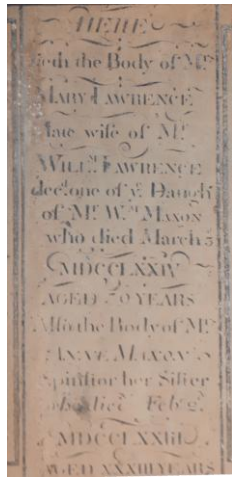
The layout of the memorials is shown in Figure 3 below. The photos of the slabs are in roughly the correct position relative to each other, although the correspondence with the actual layout in the Chapel is not exact. They are identified using the notation given above. The discontinuity in the photographs of slabs FB, FC and FD indicates the position of the altar rail.



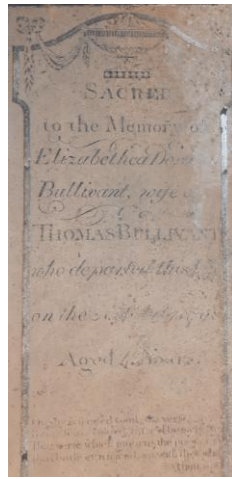
AA



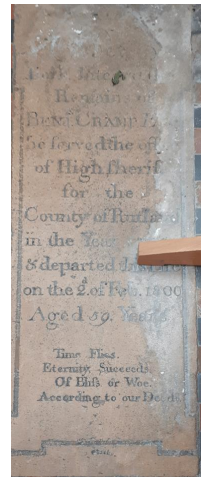
AB



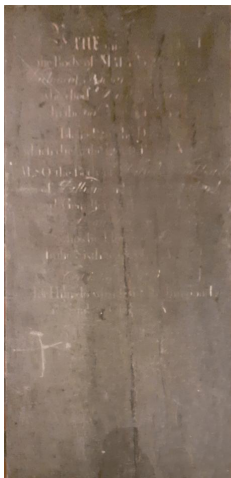
AC



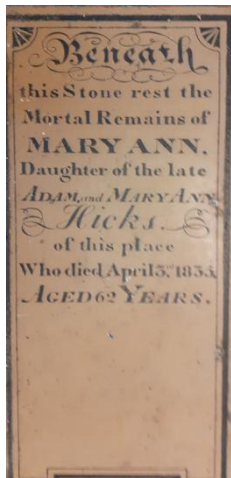
AD



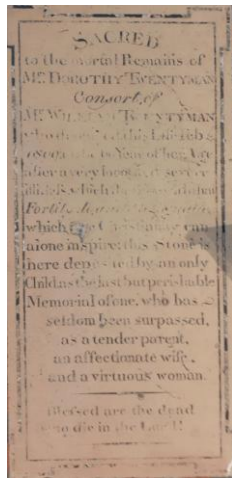
AE



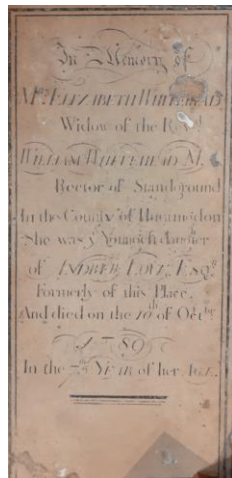
BA



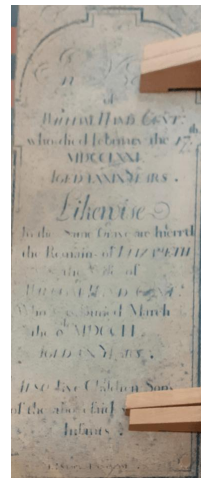
BB



BC



BD



BE



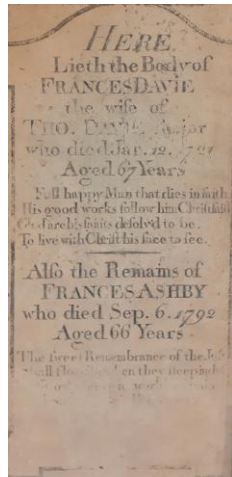
CA



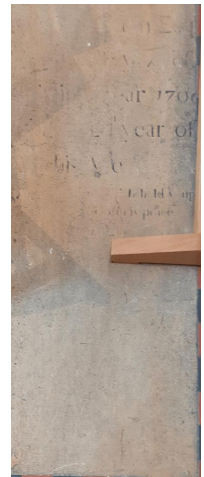
CB



CC



CD



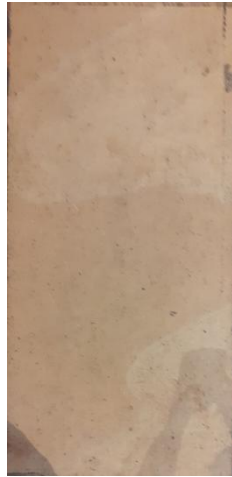
CE



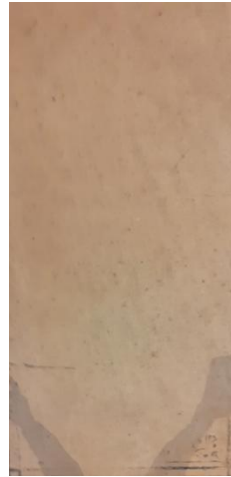
DA



DB



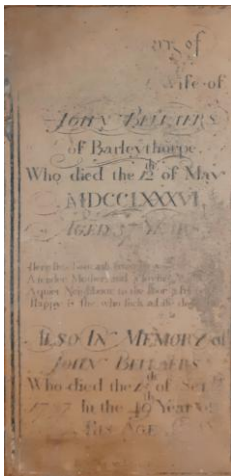
DC



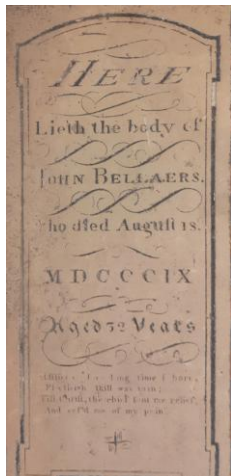
DD



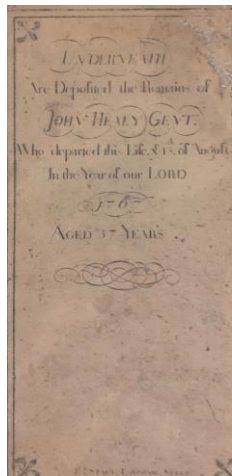
DE



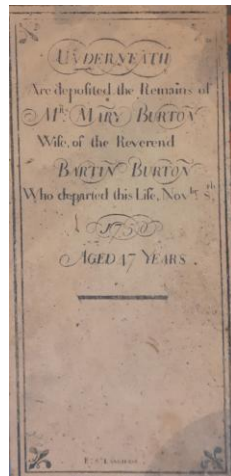
EA



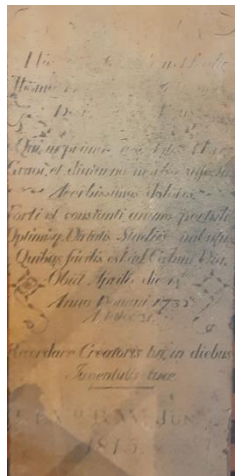
EB



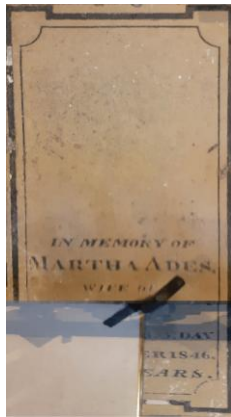
EC



ED



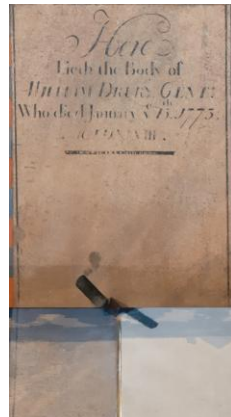
EE



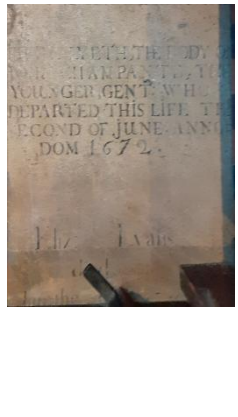
FB



FC



FD



FE

Figure 3. The layout of the memorial slabs

The inscriptions

In the inscriptions that follow, I have (deliberately) not reproduced the details of the typography on the memorials (capitalisation, punctuation etc.) but have tried to put them in a form where they are more easily read with modern typography. The texts in italics are not on the memorials.

AA. ...Bradford....Widow of ... of Henley in Ox... departed this life .. 20th May 1802 aged 66 years
..... *Undecipherable verse*

AB. ... body of 12th 1772....

AC. Here lieth the body of Mary Lawrence, late wife of Mr William Lawrence, dec., one of ye daughters of Mr William Maxon, who died March 5th MDCCLXXIV (1774) aged 39 years. Also the body of Anne Maxon...her sister who died February 2nd MDCCLXXIII (1773) aged XXXIII (33) years.

AD. Sacred to the memory of Elizabeatha Doris Bullivant, wife of Thomas Bullivant who departed this life on the 1798 aged 42 Years.....

AE. ... remains ... Benjamin Cramp Esq. He served the office of High Sheriff for the County of Rutland in the year ... departed this life on the 2nd February 1800 aged 59 years. Time flies; Eternity succeeds; of bliss or woe; according to our deeds.

BA. *Not readable*

BB. Beneath this stone rests he mortal remains of Mary Ann, daughter of the late Adam and Mary Ann Hicks of this place who died April 3rd 1835 aged 62 years,

BC. Sacred to the mortal remains of Mrs Dorothy Twentyman, consort of Mr William Twentyman who departed this life February ... 1809 in the ,, year of her age after a very long and severe illness which.....Christianity can alone inspire. This stone is here deposited by an only child as the last but perishable memorial of one who has seldom been surpassed, as a tender parent, an affectionate wife and a virtuous woman. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!

BD. In memory of Mrs Elizabeth Whitehead, widow of the Revd William Whitehead MA, Rector of Stanground in the county of Huntingdon. She was ye youngest daughter of Andrew Love Esq. formerly of this place, and died on the 10th of October 1789, in the 75th year of her age.

BE. Hind Gent who died February the 17th MDCCLXXI (1771) aged LXXIX (79) years. Likewiseare buried the remains of Elizabeth ...who was buried March ...MDCCII (1702) Also five ... sons if the above died...infants

CA. *No inscription visible*

CB. Beneath this stone are deposited the mortal remains of Edward Hicks, Gentleman who departed this life December 3rd, 1812 aged 56 years.

CC. In memory of Ann, daughter of Thomas and Ann Exton, who departed this life August the 22nd 1808 aged .9 years. Also in memory of Thomas Exton who departed this life April the 17th 1809 aged 73 years. Also in memory of Ann, wife of Thomas Exton, who departed this life November ...18... aged 88 years.

CD. Here lieth the body of Frances Davie, the wife of Thomas Davie Senior who died January

12th 1721 aged 67 years. Full happy man that dies in faith, His good works follow him...;are his saints to be; To live with Christ his face to see. Also the remains of Frances Ashby, who died September 6th 1792 aged 66 years, The sweet remembrance of the just ... shall flow ... they sleep.....

CE.year 1706 .. year of his agepeace

DA. *No inscription visible*

DB. *No inscription visible*

DC. *No inscription visible*

DD. *No inscription visible*

DE. *No inscription visible*

EA. ...memory of wife of ... John Bellaers of Barleythorpe, who died the 12th May MDCCLXXXVI (1786) age 37 years, Her lies beneath...; A tender mother, a loving wife; A quiet neighbour, to the poor a friend; Happy is he who finds a Also in memory of John Bellaers who died the ... of September 1787 in the 49th year of his age.

EB. Here lies the body of John Bellaers who died August 18th MDCCCIX (1789) aged .2 years. Affliction ... long time I bore; Physician skill was vain; Till Christ the chief sent me relief; And cured me of my pain.

EC. Underneath are deposited the remains of John Healy, Gent.. who departed this life on 13th August in the year of our Lord 1767 aged 57 years.

ED. Underneath are deposited the remains of Mr Mary Burton, wife of the Reverend Martin Burton, who departed this life November 8th 1750 aged 47 years.

EE.forti et constantiopptimiissii vertutis studies.....quibus finerlis est... obit aprilis ...4th Anno Domini 1732...19...21. Recordare creatoris tin in oliebus. Juventulis tiroe.....Jun 1815 (*latin text very uncertain*)

FA. *Covered by altar rail and carpet*

FB. *Part covered by altar rail and carpet.* In memory of Martha Ades wife ofthis day .. year 1846 ... years.

FC. *Part covered by altar rail.* Sacred to the memory of Thomas ...on the April ... Aged 37 years. Vain in our pleasures.....; Bound on the wheel of time ... and; Yet present wrong eternity repairs; The mighty empires and the of all

FD. *Part covered by altar rail and carpet.* Here lieth the body of ... Drury, Gent., who died January 15th 1775

FE. *Part covered by altar rail and carpet* ...lieth the body of William Pante the younger, Gent. who departed this life the second of June Ann. Dom 1672

GA. *Covered by carpet.*

GB. *Partially covered by carpet and altar.* remains of Healy Edward Ealy....

GC. *Mostly covered by altar. No inscription visible.*

GD. *Parially covered by carpet and altar. Inscription not legible*

GE. *Covered by carpet*

When and Who

Two questions arise in association with the floor memorials. Firstly, when was the Lady Chapel used for burials and secondly what sort of people were buried there? To answer the first consider Table 1 below which shows the dates from the memorial slabs where they could be found. The pattern is not wholly consistent, but it is clear that the earlier graves are on the north side next to the chancel and the later ones on the south side next to the outside wall. The earliest grave of all – FE- dates from 1672, and the latest – FA – from 1846. The larger majority date from the 18th century. The pattern suggests that the early graves might have been a continuation of graves in the chancel. In the late 17th and 18th centuries, the chancel was [configured very differently and was rebuilt in the restoration of 1858](#), so if there were similar graves there, the memorial slabs have been lost.

AA 1802	AB 1772	AC 1773	AD 1798	AE 1800
BA	BB 1835	BC 1809	BD 1789	BE 1702
CA	CB 1812	CC 1808	CD 1721	CE 1706
DA	DB	DC	DD	DE
EA 1786	EB 1789	EC 1767	ED 1750	EE 1732
FA	FB 1846	FC	FD 1775	FE 1672
GA	GB	GC	GD	GE

Table 1. Memorial dates

In terms of who is commemorated on the memorials, on the eighteen inscriptions where one might expect to find some designation, there are four identified as Gent., two as Esq. and two as clergy (not necessarily referring to the one who is buried). A web search revealed that there are the memorials of four [High Sherrifs](#) – William Lawrence 1765, Thomas Bullivant 1771, John Bellaers 1783 and Benjamin Cramp 1789. In addition [William Twentyman was the Supervisor of Excise in Oakham Lordshold in 1787](#). Thus it is clear that those interred in the Lady Chapel were, as one might expect, members of the Rutland Gentry.

Finally it is worth noting that the family of Rev Bartin Burton, whose wife is interred in ED, also has a [wall memorial in the south transept](#) (figure 4). It may be that Burton himself and his son are also interred in one of the plots in the Lady Chapel with an illegible memorial inscription.



Figure 4. The Burton memorial

The Holy Family with angels

February 1, 2026

The painting of the Holy Family shown below has hung in the Vicar's Vestry at All Saints church in Oakham for many years, and has, until recently, never been properly identified. Recent expert advice suggests it is a late 18th / early 19th century copy of a composition by Francesco Albani of between 1608 and 1610. It is believed that it was produced by a workshop in Italy, or perhaps the Netherlands, to satisfy the demands of those on the "Grand Tour" for devotional works. Whilst thus not of any great value, it thus does have an interesting back story.



**After a composition by Francesco Albani,
paint on metal, late 17th / early 18th
century**



Painting in frame (with window reflections)

Its detailed provenance is not known, but a difficult to read caption on the painting frame (below) has the inscription

"Presented to Oakham Church in memory of Harry Ellingworth".

The Ellingworth family were prosperous shopkeepers in Oakham in the late 19th and early 20th century, and a number of them were named Harry. The most significant of these seems to have been a Harry Ellingworth who was a Town Crier in Oakham in 1881.



Dedication label

Interestingly a number of similar copies of the painting can be traced – either painted in Albani’s workshop or elsewhere (see below). The details vary, but the basic composition is the same. The market for such paintings was clearly buoyant.



**Print of the original by Francesco Albani
housed in the Museum of Fine Arts in
Boston. 1608-1610**



**Dulwich Art Gallery
Holy Family by Studio of Francesco Albani
1610-60**

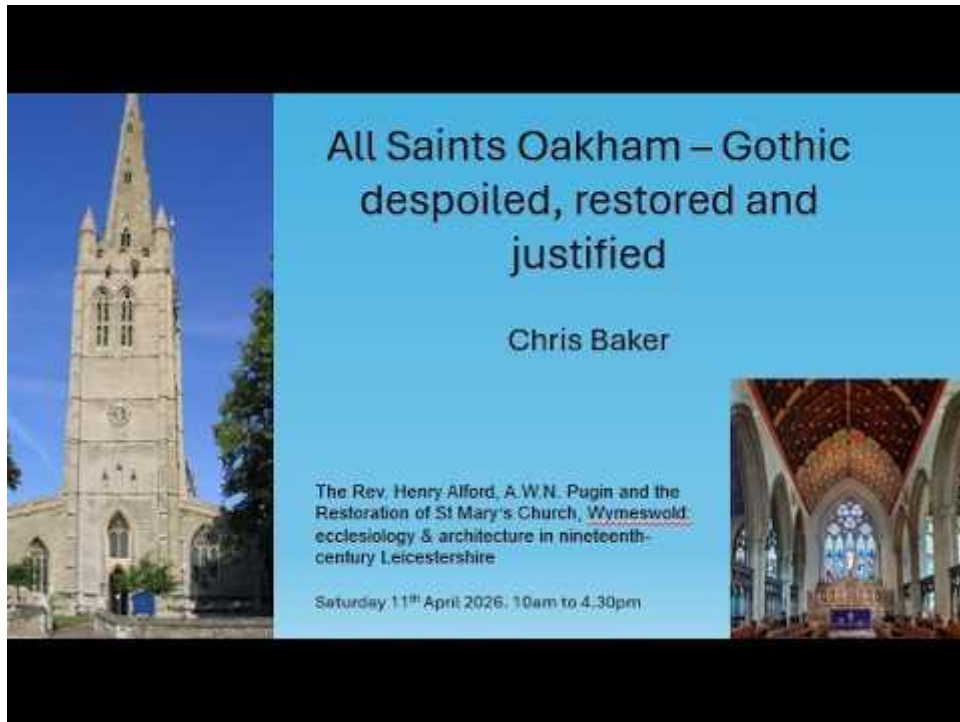
The painting shows a somewhat weary and pensive looking Madonna in a red dress with a dark blue shawl, The Christ child sits on a golden cushion on her lap, partly surrounded by a blue

sheet. Joseph looks on from the right, with an open book in front of him, that seems to be placed on a stone chest or altar or perhaps a tomb. It may be that the directions in which the Madonna and her husband are pointing is of some iconographic significance – Joseph, in his contemplation of scripture pointing upwards to God, and Mary, with the Christ child on her lap, pointing down to earth, the direction, if that is an appropriate word, of the incarnation. Two angelic figures look on from the left. There is a figure carved on the stone chest, that, from the original, appears to be some sort of Bacchanalia, with wine being poured out for small dancing child like figures. Again there may be some iconographic significance here with a representation of Christ's blood being poured out at the Eucharist. The mixture of biblical and classical themes seems to have been common at the period of the original composition.

All Saints Oakham – Gothic despoiled, restored and justified

April 12, 2026

All Saints Oakham – Gothic despoiled, restored and justified. A talk given at the conference "The Rev. Henry Alford, A.W.N. Pugin and the Restoration of St Mary's Church, Wymeswold: ecclesiology & architecture in nineteenth-century Leicestershire"



Writings on the Wall

April 18, 2026

A slide loop illustrating some of the stories behind the wall memorials in All Saints Oakham. It lasts just over 11 minutes.



More details of some of the stories can be found in the following blog posts.

[The Holy Family with angels](#) – a brief post giving a description of a painting in the Vestry of All Saints Oakham (1st February 2026)

[The Morris memorials in All Saints Church in Oakham](#). A post describing the Morris memorials in All Saints Oakham – the pulpit, a stained glass window and the reredos (June 5th 2025)

[The memorials of All Saints Oakham](#). Photographs and brief descriptions of the wall mounted memorials at All Saints church in Oakham (May 19th 2025)

[From Oakham to Mandalay](#). The story of a young curate from Oakham and his brief service as a missionary in Burma before his early death (April 29th 2025)

[Kinetic Water Power](#) – some odd words on a memorial in All Saints Oakham led to some interesting findings about how church organs were powered at the start of the 20th century (25th April 2025)

The Harrington Bequest. Two posts that consider the bequest of Anne, Lady Harrington in 1616. [Part 1- The charity](#), [Part 2 – Oakham Parish Library](#) (31st March 2025)

A Sermon in Stone

May 5, 2026

Introduction

This post shows the poster boards that were produced for an exhibition at All Saints church in Oakham which opened in April 2026. The exhibition highlighted the elaborate stone carvings on the nave capitals in the church. The posters contained photos by Richard Adams, and text based on an earlier blog post by the author that can be found at [The good, the bad and the grotesque – the decorated capitals of All Saints church in Oakham](#).

The posters

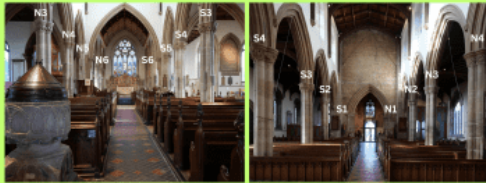
A sermon in stone – the nave arcade capitals of All Saints Oakham



All Saints church is very well endowed with stone carvings. For example, externally there is a profusion of pinnacles around the south western corner (above) and elaborate friezes around the south porch (below). There is also a wide selection of gargoyles, many of which echo designs on other local churches.



However, perhaps the most important stone carvings in the church are those on the top of the nave arcade capitals within the church, dating from the 13th century. There are in total twelve of these, that, taken together, tell the story of the bible – from the fall, through the incarnation and death of Jesus, to the final vision of heaven. They follow ecclesiastical convention, with the darker images of fall and sin being on the north side of the church, and the more positive images of redemption being on the south side. But it is possible to overinterpret these very fine carvings – and it is quite possible that in places the mason was simply being playful and intended to convey no deep meaning at all.



On the panels that follow, the capitals are referred to as N1...N6 and S1...S6 on the north and south sides of the church, numbered from the west end to the east end. These are indicated on the photos above. N6 and S6 are on the chancel arch, although the latter is very damaged and not included here.

Photographs by Richard Adams and text by Chris Baker.
The financial support of the Oakham Memorial Institute
is gratefully acknowledged.

4. A Pelican, a fox, some geese and a monkey

S1. The pelican in her piety.

This carving is a symbol of the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is based on the legend that in time of famine and drought, the mother pelican wounds herself, striking her breast with her beak so as to feed her young with her blood, in order to prevent them from dying, but in turn losing her own life.



The pelican thus symbolizes Jesus who gave His life on the cross to save men and women from their sins. The pelican and her chicks are in a nest on a tree – perhaps representing the Tree of Life.

S2. The Fox, geese and ape.

This is the most difficult of all the capitals to interpret. It shows a fox with a goose in its mouth, pursued by goslings. A man points his staff at the fox. A fettered monkey is also depicted, and two snake-like creatures intertwine, each biting the others tail.



A number of interpretations have been put forward; that it represents the story of Reynard the Fox; an incident in Chaucer's Nun's Priest's tale where the rooster Chauncleer is captured by a fox; or that the fox represents the Dean of Westminster (the patron of the church) running off with the great tithes (the goose) leaving only the lesser tithes (the goslings) for the local priest (the tethered monkey). None of these seem wholly plausible. It may simply be that we are here seeing the mason at his most playful and inventive, with the intention of causing amusement rather than conveying meaning.

2. Adam lay ybounden....



N1. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden.

The carving on the left shows Adam and Eve either side of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The serpent (Genesis 3.1-6) can be seen between them. Eve's arm is extended to Adam, perhaps offering him the apple from the tree. The figure on the right shows the pair being expelled from the garden, with an angel with a flaming sword depicted blocking the way back (Genesis 3.23-24).

*Adam lay ybounden, Bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter, Thought he not too long.
And all was for an apple, An apple that he took.
As clerkës finden, written in their book.*



N2. Grotesque heads and hands.

The four figures are indeed grotesque, with faces showing a range of expressions from aggression to horror, possibly representing the state of fallen humanity. Alternatively they could be representations of demons, or even caricatures of those known to the mason.



N3. More grotesque heads and a coiled dragon.

The dragon is mentioned at several points in the Old Testament, and seems to have been thought of as a sea monster. In the New Testament we find a dragon in the book of Revelation, where it is a representation of Satan seeking to destroy the church. So perhaps we have here a picture of the oppression of humanity by the devil. The two heads have animal like bodies and can be interpreted as representing demons or evil spirits.

5. Angels and Evangelists



S3. The four angels.

The four angels are facing in the four cardinal directions. They are all quite similar in form. Symbolically they may simply be an indication of the protection of God's people, or they might refer more explicitly to the four angels of Revelation 7.1, who hold back the winds indicating the judgement of God.

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

S4. The four evangelists

These figures represent the four gospel writers – Saint Matthew (Man / angel – top left); St Mark (Lion – top right); Saint Luke (Ox – bottom left); and Saint John (Eagle – bottom right).



This symbolism comes from the vision of the four living creatures around the throne of God in Revelation 4.7.

.....the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle..

This in turn is based on a vision of the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament, of the four-faced angels around the throne-chariot of God, which was very influential in early Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature.

3. A Green Man, a siren and a jester

N4. The Green Man.



The notion that the Green Man, or more properly, a foliated head, represents a survival from pagan worship has been thoroughly debunked by historians in recent years, and, as was so much else in folklore studies, largely the invention of late 19th century scholars.

The motif is however of Indian origin that came, via the Arab world, to be used with a decorative function in European churches. In terms of Christian iconography, some writers suggest that Green Men with foliage springing from their mouths, such as the one here, reflected the Golden Legend from the 13th century, which describes how Seth, the third son of Adam, planted seeds from the Tree of Life in his dead father's mouth as he lay in his grave. The tree that grew from them became the tree of the true cross of the crucifixion. The figure could thus represent the death mask of Adam, with a foreshadowing of the cross and resurrection. Or it might simply be a favourite of the mason.

N5. The Siren.

A winged beast with a human head playing an instrument that looks like a lyre, using a bow. This is possibly a Siren of the legends of classical legend, that lured sailors to their death by the beauty of their song. As such it may represent the alluring temptations of sin.



N6. The Jester.

This carving above the pulpit was damaged by the installation of a long-since removed Rood Screen. The front figure shows two figures making faces, and there was presumably a third to the right (these are perhaps appropriate for a location just above the pulpit). Around the back however, on the other side of the rood screen damage, there is a much more serious, although rather worn, person in prayer.

6. Nor had one apple taken been.....Deo Gratias!

S5. The crowning of the Virgin, the Annunciation and Adam and Eve.

This is perhaps the most intricately carved of all the capitals in All Saints. There are three scenes. The first shows a king crowning a queen, taken as being the Crowning of the Virgin Mary in heaven by God the Father, holding an orb – an event only found in medieval literature. The very anthropomorphic nature of the scene suggests that this is based on a model of the coronation of a medieval queen by her husband, a common practice in the 12th and 13th centuries.



The second scene is a representation of the Annunciation – the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary to announce the coming birth of Christ. Between Mary and Gabriel, we can see the Lily – the symbol of Mary. The device above the Lily, linking Gabriel and Mary, may represent a scroll, on which the words of the angel may originally have been painted – perhaps *Ave gratia plena*. Finally the scene on the right shows the Harrowing of Hell, with Christ on the left holding the pennant or banner of the resurrection, leading Adam and Eve out of Hell, represented by the serpent at their feet.

The three scenes are thus a representation of the Trinity – God the Father crowning Mary, God the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary in the Annunciation, and God the Son leading Adam and Eve out of hell between his death and resurrection.



*Nor had one apple taken been, The apple taken been,
Then had never Our Lady, A-been heaven's queen.
Blessed be the time, That apple taken was!
Therefore we may singen, Deo gratias!*

Note on Poster 6

In an earlier version of Poster 6, I queried what the third scene – the one that depicts Adam and Eve for a second time, was meant to depict. This has also puzzled other writers in a range of church histories since the early 1900s. At the opening of the exhibition on April 18th, on viewing the large scale photo below, Prof Elizabeth Tingle, Professor Emerita at De Montfort University, made what I am sure is the correct identification. The scene represents the [Harrowing of Hell](#), with Christ on the left holding the pennant or banner of the resurrection, leading Adam and Eve out of Hell, represented by the serpent at their feet. As such the three scenes are a representation of the Trinity – God the Father holding the orb as he crowns Mary, God the Holy Spirit coming to Mary in the Annunciation, and God the Son leading Adam and Eve out of hell between his death and resurrection. They thus form a fitting conclusion to the overall story of salvation shown on the Capitals.



Detail from Poster 6

They exceed in meanness even what is usual in country churches

May 25, 2026

In his report to the committee overseeing the [restoration of All Saints church in Oakham](#) in the late 1850s, Gilbert Scott wrote

Of the internal fittings I have but little to say. They exceed in meanness even what is usual in country churches. And there must be but one opinion about them – they must entirely cleared away, and the whole refitted in proper manner with good oak seats

A few years earlier, Baron Stephen Glynn in [his church notes](#) had written in a similar, if somewhat milder, vein.

Altogether the interior is not so well kept as it deserves to be. The pews and galleries are shabby and the whole dirty and untidy.

In this short note we present some information contained in the history of the church in the [Rutland County Magazine](#) published in 1903 concerning the internal arrangement of the church before the 1858 restoration. In particular Figure 1 shows the arrangements of the pews as sketched by Rev. C. A. Stevens, superimposed on the ground plan of the church – the interior fittings so disparaged by Scott.

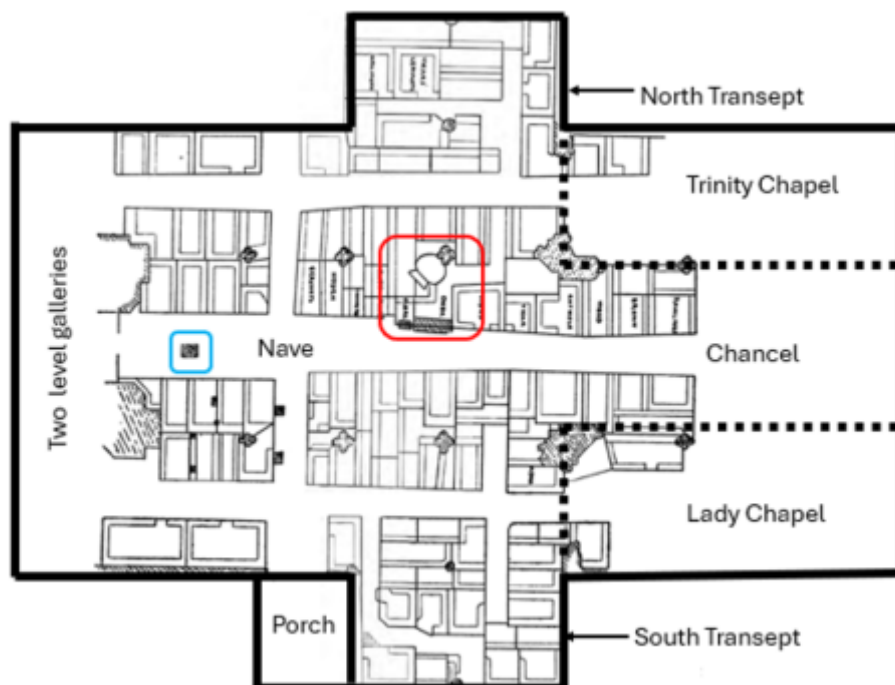


Figure 1. Box pew arrangements in All Saints church – from the [Rutland County Magazine](#) of 1903

For those who know the orderly front facing bench pews in All Saints today, the arrangement shown in the figure will appear very odd. Box pews (for which a rent would have been charged) fill the nave, extending into the Trinity chapel, the Chancel and the Lady Chapel and would have been occupied by the wealthier members of Oakham Society. The sides would have been 3 or 4 feet high and they would have afforded a degree of privacy. As an example of how they might have appeared, see the picture of eighteenth century box pews from Inglesham church in Figure 2.

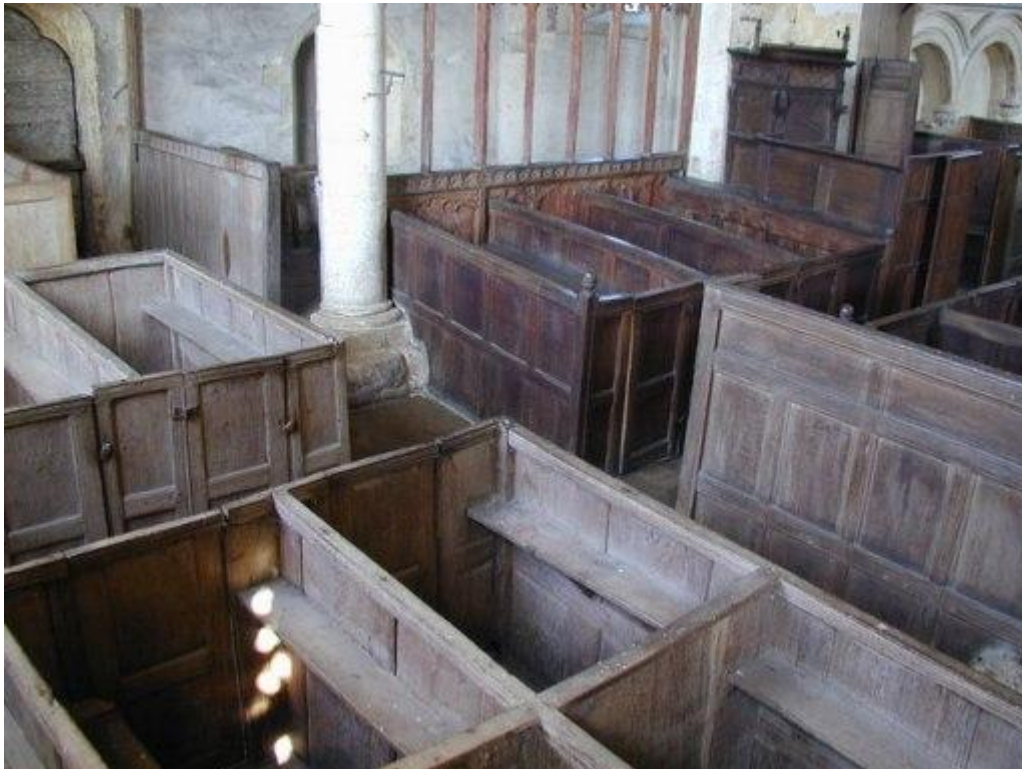


Figure 2. [Georgian Box pews – St John the Baptist, Inglesham.](#)

The lack of geometric regularity and uniformity in Figure 1 is clear, indicating that this arrangement developed over the years, as new pews were added and old ones removed or adapted. The *hoi polloi* would have been housed in the free sittings in the double deck gallery at the west end of the church.

The focus of the church was also very different from today. The red square gives the location of the pulpit, the clergy desk and the church clerk's desk – which are in the centre of the nave, adjacent to the pillar with the [Green Man capital](#). The pulpit is surrounded on all sides by pews, some of which, but by no means all, would have enabled worshippers to face the preacher and vice versa. Unfortunately no indication of how the chancel is laid out is given, but presumably the altar was at the east end as now.

The function of the pews and the names of those families that rented the pews are shown on the figure, but the writing is too small to easily read at the scale shown here. From west to east in the nave we have

Servants; Hough; ??; Butt / Poor; Clerk; Desk; Ades; Vicar; Catmose; Wood; Brown; Rawlings

In the north transept we have, again from west to east

Wellington; Vicar's servants

These are presumably names of parishioner families. A final point of interest is the location of what is almost certainly the font, within the blue square. This stands in the middle of the central aisle at the west of church, which is in many ways much more liturgically sensible than its current position, tucked away amongst pews on the north side of the central aisle.

More on the Nave Arcade carvings at All Saints Oakham

May 28, 2026

In a recent post I have described the exhibition “[A sermon in stone](#)” at All Saints Oakham which features photographs of the 13th century nave arcade capitals. That exhibition builds on work set out in an [earlier blog post](#). The carvings feature biblical, classical and folklore themes and between them appear to tell the salvation story from the fall of Adam and Eve to the resurrection of Jesus and beyond. In this post I include a photograph and brief discussion of a carving that didn’t feature in the exhibition, as it was felt to be too badly damaged.



Figure 1. Making faces and praying

Most of the carvings are around the capitals on the pillars in the nave arcade, but two are actually on the chancel arch at the same height as on the arcade. Both have been damaged at some point in the past by the installation of a rood screen. One of these features in the “Sermon in Stone” exhibition – that on the north side of the chancel arch of jesters making faces above the pulpit with a more serious praying figure looking into the chancel (figure 1). The other, on the south side, was thought at the time to be too damaged to include. However when a high resolution photograph was taken (by Richard Adams who took all the photos for the exhibition) it was found that there was considerable detail remaining – see figure 2, which shows a lion like figure, in an oak leaf surround.



The question then arises as to whether or not this carving has any meaning in the overall salvation theme of the carvings. It is clear from the overall arrangement that those carvings on the north side represent the dark side of salvation history – the fall, the devil, temptations to sin – and those on the south side the light side of redemption and restoration – the eucharist, angels and evangelists, the annunciation and crowning of the Virgin. The jester on the north side fits into this theme quite well, as displaying a range of unredeemed human qualities, and on this basis one would expect the figure on the south side to represent something more positive. Now in scripture, the symbolism of a lion is nearly always negative, as a creature that attacks and destroys, except in one place in the book of Revelation where Jesus is described as a lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5.5).

Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals

So perhaps in this carving we perhaps see a representation of Jesus, identified as the Lion of Judah, sat on the throne of God in heaven. This would be appropriate in its position as next to the capital that shows the crowning of the Virgin and the Harrowing of Hell, which are also eschatological themes. But, as ever with these carvings, this identification must be quite speculative.

The Vicars of Oakham

June 3, 2026

The Vicar Boards at All Saints Oakham

Two large inscribed boards at the west end of All Saints church list the vicars of the church from 1227 to the present day (figure 1). This list matches those found in church guides written over the last 100 years and date back to the primary research found in a 1903 article in the [Rutland County Magazine and Historical Record of 1905](#). Whilst this list is quite comprehensive, a more detailed resource is now available – the [The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 \(CCEd\)](#) which contains information from a wider variety of sources than were available in 1905. In this post we look at the information that can be obtained from this database about the life and times of Vicars of Oakham for the period 1540-1835 – roughly corresponding to the top half of the second board in figure 1.



Figure 1. The Vicar boards at All Saints Church

The database listing

A listing of the Vicars of Oakham from the database is given in Table 1 below. The table gives the names and the year and type of the event recorded. The hyperlinks on the names link to the information held in the database of the career that particular person, both at Oakham and

elsewhere, and the hyperlinks in the “View” column link to details of the particular event recorded. The types of event are as follows.

- Appt (Admission) – Definition not clear
- Appt (Collation) – Candidate appointed by the Bishop as Patron, combining presentation and institution
- Appt (Institution) – Appointment of the candidate to the living by the Bishop
- Appt (Licensing) – Appointed with a Bishop’s license
- Appt (Presentation) – Patron presents the candidate to the Bishop
- Disp (Dispensation) – Some variation of normal practice
- LibC – Liber Cleri – Name found in Visitation records
- Subsc – Subscription to various oaths
- Vac (Death) – Vacancy caused by death
- Vac (Resignation) – Vacancy caused by resignation

Not only does the database list the Vicars of Oakham, but also those who were curates or licensed preachers, and these are shown in Table 2. The intermittent nature of this listing suggests that this list is far from complete. Indeed the database also lists curates in the associated parishes of Egleton, Barleythorpe, Langham and other chapels, who were probably under the oversight of the vicar of Oakham.

Archbolde , Willimus	1561	Appt (<i>Resignation</i>)	Vicar	View
Tarte , Thomas	1561	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Bartlett , Johannes	1565	Vac (<i>resignation</i>)	Vicar	View
Thyckpennye , Thomas	1565	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Peachie , Willimus	1596	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Greene, Johannes	1609	Appt (<i>Presentation</i>)	Vicar	View
Peachie , Will	1629	Disp-App	Vicar	View
Tyd , Richard	1644	Appt (<i>Admission</i>)	Perpetual Vicar	View
Wright, Abraham	1662	Subsc	Vicar	View
Wright, Abraham	1664	Libc	Vicar	View
Warburton, John	1691	Appt (<i>Collation</i>)	Vicar	View
Warburton, John	1736	Vac (<i>Death</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams, John	1736	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , John	1777	Libc	Vicar	View
Williams , John	1782	Vac (<i>Death</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1782	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1806	Vac (<i>Death</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1806	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1806	Vac (<i>Death</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1806	Disp (<i>Dispensation</i>)	Vicar	View
Williams , Richard	1815	Vac (<i>Death</i>)	Vicar	View
Finch , Heneage	1815	Disp (<i>Dispensation</i>)	Vicar	View
Finch , Heneage	1815	Appt (<i>Institution</i>)	Vicar	View

Table 1. The Vicars of Oakham from [The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 \(CCEd\)](#)

Gooche, Nathaniel	1612	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Preacher	View
Chamberlain , Jacob	1639	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Warburton, Charles	1722	Appt (<i>Appointment</i>)	Curate	View
Holwell, Benjamin	1725	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Stokes, Charles	1728	Subsc	Deacon	View
Stokes, John	1728	Subsc	Deacon	View
Smith , William	1776	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Smith , William	1777	Libc	Curate	View
Orme ? , Thomas	1777	Libc	Curate	View
Currie , John	1783	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Barton , Matthew	1808	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Jones , John	1816	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Macfarlane , Robert	1821	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Breynton , John Henry	1821	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Foxton , George Lardner	1825	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Philpot , William Doveton	1833	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View
Heaton , George	1834	Appt (<i>Licensing</i>)	Curate	View

Table 2. Other ministers at Oakham from [The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 \(CCEd\)](#)

In what follows we delve deeper into the database to learn more about the clergy named in the above tables.

Reformation, counter Reformation and the Elizabethan settlement (1540 -1596)

Henry VIII died in 1547, and was succeeded by his son Edward VI (1547-1553). In his reign the Protestant Reformation took hold, with the publication of the 1549 Prayer book in English. The situation rapidly changed when his sister Mary (1553 to 1558) came to the throne, with the Catholic Counter Reformation. This period was a time of turmoil for the church, with loyalties

tested amid persecution and martyrdom. The situation stabilised when Elizabeth I came to the throne, with a return to Protestantism, but acceptance, if not approval of catholic worship as long as it was carried out discretely.

George Daddley, who appears on the board for 1528, does not appear in the database, presumably because all the information about him precedes 1540, the start date for the database. The first vicar recorded in the database after that date is William (Willimus) Archebolde who resigned in 1561. He was Vicar of Blakeskey from 1551 and presumably resigned at some time after that to take up the position at Oakham. He was also Vicar of Bugbrooke from 1560 to 1561 and Vicar of Kislingbury 1559-1568. How he fared in the reigns of Edward and Mary is unknown – but he at least survived to the reign of Elizabeth. He was succeeded at Oakham by Thomas Tarte in 1561. Tarte presumably resigned after two or three years and was succeeded by John (Johannes) Bartlett (again not on the board) who himself resigned in 1565. This rapid turnover of clergy then came to an end with the appointment of Thomas Thyckpenne, who had been a curate at North Luffenham from 1562, who remained in post until 1596.

The Stuarts, the Civil War and the Restoration (1596-1691)

Over the course of the seventeenth century, the stability achieved under Elizabeth was to be lost under the Stuart Monarchs and during the Civil War and the Commonwealth. Again, this would result in far reaching disruption to the life of the church, with conflict between the episcopal Church of England and the Presbyterian parliament. However for the first 40 years of the century there was a sense of stability, with only one, long serving vicar, William Peachie. His career is well documented in the database.

- Father Thomas and born in Essex,
- Matriculated as a Pensioner at St John's, Cambridge, Michaelmas 1582
- B.A. 1586-7; M.A. 1590; B.D. 1597. Fellow, 1590
- Ordained Deacon and Priest on the same day in 1591
- Vicar of Exton, Rutland, 1592-6.
- Vicar of Oakham, 1596-1643
- Father Thomas buried at Oakham in 1602
- Rector of Burrough-on-the-Hill, Leics., 1628-43.
- Died Oct. 6, 1643, aged 78. M.I. at Oakham.
- Father of Josias (1617), John (1620) and Samuel (1614).

Early in his incumbency, a report of a Visitation suggest the church was in poor repair.

The seats on the south aisle are all broken in the bottom and neither paved nor boarded. Pavement in the east and north aisles broken. The chancel and the chapel on the north side neither plastered nor whited...Two bell wheels broken but being mended. The communion table unfit. The linen cloths very old. The north door in decay

Peachie was buried in the chancel, with a plain gravestone, with the following inscription ([The History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland](#), James Wright, 1684)

Subtus jacet Venerab. Vir Guil. Peachie S.T.B. quondam Coll. D. Joh. Cant. Soc. nuper bujus
EcclesiaVic. Morum innocentia satis laudatus, in arte concionandi Versatiss.

Quator Trium, Insignum Theologor, Pater Soror

Qui OJob. 6.

Non tam morbo confectus, quam vivendi tedio lassatus, placide expiravit.

Dom. 1643.

Etat. 78.

Residentia, 47.

Noli vexare Quiescit.

The gravestone no longer exists. The English Translation is as follows.

Beneath lies the Venerable. Rev William Peachie S.T.B. formerly of the College of St John, Cambridge. Recently the Vicar of the Church. His innocence of morals is highly praised, he is skilled in the art of preaching.

Four Three, Insignia Theologian, Father Sister

Job 6

Not so much worn out by illness, as worn out by the tedium of life, he expired peacefully.

Died 1643

Age 78

Residence 47

Don't bother him. He's resting.

Peachie thus survived through the reigns of James I and Charles I, but by the time of his death, the Civil War was underway and the relative peace of the first half of the century shattered. In this context one can perhaps appreciate the world weariness expressed in the inscription. It may also be that Peachie would have been required to sign the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) – a Presbyterian document of 1643 to which all those appointed to livings were required to subscribe. There are other indications in the record that his tenure was not wholly without incident. The records indicate that in 1609 John (Johannes) Green was presented to be Vicar of Oakham by the Patron, King James. No further details are known, and this may simply be a mistake in the original record or the transcription to the database. But it might indicate some sort of conflict over the living. Then in 1612, Nathaniel Gooch was licensed as a Preacher in the parish, having been ordained deacon and priest in 1607. What this role was in relation to Peachie is unknown, and Gooch is next found in the record as being appointed Vicar of Twyford

in Leicestershire in 1630. Neither Green or Gooch are on the Vicar's board. Further to these appointments, in 1639 James Chamberlin was appointed curate of the Parish and Preacher throughout the Diocese of Peterborough. He had been a curate and preacher at Kirkby Mallory, Earl Shilton Chapel from 1633. Again what his role was in relation to Peachie's is not clear. The record shows him again at Kirkby Mallory, Earl Shilton chapel in 1662 after the Restoration. Again, as a curate he does not appear on the Vicar's board.

We have little information on the next vicar other than his name – Richard Tydd, who was appointed in 1644, by when the conflict between Bishops and Presbyterians for control of the church was underway. His incumbency only lasted a year and it might be that he too was required to sign the covenant, but refused to do so. The next incumbent was one of the most consequential of the period under study – Abraham Wright. Details of his career can be found on a [Wikipedia page](#), an obviously AI written [Grokikipedia page](#), the [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) and [Rutland Record 8, 1988](#). The latter is most succinct and is reproduced below.

WRIGHT, Rev. Abraham (1611-90) Oakham's notable Vicar, Abraham Wright, was born in 1611. He became a Fellow at St John's College, Oxford, in 1632 and, in 1636, when Archbishop Laud, a former President, came with King Charles 11 and the Queen to open the new Library, it was Abraham Wright who read his own poem of welcome, later contained in "Parnassus Biceps". During the same visit, he acted before the Royal Visitors in "Love's Hospital". Earlier, he had written a comic interlude, which he called "The Reformation". Later, he published his own Sermons, including one which he preached at his own Ordination, and another given before the King. Other writings include an essay in praise of Strafford. In 1645, Wright was offered the living of Oakham by William Juxon, his President when he went up to Oxford, and by now Bishop of London but, because he could not accept the interregnum requirement to take the covenant, he was not instituted until 1660. Instead, he was active in Peckham and St Olave's, Hart Street. When 1660 came, he was offered the Chaplaincy to the Queen of Bohemia, the new King's sister. However, he refused this and other offers of high preferment and chose to come and remain in Oakham until his death in 1690. He married twice. His first wife bore him James, the writer of The History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland, towards which Abraham Wright provided the cost of two plates, including one of the windows of a former hall of the Hospital of St John and St Anne. As a disciple of Juxon, and as seen in some of his writings, Abraham Wright was a Laudian and, as such, insisted on ceremonial, belief in the Sacraments and the dignity of the Priesthood.

Some of his publications can be found on the web – for example "[A practical commentary or exposition upon the Pentateuch](#)" and "[A Commentary on the Psalms](#)".

Again there seems to have been problems with the church fabric in the latter part of Wright's incumbency, perhaps partly due to neglect during the Civil War. From the [Victoria County History 1935](#).

In 1681 an order was made on Mr. Abraham Wright, vicar, and Mr. Burton, tenant of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, to pave the chancel and repair the ceiling, seats and windows; and on the churchwardens to remove the rubbish out of the churchyard, repave the church alleys throughout, repair the seats and the roof and glaze the windows, rebind the Bible, provide a new Common Prayer Book, plaster and whitewash the vestry, provide a covering to one of the pewter flagons, a carpet for the Communion table of fine green or purple broad cloth, to repair the beam in the middle aisle over the minister's pew and to take away the seats in the middle aisle.



Figure 2. The Abraham Wright Memorial

The memorial to Wright still exists on the west wall of the north transept (Figure 2). It is the only monument in the church written in Latin.

P. M. S.
 Prope jacet corpus venerabilis
 Abraham Wright M.A. quondam hujus Ecclesia Vicarij
 nata Londinensis, eruditione Oxoniensis,
 olim Collegij d. Johan Baptista
 in celeberrima ista Academia Socij.
 qui nonis die Maij
 Salutis Christianæ 1690
 ætatis sua 79,
 Vicariatus 30, pie et tranquille expiravit
 Beati mortui qui in domino moriuntur,
 Requiescant à laboribus suis.

amodo jam dicit spiritus ut
requiescant a laboribus suis.

The English Translation is as follows.

P. M. S.

Near lies the body of the venerable
Abraham Wright M.A., formerly Vicar of this Church
born in London, educated in Oxford
formerly of the College of John the Baptist
in that celebrated Academic Society
who died on the 1st of May, 1690
aged 79
Vicar for 30 years, in piety and tranquillity.
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord
from now on the Spirit says
that they may rest from their labours.

The other “vicar” that deserves further mention is the one who replaced Wright during the Civil War and Commonwealth – Benjamin King (1545-1660). His name, unsurprisingly, does not feature on the Vicar’s Board. After the Restoration he was ejected from the living at Oakham, [one of six in Rutland](#) to suffer that fate. But he seems to have remained in the area. From the [Victoria County History](#).

In 1672 a licence was granted to Benjamin King, who had been intruding minister at Oakham during the time of the Commonwealth, for Presbyterians to meet at the house of Matthias Barry at Oakham. King had two daughters, one of whom married Vincent Alsop, usher of Oakham School and later an eminent minister in Westminster; the other married Robert Ekins, the first minister in the Northgate Barn.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1691-1835)

The eighteenth century again saw two long incumbencies – John Warburton from 1691 to 1736, and John Williams from 1736 to 1782. Curates become more common (or they are recorded more diligently) with six in total recorded during these incumbencies.

After the death of John Williams, his place was taken by his son Richard. He had been ordained deacon in 1771 and priest in 1772, a was curate of Stapleford in Leicestershire and vicar of Skillington in Lincolnshire from 1772. He was vicar of Oakham from 1782 to 1806 – a relatively short incumbency of only 24 years! He in his turn was succeeded by his son, another Richard, whose was ordained deacon and priest in 1801 and 1802. He was a curate in his father’s parish from 1801 until he succeeded him in 1806. In addition he was Usher at Oakham School from 1802-10. curate of Langham from 1801, vicar. of Enderby with Whetstone in Leicestershire from 1803-15 and domestic chaplain to George Finch, 9th Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham of

Burley House from 1806 to 1815 (the patron of the church, and thus the one who presented him to the living). Only two curates are recorded during the incumbencies of the two Richards.

A monument to all three Williams is still in place in the north transept of the church and is shown in Figure 3.

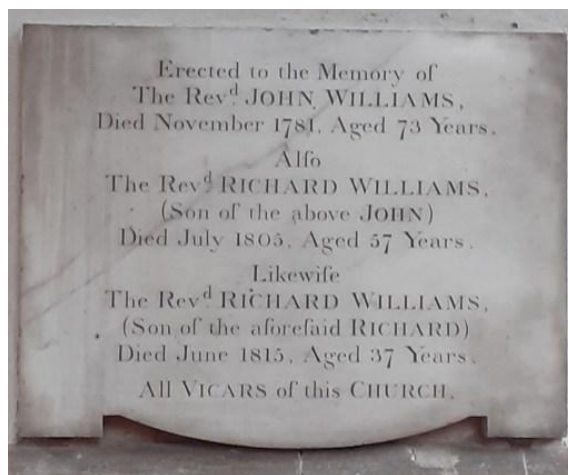


Figure 3. The Williams memorial

The final vicar in the period of the Clergy of the Church of England dataset is Heneage Finch, grandson of Heneage Finch, 3rd Earl of Aylesford ([History of the Finch Family, Brayan l'Anson, 1933](#)) and a distant relative of George Finch, 9th Earl of Winchilsea and Nottingham mentioned above, the patron of the living. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1812, and was curate of Harpsden before moving to Oakham in 1815. He was also Rector of Great Weldon from 1812 to 1819 and Domestic chaplain to William Legge, 4th earl of Dartmouth and Viscount Lewisham from 1815. He was another long serving vicar and died in post in 1865. It was during his incumbency that the church was restored by [Gilbert Scott in 1858](#). Before that, as can be judged by Scott's report, the church was again in a very poor state of repair. Indeed a [lecture of 1860](#) that describes the pre-Restoration state of the church mentions

...that old ladies sat in church with their umbrellas up, and the pulpit to the last was in mourning for George III...

It would seem that Heneage Finch was content to let the status quo prevail and [had to be urged \(or one might say shamed\) to let the restoration take place](#). In the end he contributed £200 to the overall contract cost of £4400. George Finch contributed £800.

