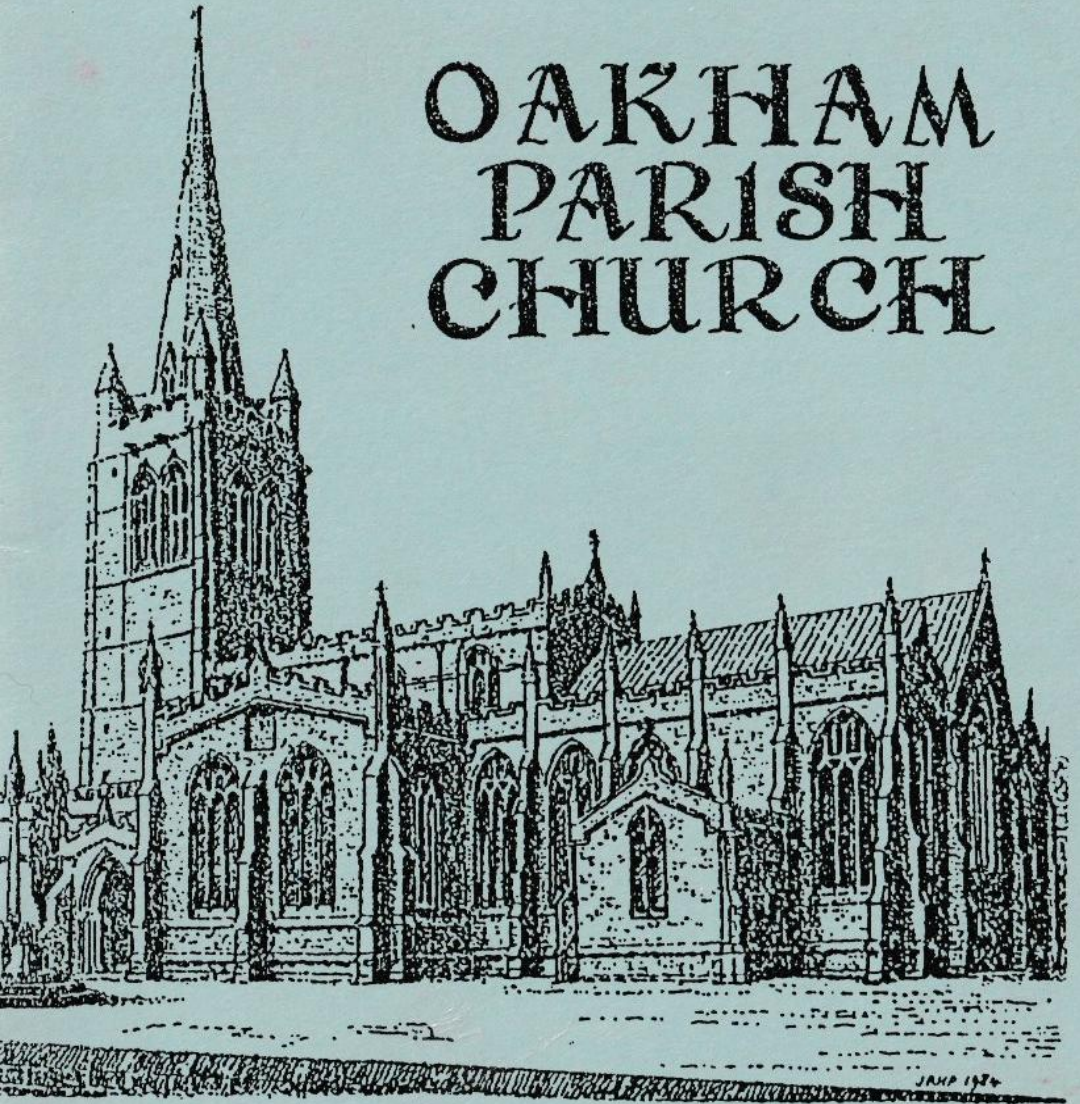



OAKHAM PARISH CHURCH



THE BUILDING

The first church on the site was probably wooden. A stone church was built in the 13th century, rebuilt in the 14th century, further modified in the 15th century and partially restored in the 19th century, a continuous process dependent on the availability of finance. The original building was probably stone only to window-sill level, with timber frames above supporting the roof, and extending only to the present Chancel entrance with the two transepts as chapels, the South Transept probably serving as the Lady Chapel.

IMAGINATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF 13TH CENTURY STONE CHURCH



SOUTH PORCH

This is mainly Early English, with two colonnades of four blind arches. Note the nail head motif of the six unrestored capitals. One column of Victorian marble was introduced in the 19th century to encourage subscriptions for a complete restoration, fortunately not realised.

SOUTH DOORWAY

This dates from approximately 1190 and is Transitional Norman in style.

FONT

The bowl is Transitional work of the late 12th century. Note that the arading of intersecting arches is imperfectly proportioned on the north west side. It stood originally on eight shafts, the capitals of which can be seen under the bowl. It now stands on what is believed to be the base of a 14th



Each (Fig.1) The capital third from the west represents the Green Man (Fig.2), the father of lies abusing the four evangelists opposite.

On the South side the tower capital shows the pelican feeding her young, representing the Blessed Sacrament (Fig.3). The capital first from the west relates the legend of Reynard

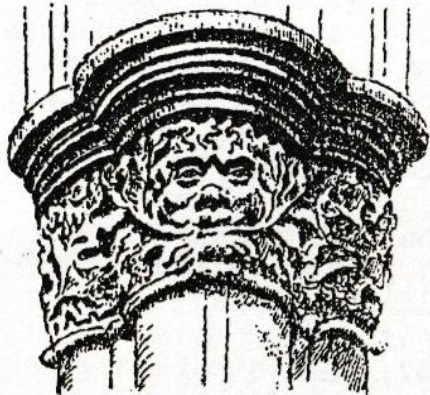
the Fox (Fig.4), which may depict the Abbot of Westminster making off with the great tithes, leaving only the smaller tithes for the fettered monkey (the local priest) but was more likely to be an illustration of Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale". The capital on the Chancel arch depicts the Crowning of the Virgin and the Annunciation.

MEDIAEVAL CAPITALS ON THE NORTH SIDE

Fig.1



Fig.2

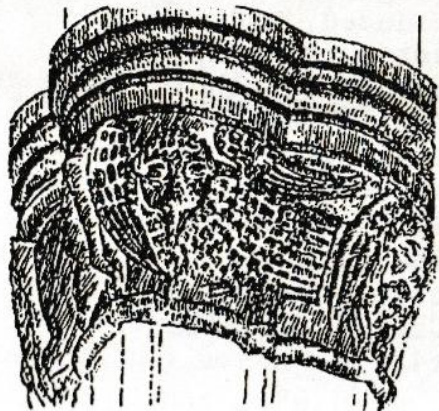


MEDIAEVAL CAPITALS ON THE SOUTH SIDE

Fig.3



Fig.4



NAVE (cont.)

The roof of the Nave in the 14th century church was steeply pitched. The inverted 'V' which can be seen on the tower-wall indicates its position. It was raised to its present shallow pitch when wool trade wealth facilitated a massive rebuilding in the 14th and 15th centuries. The roof, partially restored, dates from this period. It is supported by tall wooden uprights which spring from the corbels of the old roof. It is of moulded ribs and panelling in four bays. The theme of grotesque heads in the corbels is continued in the roof bosses best seen by looking westward from the Chancel step. Note also carved figures of angels where roof meets wall. (Figs. 5 and 6) The clerestory in pure Perpendicular style was added to lighten the church. Double decker galleries and the old pulpit and box pews were removed in 1857, when a restoration of the church was carried out by Sir Gilbert Scott. Pews with poppy head and other carvings were introduced, and an octagonal pulpit of wainscot with traceried panels, but this was subsequently replaced in 1905 by the existing pulpit, a memorial to Charles Knowlton Morris.

Fig.5



Fig.6



SOUTH AISLE

The Decorated English west window dates from the 14th century. Its off-centre position shows that the aisles also had steeply sloping roofs at this time. The carved stone lion inserted above an existing pier to support the roof beam to the east of the South doorway is also noteworthy. The windows in the south wall are of a developed Perpendicular style dating from the 15th century rebuilding when the earlier roof was raised to its present level. At the west end the extended span of the roof beam was necessitated by the construction of the tower, begun in the 14th century. A poignant memorial of 1642 to 15 year old Anne Burton is on the west wall inside the section curtained off as a choir vestry.

MONUMENT TO
ANNE BURTON



TOWER (See also notes on exterior)

The tracery of the window above the west door is 14th century Decorated work. The round piers of the north arch suggest the re-use of an earlier doorway. The staircase to the bell chamber is in the south-west corner.

NORTH AISLE

The unusually large window in the north wall, now with Perpendicular tracery, may have been transferred from the east end of the Chancel.

When Edith died in 1075, William the Conqueror honoured the Abbey's claim on her part of Rutland. Hugh de Port held her lands in farm from the King, but by royal command gave the tithe to the Abbey. King William Rufus later confirmed that the Abbot's rights should continue as in his father's reign.

Early in the 13th century, Abbot Richard de Berkying purchased the church at his own expense to gain greater control. The lands formerly held by Edith and Albert thereafter became known as "Deanshold" and were administered by a monk called a pittancer.

In 1227, the Abbot appointed another absentee Rector, Gilbert Marechal, but also safeguarded the rights of William the Vicar. In time the Abbey cut out the middle man, the Rector, and appointed the Vicars direct. In accordance with

customary mediaeval financial practices this ensured that the great tithe accrued to the Abbey's benefit. The lesser tithe financed the clergy of Oakham and attendant villages.

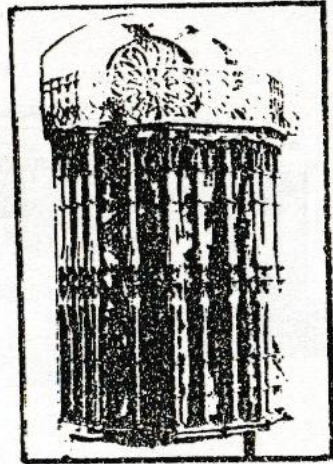
(See the note on pages 2 and 3 about the capital depicting the legend of Reynard the Fox.)

In the 16th. century, the Abbot retained the advowson, the right to appoint a priest, even after the secularisation of the Abbey, but in 1550 Edward the Sixth granted this to Bishop Ridley of London, whose successors held it until 1697. It then passed by Act of Parliament to the Earl of Northampton and subsequently to the Earl of Winchelsea and the related Finch family. The Abbey still retained its property in the area. During the Commonwealth "Deanshold" was confiscated but was restored after the Restoration in 1660.

(See the note about Abraham Wright on page 7)

HOLY TRINITY CHAPEL (cont.)

south east corner is of the 15th century. The stained glass in the east window is a 19th century memorial to the Hon.H.Barleythorpe. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in this Chapel. The aumbry (pictured here) by Frank Knight was regilded and inserted in the north wall in 1979. The altar and the present lighting were designed by Sir Ninian Comper. New hangings have recently been added in this Chapel.

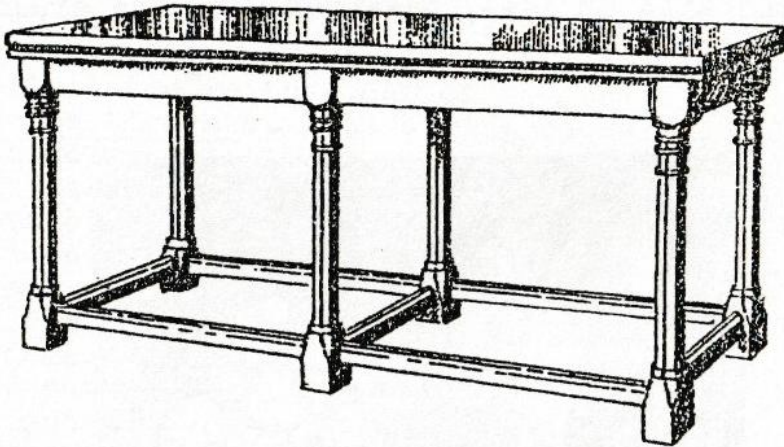


LADY CHAPEL

This was added somewhat later in the 15th century. Note the flatter Perpendicular arches in the arcade and the simpler decoration of the capitals. The East window is a fine example of Perpendicular work. The vestry door and next to it, screened by a curtain, a Priest's door are of the same period. Numerous stone flags in the floor are mostly 18th and 19th century memorials, but the inscriptions on some have been worn away. The interior of the roof was rebuilt in the 1857 restoration. The stained glass is 20th century. The window on the south side, designed by Sir Ninian Comper, is a memorial of 1908 to John Brough Hallam and depicts the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The glass in the east window is a memorial to May Clapperton.

LADY CHAPEL (cont.)

The altar in this Chapel (below) is also by Sir Ninian Comper. It was previously in use, together with its candlesticks, as the High Altar, a memorial to the widow of Canon Charles, vicar from 1905-1929. The Madonna at the entrance is a memorial to Margaret Purdy dated 1950.

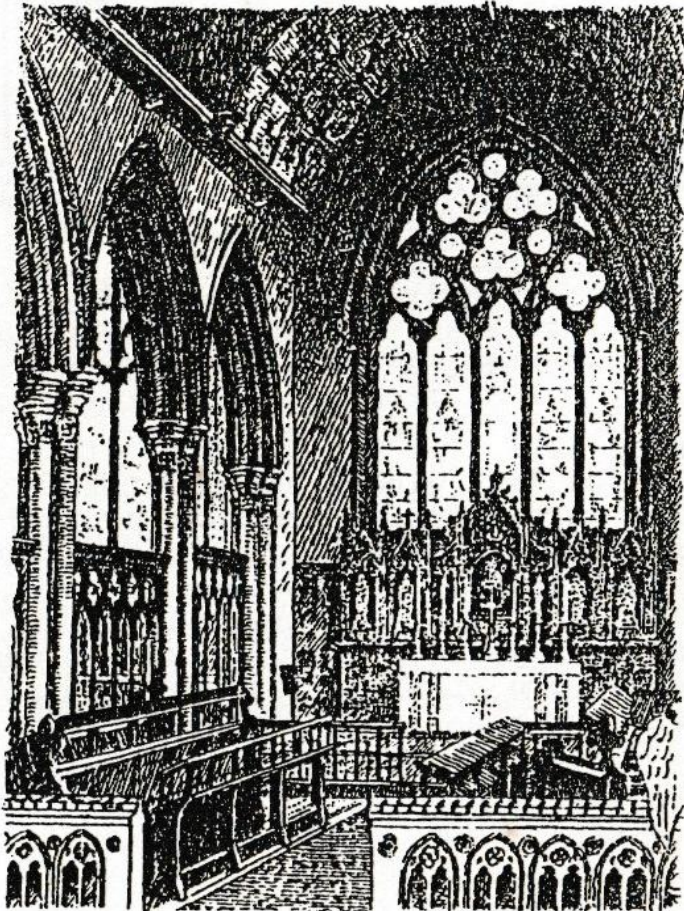


CHANCEL

The arcades date from the building of the Chapels. The East window was rebuilt in Devonshire marble during the 19th century reconstruction by Sir Gilbert Scott. The roof of English oak, the screens in the arcades and the floor of encaustic tiles date from this period. A rood screen was also erected and an altar rail of wainscot installed, but these were subsequently removed. The 19th century stained glass, depicting the Ascension, is a memorial to Captain Doria. The reredos, the work of

CHANCEL (cont.)

James Forsyth, depicting the Resurrection, was installed in 1898 as a memorial to William Clarke Morris. At the same time the Sanctuary roof was enriched, its floors paved in marble, and brass altar rails installed. A brass tablet above the precentor's stall on the north side is a memorial to a former curate of Oakham, Henry Arthur Jerwood, dated 1906. The High Altar, in memory of Charles Thornton, was dedicated in 1944, together with the cross and candlesticks.



EXTERIOR

The Tower, 284 ft. high, dominates the area. It has five stages marked by string courses. Construction started in the 14th century but was a continuing process not completed until the 15th century. The Bell Chamber has lights of Decorated tracery, off-centre on the west and south faces to accommodate the staircase. Statues of our Lord and two Saints, probably S.S. Peter and Paul, can be seen on the west side. Roger Flore, whose house stands in the High Street, and four times Speaker of the House of Commons between 1397 and 1419, contributed to the cost of the spire.

The Battlements, with string courses, including attractive carvings underneath, were added to the exterior as part of the 15th century rebuilding.

Evidence of the heightening of the church is clearly visible on the upper part of the walls of the North Transept and North Aisle.

A damaged holy water stoup can be found on the outer wall of the vestry outside the Priest's door near the eastern end of the South wall.

The Weathercock, Cock Peter, appears to be the original one dating from about 1430. There are two repair plates on the bird showing dates 1632 and 1737.

The Clock was made by F. Dent of London in 1858. It is a precursor of Big Ben and also rings the Cambridge chimes.

BELLS

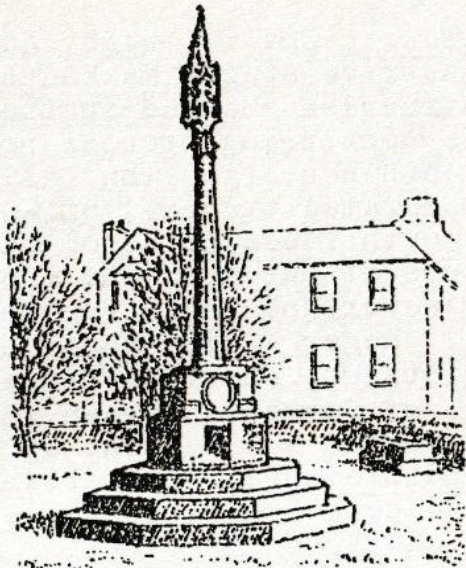
Two date from 1677, a third from 1723 and four were added between 1840 and 1875. They were recast in 1910 by Gillett and Johnson. The last restoration took place in 1979 by Eayres and Smith of Kegworth. The tenor weighs nearly 16 cwts. and has a diameter of 19 ins.

WAR MEMORIAL

Designed

by

Sir Ninian Comper



TREES

To the west of the South Porch there are two Cypress trees grown from seed brought from the Garden of Gethsemane in 1925 by John Codrington.

COMMUNION PLATE

This includes an Elizabethan silver gilt chalice of 1578, another dated 1638, a flagon of 1725 and a paten of 1742.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide is based on an earlier more detailed version by Rev. Stephen Haddelsey M.A. Subsequent additions by Canon Alan Horsley B.A. Abridged and redacted by H.S.Aubury B.A. Drawings by Canon J.R.H.Prophet B.A., L.Th. Photography by B. and E. Nicholls.

SCHOLA LATINA

GRAECA

HEBRAICA A° 1584