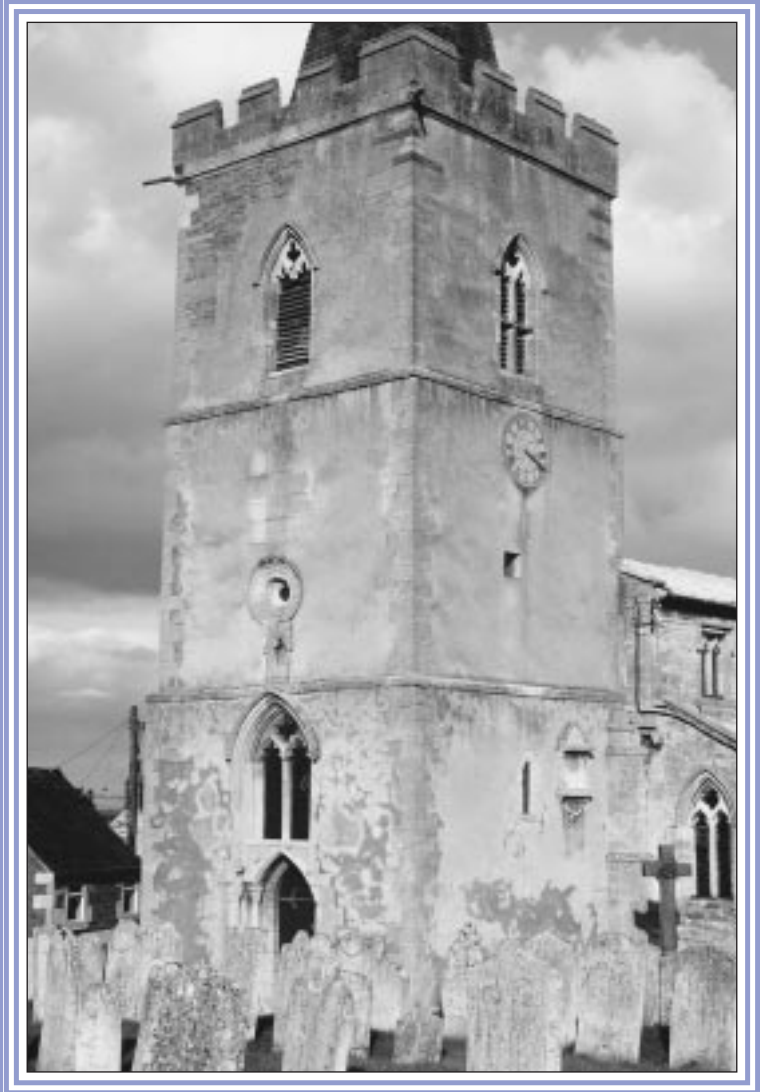


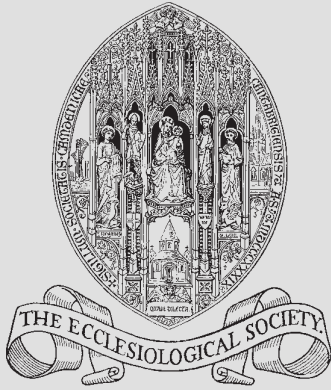


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*The illustration on the cover is the West Tower of St Mary's, Morcott, (Rutland),
from the south west.*

Chairman's Letter

WELCOME to a rather late edition of *Ecclesiology Today*. I apologise for its tardy arrival, but hope you feel that, now it is in your hands, the wait has been worthwhile. The delay occurred for a number of reasons, for none of which was our editor, John Elliott, responsible.

The present plan is to produce one more issue later in the year: we will let you know if we decide instead on any other course of action, for example combining the next two editions into a single one. Your Council are anyway giving serious thought to the long-term pattern of publication for *Ecclesiology Today*, given the way it has developed into a periodical of some significance from its rather more humble beginnings as a stapled newsletter some twenty-five years ago. I expect we will have some news on this in the fairly near future.

This has been a year of change on our Council. Early in the year, Ian Watt became a postulant at Downside Abbey, to test his vocation as a monk, and so did not stand for re-election at the AGM. He was a member of Council for about eight years, latterly as Minutes Secretary, and brought a fund of useful knowledge, and a gift for asking the searching question. He is missed. Recently he begun his formal novitiate, taking the name Brother Benet. We wish him well.

We are delighted that three members have joined the Council, two through election at the AGM, and one by co-option. Together they bring a range of skills and experience. Keith Lovell is a lover of heraldry, and is not a little knowledgeable on the topic; he has also researched particular aspects of gothic revival church architecture. Sarah Brown leads English Heritage research on places of worship, and will be known to many from, amongst other things, her own research on stained glass. Paul Barnwell, also from English Heritage, has a particular interest in using the evidence of buildings to address historical questions, and is involved in extensive research in this area.

And finally, we congratulate our Treasurer Sue Branfoot, who has been awarded a doctorate for her research into the restorations of George Gilbert Scott.

Since the last edition of *Ecclesiology Today*, we have modernised our database of members. For reasons which are too boring to go into, this involved a complete retyping of names and addresses, a task cheerfully carried out by Doreen Spurr. Although we have put some effort into checking the new database, especially post codes, I suspect there will be some errors, and would encourage you to email the Society or write to our membership secretary with any corrections.

I and other Council members look forward to meeting many of you at the annual conference on 8 October, on the little-studied topic of private chapels, and at our other forthcoming events.

Trevor Cooper
September 2005

Image, Liturgy and the Topography of Devotion: St Mary's Church, Fairford

Sarah Brown

THE CHURCH OF ST MARY, FAIRFORD IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE (fig. 1), with its twenty-eight extraordinary early sixteenth-century windows, has long been recognised as exceptional: the windows were the subject of two admiring seventeenth-century poems¹ and it is said that Van Dyke described the windows to Charles I as 'being so exquisitely done that they cannot be exceeded by the best pencil' – praise indeed in an age in which medieval art was generally held in low esteem.² Extravagant admiration of the church has continued into our own era: in 1999, Simon Jenkins justifiably included Fairford among his thousand best churches, assigning a five-star rating to 'one of England's most outstanding galleries of church art'.³ This accolade, however well-deserved, belies the fact that the church was not built as an ecclesiastical art gallery, but, in common with many thousands of less celebrated others, served as the backdrop to the performance of that everyday medieval miracle, the celebration of the Mass. In its windows, on its walls and in its fabric, we can glimpse something of the environment and topography of late medieval liturgy and devotion, the local specifics of a subject that

Fig. 1. St Mary, Fairford, Gloucestershire, from the south-east.



formed the golden thread that ran through the Ecclesiological Society's 2004 Autumn conference, proof positive of the vigour and vitality of religious life in the late medieval English parish on the very eve of the Reformation that was to transform it irrevocably.

The Building: History And Patronage

Although the church was almost completely reconstructed in the 1490s, the crossing area preserves fabric of the earlier cruciform church in the form of a fragment of thirteenth-century nave arcade, while externally the shadow of the roof of the lost north transept can still be seen. The thirteenth-century crossing tower may have been strengthened and rebuilt in the 1430s.⁴ The masons of the 1490s' reconstruction were probably from Oxford, as Anna Eavis has convincingly argued, comparing Fairford to the University church, St Mary's, built in the same period.⁵

In 1542, John Leland, antiquary and chaplain to Henry VIII, visited Fairford and recorded: 'John Tame began the fair new chirch of Fairforde and Edmund Tame finished it' and there seems little reason to doubt the veracity of Leland's testimony concerning chronology and patronage.⁶ Tame's arms appear in several places on the church, both inside and out, including on the rebuilt central tower, where they accompany those of the Earl of Warwick, in possession of the manor until the 1430s, together with those of the Clares and Despencers, holders of the honour of Gloucester and patrons of the Abbey of Tewkesbury, patron of the church.⁷ The wealthy wool merchant John Tame was granted custody of the manor of Fairford in 1497 and the family held the manor, first in custody and then by lease, until 1547.⁸ Leland attributed Fairford's late medieval prosperity to the Tames: 'Fairford never flourished afore the cumming of the Tames onto it'.⁹ In June 1497, the second of two special visitations of Fairford church took place. It is likely that this event marked the consecration of at least the east end of the church. This impression is confirmed by the terms of John Tames's will, made in January of the same year, in which he requested burial in the north chapel of the church (see Appendix). At his death in May 1500, his wishes were carried out and his splendid tomb (fig. 2) is located on the south side of the north chapel, the Lady chapel, where he is accompanied by his wife, Alice Twyniho, who predeceased him. His son, Edmund, a successful courtier to Henry VIII, died in 1534 and was also buried in the north chapel, by now clearly designated as the Lady chapel. His son, also Edmund, was still in residence in Fairford, in the house to the north-west of the church, at the time of Leland's visit. He died in 1544 and was buried at Rendcomb, another church constructed and glazed by his father.



Fig. 2. The tomb of John Tame (d. 1500) between the chancel and the Lady Chapel.

The Windows

It has long been recognised that the stained glass windows were probably the work of the Anglo-Netherlandish glaziers based in Westminster and Southwark, closely associated with the most prestigious royal and aristocratic projects of the years around 1500. The arrival of the windows by boat on the nearby river Coln, a tributary of the Thames, may account for the apocryphal

tales of their capture on the high seas. It is even possible that work was directed by Barnard Flower, the Netherlandish King's Glazier appointed in 1497, although this cannot be substantiated.

It has been suggested that the windows may have been given by members of Henry VII's household and court.¹⁰ However, Tudor royal art and architecture was characterised by a bravura display of shields, badges, insignia and mottoes. With the exception of the Prince of Wales' feathers in the small tracery eyelets of three windows in the north aisle, there is no such display at Fairford. As a loyal servant of the King, Leland would surely have recorded this extraordinary and unprecedented act of royal generosity. In support of the hypothesis of Court patronage, it has also been suggested that the windows contain a series of hidden portraits of members of the Tudor court.¹¹ This theory has failed to attract widespread support, although there is a strong generic similarity to the features of Henry VII displayed in the figure of a king climbing the steps of heaven in the west window. This may indicate that its creation dates from the period following the king's death in 1509. A date of c.1500-15 would sit comfortably with its style. By 1515, the Flower workshop and its associates were heavily engaged in the first phase of glazing at King's College, Cambridge.¹² It is interesting that at nearby Rendcomb, reconstructed and glazed under the patronage of Edmund Tame the Elder between 1503 and 1517, the glass, fragmentary, but of very high quality, is in a style significantly more classical in its decorative repertoire and surely later in date and by different Anglo-Netherlandish glaziers than those employed at Fairford.¹³ An understandable preoccupation with the style and artistic quality of the stained glass of St Mary's has resulted in the relative neglect of a thorough consideration of how the windows worked within their architectural context. The main subject of this paper is, therefore, the liturgical and devotional topography of the church and the windows' place in this.

The Topography Of Devotion

The survival of the wonderful wooden screens between eastern chapels and nave enormously increases our appreciation of the liturgical topography of the building (fig. 3). St Mary's, in common with all other late medieval parish churches, was comprised of a series of encapsulated spaces. The screens, enriched with five different foliage and fruit designs, and with their candle prickets surviving in a number of places, run from north to south in line with the eastern piers of the central tower and divide the nave and crossing from the eastern arm. Parclose screens running east-west separate the two-bay north and south chapels from the choir, the location of the high altar, sited in the relatively shallow



one-bay sanctuary. In John Tame's will of January 1497, the north chapel is referred to merely as 'the north chapel'. The will of Elizabeth Tame (d.1545), describes it as the Lady chapel.¹⁴ The south chapel was dedicated to Corpus Christi, a feast celebrated in England from 1318 and by the end of the 15th century one of the most elaborate of festivals, marked by processions involving the whole parish.¹⁵ The high altar must also have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary, to whom the whole church was dedicated by at least the 1430s.

It is undoubtedly the stained glass that now provides the most evocative and complete evidence of the devotional priorities of the church and the way in which image and liturgical space interacted. The glazing scheme is one of the most sophisticated in any English church, displaying every indication of careful planning and a sensitivity to the orientation of the building (fig. 4). In its simplest form, this is manifest in the use of the north-south/dark-light dichotomy present in every church. In the nave, for example, a company of saints and martyrs accompanied by angels are displayed in the south clerestory windows, confronting unique images of the persecutors of the church accompanied by

*Fig. 3. Chancel screen
(NMR © Crown Copyright)*

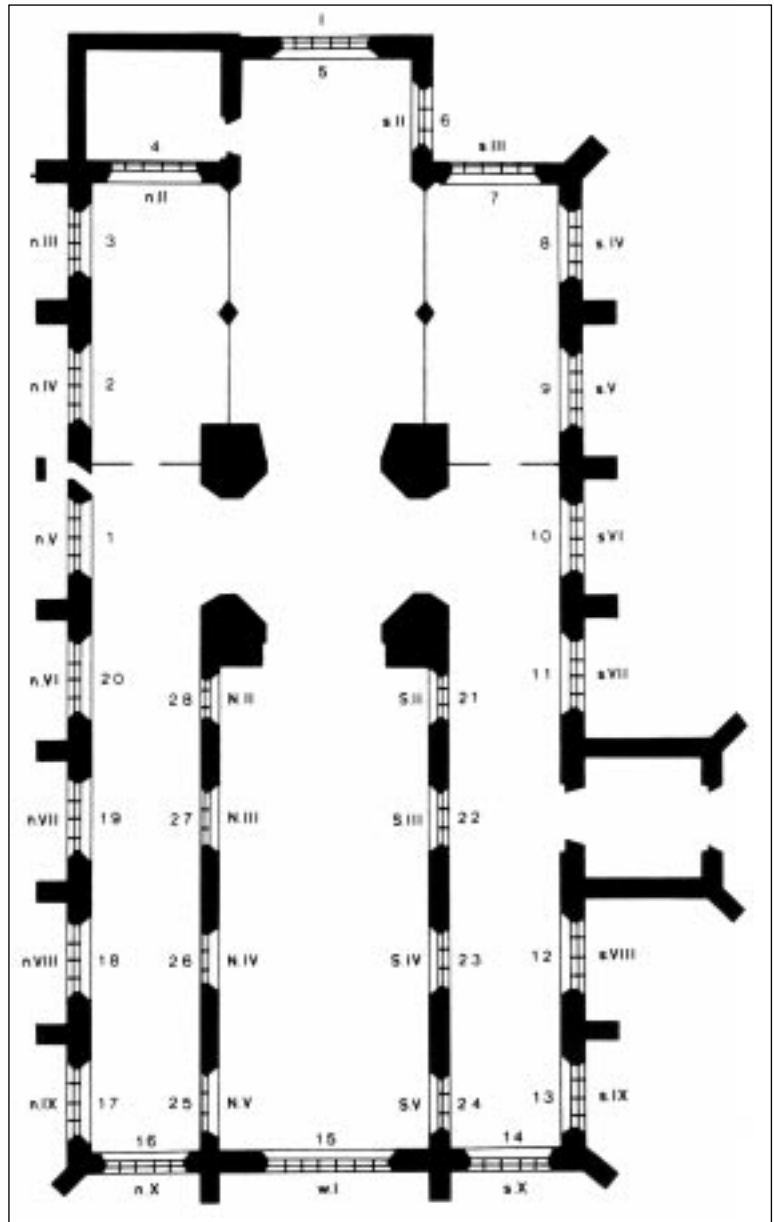


Fig. 4. Plan of the church.

an extraordinary group of demons arrayed on the north side. An east-west dynamic is also at work in the balance of the imperfect human judgement of Pilate in the central light of the east window and the infallible Last Judgement meted out by Christ in the centre light of the west window.¹⁶

However, as the subject of the Society's 2004 symposium was the church as the place for the celebration of the Mass, what follows will concentrate on the imagery of those windows associated with the principal altars. The windows are intended to be 'read' like the turning pages of a book, beginning on the north



Fig. 5. Window 1: The Temptation of Eve and Moses and the Burning Bush.

side of the church, immediately west of the Lady chapel screen. It is a book dedicated to the Virgin Mary, to whom the church is dedicated, and window 1 (nV) acts as a preface, depicting the temptation of Eve, Moses and the burning Bush (fig. 5), Gideon and the Golden Fleece and Sheba before Solomon – all typological precursors of the Marian scenes depicted immediately to the east in the windows of the Lady chapel. Indeed, throughout



Fig. 6. Window 9: Pentecost.

the entire narrative of the eastern arm, the key role of the Blessed Virgin is consistently emphasised in what amounts to an extended version of the Joys and the Sorrows of the Virgin Mary.¹⁷ Even in those scenes in which the Virgin is not the key protagonist, she is often given physical pride of place, and the designer of the windows has chosen to depict a number of incidents from the Virgin Mary's psychological perspective. This is nowhere more apparent than in the depiction of Pentecost (window 9, sV, fig.6), where the Virgin Mary is seated centre stage. At a number of points, the narrative sequence is adjusted to accommodate scenes that reinforce Mary's special role in the sacred drama, suggesting that in common with countless other English parishes, devotion to the Virgin Mother was particularly strong in the late medieval parish of Fairford. Indeed, Englishmen were encouraged to believe in their nation's special relationship with the Blessed Virgin, in which England was represented as the Virgin's dowry.¹⁸

There can be little doubt that both John and Edmund Tame shared this devotion, for in their choice of burial place they put themselves under the Virgin's eternal protection. John's tomb was incorporated into the parclose between the chancel and the Lady chapel, in a location traditionally associated with founders. He bequeathed £250 for the foundation of a chantry, presumably associated with the Lady chapel altar.¹⁹ Edmund lies in a vault immediately before the Lady chapel altar, marked with a brass depicting himself (fig. 7), and his two wives, Agnes (Greville, d. 1506) and Elizabeth (Tyringham), who survived him. The inscription makes it clear that it was installed during Elizabeth's lifetime and reads 'Of youre charite pray [for the soul of Edmund Tame] Knyght here under buried which decessid the fyrst day of October in the yere of oure Lorde God MCCCCxxxiiij [1534] and for the soul of Agnes his first wife which decessid the xxvj day of July The prosperite of Dame Elizabeth his last wife [?frend]es and all Christian soules Jesu have mercy. Amen'. The wall brass on the north wall of the chapel must have been installed only after Dame Elizabeth's death in 1545, its Latin inscription reading in translation 'Here lie Edmund Tame, Knight, and Agnes and Elizabeth his two wives; Edmund died on the first day of October, A.D. 1534, and in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of King Henry VIII, on whose souls may God have mercy. Amen'. Edmund, his wives and children, kneel before the three persons of the Trinity, their prayers expressed on brass ribbons in English: 'Jesu Lord that made us', 'and with Thy blood us bought' and 'Forgive us our trespass'.²⁰ Edmund also made bequests to support a chantry priest 'for ever to sing for the sowles of my father and mother and for the sowles of me & my wife and other frendes'.²¹



*Fig. 7. Detail of the floor brass of Edmund Tame (d. 1534), from C. T. Davies, *The Monumental Brasses of Gloucestershire*, 1899.*

The dedication of the north chapel to the Blessed Virgin is made explicit in the iconography of the windows, which develops an extended infancy narrative, drawn from a mixture of Biblical and well-known Apocryphal sources. Her conception, nativity, education in the Temple and betrothal to Joseph are depicted in the first of the chapel's north wall windows (window 2, nIV), followed by the Annunciation, the Nativity of Christ, the Adoration of the Magi and Shepherds and the Purification (window 3, nII). The window directly above the Lady chapel altar (window 4, nII), its lights shorter than its neighbours in order to accommodate the sacristy further east, comprises five lights rather than the four that is otherwise the standard. The chronological



Fig. 8. Window 4: *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary.*
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Infancy narrative is continued in the window's outer lights, with the Flight into Egypt, with Apocryphal embellishments, and Christ disputing with the doctors. This scene is 'freeze-framed' at the moment at which the anxious Virgin finally finds her lost Son. This smooth chronology is, however, interrupted, so to speak, by the subject of the central light of the chapel's east window, depicting the Assumption of the Virgin and her Coronation by angels (fig. 8). This is an image concerned with elevation and would be seen by those lifting their eyes to witness the elevation of the Host during the Mass. Photographs taken before the installation of the Geoffrey Webb English altar in 1912-13 show that in common with the east wall of the Corpus Christi chapel on the south side, no sculpted stone reredos had been provided, so it is not perhaps fanciful to see the east window as fulfilling this role.²²

The chancel is dominated by the great five-light east window (fig. 9). Here we have jumped from infancy to Passion, with a narrative unfolding in two registers. At the bottom left of the window, Christ triumphantly enters into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, while bottom right he leaves the city on the way to Calvary, his tortured way impeded by the spiked wooden blocks tied to his girdle (fig. 10). The narrative thus unfolds in the window in both time and space, culminating in the Crucifixion that fills all five lights of the upper register. The crowded composition is reminiscent of carved Netherlandish altarpieces of this subject and indeed the spiked blocks are a detail found in several Antwerp pieces of the 1490s.²³ It is, however, a dramatic detail that seems to have originated in the art of Rogier van der Weyden in the 1440s.²⁴ The central light depicts another elevation, of Christ's broken body on the cross, damaged by iconoclasts in the sixteenth or seventeenth century and restored by Barley Studio in response to the specific request of Fairford's contemporary parishioners, for whom the windows continue to be an integral part of their devotional life.

Immediately south of the east window, Christ's deposition and entombment are depicted, together with the harrowing of Hell in window 6 (sII). The Deposition is one of Fairford's most affecting images (fig. 11), with a power to move the onlooker from beyond the great devotional divide created by the Reformation. The normally rather worldly seventeenth-century Oxford poet and dramatist William Strode (1602-45) was inspired to write:

See where he suffers for thee: see
His body taken from the tree:
Had ever death such life before?
The limber corpse, besullyed ore
With meagre paleness, doth display



A middle state twixt Flesh and Clay:
His armes and leggs, his head and crowne,
Like a true Lambskinne dangling downe,
Who can forbear, the Grave being nigh,
To bring fresh oyntment to his eye?²⁵

Strode's reference to the proximity of the grave may have been suggested by the tomb-like impression conveyed by the shallow tripartite tabernacle forming a sedilia immediately beneath the window (fig. 12). There is no architectural provision made for the



Fig. 9. Above left: *The East Window: The Passion of Christ.*

Fig. 10. Above: *The East Window: The way of the Cross*
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*Fig. 11. Above:
Window 6: The Deposition.*

*Fig. 12. Right:
The south-east corner of the chancel.*

Easter Sepulchre into which Christ's body was symbolically entombed between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The most usual position for an Easter sepulchre, in the wall to the north of the altar, is cramped, occupied by the door into the sacristy. Despite its southern location, could the sedilia recess ever have actually functioned as Christ's symbolic tomb?

The chapel to the south of the chancel is dedicated to the Corpus Christi. Like the Lady chapel, it was never provided with a stone reredos and in common with the Lady chapel east wall, its



east window (window 7, sIII) is also of five lights, not four, providing the space for a single central image. The four outer lights depict appearances of the resurrected Christ. The Resurrection itself is nowhere depicted and it is telling that the first image in which it is implicit is transformed into another celebration of the special status of the Virgin – Christ's first Resurrected appearance to her known as 'Et prima vidit'.²⁶ The scene strongly echoes the standard late medieval Annunciation composition, with the Virgin taken unawares at her private devotions (fig. 13). Christ greets his mother with words that would have been familiar from the opening of the Mass of the Virgin – *Salve Sancte Parens* (Hail, Holy Parent). This is no accident, as St Ambrose had compared Christ's resurrection from an unused tomb with his birth from the womb of an unsullied Virgin. The subject was popularised in Pseudo-Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and from the early fifteenth-century in Nicholas Love's English translation, *The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*.²⁷ In the centre light, the chronology of narration is yet again confounded. The desire to provide an elevation image directly above the altar presented the designers with a problem. The Eucharistic image of the Last Supper most



Fig. 13. Window 7:
'Et Prima Vidit'.



Fig. 14. Window 7:
The Transfiguration.

appropriate to the Corpus Christi altar had already been overtaken in the chronology of the Passion narrative. The Ascension is yet to come. The subject chosen was the Transfiguration of Christ, an inspired iconographic compromise, given explicit Eucharistic emphasis by the depiction of a golden host radiating from Christ's breast (fig. 14).

In the adjoining windows (windows 8 and 9, sIV and sV) the Gospel narrative is resumed, with the supper at Emmaus, the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the apostles and doubting Thomas, the miraculous draught of fishes, the Ascension and Pentecost, in both of which the Virgin Mary appears in the foreground.

Authorship Of The Scheme

Who planned this scheme, with its sophisticated iconography so cleverly adapted to its architectural setting? We can only speculate. Local clerical advice cannot be discounted. John Tame's younger son, Thomas, was a priest at Castle Eaton and William Skynner, vicar of Fairford, was a witness to John Tames' will. However, neither received generous posthumous gifts and neither seems to be a very likely source of such sophisticated iconographic inspiration. Edmund Tame, who, as we have seen, was probably the man responsible for funding the glazing, was a successful courtier and his father's wealth had given him access to a more cosmopolitan sphere of life outside the parish. Between 26 August and 2 September 1520, for example, Edmund entertained Henry VIII at his house to the north of the church and his young son was knighted on this occasion.²⁸ Both Edmund and his father are represented on their funerary monuments not as Gloucestershire wool merchants in secular dress, but as armigerous gentlemen dressed in armour. Edmund's will suggests that he was on good terms with the abbots of Augustinian Cirencester and Benedictine Winchcombe.²⁹ The input of the worldly and experienced glaziers themselves cannot be discounted. Whoever had a hand in the scheme had access to up-to-date pictorial sources. In both window 1 and in the west windows of the nave aisles, the blockbook *Biblia Pauperum*, a late fifteenth-century Netherlandish product, was the principal pictorial source.

Access And Audience

Very little is known of the devotional life of the late medieval parishioners of Fairford, although by the 1480s it is known that there were Fraternities dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Holy Trinity and St Cross active in the parish.³⁰ We do know that Fairford church had separate altars with accompanying windows perfectly suited to the weekly celebration of three of the most

popular late medieval votive masses: Thursday, Corpus Christi, Friday, the Holy Cross and Saturday to the Blessed Virgin.³¹ How and when were the windows viewed by the laity? The evidence at Fairford is intriguing. The prefatory window of typological scenes situated immediately to the west of the north screen seems to imply that the viewer is to proceed to 'read' the subsequent windows beyond it rather like the turning pages of a book. The depiction of the Purification of the Virgin and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple in window 3 (nIII), immediately to the left of the Lady chapel altar, would have been an excellent location for celebration of Candlemas, and part of the service for the churching of women.³² For the most part, however, the 'reading' of the glass presumably took place outside service times, so that Fairford's parishioners were very familiar with their windows even if they could only glimpse them through the screens during the celebration of the Mass. Indeed, William Strode's poem suggests that a practice alive and well in Fairford in the nineteenth century, had a seventeenth- and - could it be? - even a sixteenth-century precedent, when he describes the didactic use of the parish clerk's fishing rod to point out particular details in the glass.

When with a fishing rodde the clark
 Saint Peter's draught of fish doth marke,
 Such is the scale, the eye, the finne,
 You'd think they strive and leape within,
 But if the nett, which holds them breake,
 Hee with his angle some would take.³³

It is possibly the didactic use of the windows, complemented by limited but quite specific iconoclasm designed to render dangerous images spiritually impotent, including the figures of Christ and the two thieves in the east window, the transfigured Christ in window 7, that accounts for the otherwise almost miraculous preservation of the windows.³⁴

While the Tames, principal funders of the enterprise, may have successfully appropriated the sacred space of the Lady Chapel, they had certainly not privatised it and do not seem to have had more privileged access to the altars and their windows than any other layperson. In the north wall of the church is a small doorway neatly tucked under one of the buttresses (fig. 15). It has been plausibly suggested that this door was designed to provide convenient access to the church for the Tames, whose house stood to the north and west, between the churchyard and river Coln (fig. 16), or in Leland's words, 'a fair mansion place hard by the chirchyarde, buildid thoroughly by John Tame and Edmund Tame. The backside of whereof goith to the very bridg of Fairford'.³⁵ The house was partially demolished in the seventeenth century



Fig. 15. The north doorway.

and its vestiges were only finally demolished in the mid-eighteenth century when the churchyard was extended.³⁶ The door was not provided for the convenience of the vicar, whose house was to the south of the church, on what is now the Lechlade to Cirencester road.³⁷ Nor does it appear to have been for the benefit of the two Tame chantry priests, who are said to have lived in a house in the Market Place.³⁸ Tame investment in the church and particularly in the Lady chapel, would certainly seem to have been sufficient to warrant this provision of a 'private'



Fig. 16. The church seen from the north-west.

entrance. However, the doorway is cut diagonally through the thickness of the wall, and the angle means that the door opens not into the north chapel, effectively the family's funerary chapel, but immediately west of its screen. The Tames therefore entered the church in the nave, not the chancel, and in this respect they were like every other lay parishioner.

The altars of the chancel and the two side chapels were not the only foci for devotion, however. The evidence for their location will be summarised briefly. It is once again John Tame's will that provides valuable evidence for his generous bequests to the church included the gift of seven pounds to the seven lights of Fairford church and provision of eight great 'torchis', to the value of four pounds. It can be assumed that in addition to lights at the three principal altars, at least one light burned before the rood. The rood was displayed against the dramatic backdrop of the central tower, the west face of which is decorated with niches that once accommodated the sculpted figures of the Crucified Christ, the sorrowing Virgin and St John (fig. 17). The sculpture was complemented by figures of painted angels holding Passion instruments, which survive. The Rood was reached from a gallery that once ran around the interior of the tower, accessed from a staircase in the south-east tower pier. The rood beam rested on the upper corbels, the lower ones being modern insertions to support an eighteenth-century singing gallery (since removed). The tower, which on the one hand, must have affected the view into the



Fig. 17. The west face of the central tower.
 NMR © Crown Copyright.

chancel, was clearly a significant site of devotion. Its interior retains extensive traces of painting, some of it figurative and as yet inadequately studied. The painted decoration of the church was obscured by lime wash, probably in the seventeenth century, and the somewhat careless uncovering of this decoration in the nineteenth century caused loss. The figure of St Christopher facing the south door was covered up again, although a faint outline can still be seen. The decoration of the tower is more legible: The north-east tower pier depicts a vested archbishop, possibly St Thomas of Canterbury. A figure identified as St Edmund decorates the south-east pier, while the north-west tower pier retains traces of an unidentified robed figure. Niches facing into the south nave aisle have been decorated with painted imitations of richly damascened cloths of honour. These must once have contained devotional statuary, perhaps illuminated by the lights paid for by John Tame's posthumous munificence.

APPENDIX: Extract from the will of John Tame of Fairford, d.1500

'First, I bequeath my sowle to Almyghty God and to our blissid Lady and to alle the blissid Saints in hevin and my body to be buried in the Northe Chapell of the Church of our Lady in Fayreford.

Item, I bequeath to the moder Chirch of Worcester vis viiid [6s 8d]. Itm, I bequeath to the chirch of Fayreford a sute of fine vestiments, pr. lxxx li [£80]. Itm, a sute of blake vestiments with the apparelling of the Aultar, pr. l [£50]. Itm, ij censuers of silver, w't a ship of frank and sence, pr. xiiij li [£14]. Itm, a grete iiij th belle, pr. xxxv li [£35]. Itm, a pax of silver, pr. vi li xiijs viijd [£6 13s 8d]. Itm, a crosse of silver, pr. xl li [£40]. Itm, to the vii lightes of the said Chirch, pr. vii li [£7]. Itm, ij candlesticks of silver w't cruets, pr. X li [£10]. Itm, a masses book, pr. viij li [£8]. Itm, viij grete torches for the said Church, pr. iiij li [£4]. Itm, for the other ornaments about the Chirch to the value of x li [£10].

Itm, for the fundacion for a Chantry within the said Chirch of Fayreford, ccxxxxx li [£250] [Smaller bequests to other local churches follow]

Itm, for all manner of charges aboute my burying cxxxx li [£140]. Itm, and over that, for cxx score [2400] prests masses, xxd eyther of them, xxli [£20]. Itm, xii [12] large gownes w't hodis for them that shall hold the torchies, pr. iiij li [£4]. Itm, towards the marriage of xxx poore maydenes within iiij myle of Fayreford or else in the town of Cicetter (Cirencester), xl li [£40].

From J G Joyce, *The Fairford Windows* (London 1872), appendix A.

FURTHER READING

Sarah Brown and Lindsay MacDonald (eds), *Life, Death and Art. The Medieval Stained Glass of Fairford Parish Church* (Stroud 1997)

Hilary Wayment, *The Stained Glass of the Church of St Mary, Fairford, Gloucestershire* (London 1984)

ENDNOTES

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The Romanesque Churches Of St Mary Magdalene At Tixover and St Mary At Morcott (Rutland)

Malcolm Thurlby

Introduction

St Mary Magdalene at Tixover and St Mary at Morcott (Rutland) are interesting examples of regional Romanesque ecclesiastical architecture that incorporate some remarkably ambitious details, especially in the arches between the nave and the west tower in both churches. They are studied here in the context of English Romanesque architecture with the view to establishing aspects of their use, their date and patronage.

Description

OF THE ROMANESQUE FABRIC of the churches at Tixover and Morcott just the west tower remains in each case, although it seems likely that the original nave of both churches is preserved, albeit cut by the later arcades.¹ The three-storey tower at Tixover is built mainly of rubble, with ashlar reserved for the stepped, chamfered plinth, the quoins, decorated string courses, the windows and belfry openings (Fig. 1). There is a simple, round-headed window in the centre of the ground storey of the west wall, and an elaborate window in the first storey on the south side (Fig. 2). The inner order of the latter has a continuous roll moulding and lateral chevron on the face with angle wedges. The second order has a plain roll moulding in the arch carried on unusual cushion capitals with raised shields that do not completely fill the sides of the capital. The capitals sit atop detached shafts. The outer order is plain but has a sort of emphasized keystone deflected to the left, above which there projects a worn, three-dimensional head. The triple belfry openings are quite plain (Fig. 1). The tower is entered only from within the church through a massive arch of three moulded orders with richly carved capitals on shafts and moulded bases on tall, four-step, chamfered plinths (Fig. 3). The shafts are coursed and sit on steep bases, moulded with horizontal rolls and hollows on the left (Fig. 4), and with convex flutes on the right. The capitals are enriched variants of the cushion type on the south window of the tower (Figs 2, 5 and 6). In each case the raised shield of the cushion is further diminished and, on the north, the undersides of the capitals are carved with simple foliage trails with spiral or lobed terminations (Fig. 5). On the south, the upper parts of the cushions are ornamented with raised, chip-carved lozenges and the shield of the central capital is carved with half a stylized daisy-like flower (Fig. 6). The undersides are variously ornamented;



Fig. 1. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, W tower, from SW.

lobed leaves on the outer capital, interlace in the middle and an all-over pattern of encircled beads for the inner capital. In the arch the mouldings are symmetrical to east and west. There is a large soffit roll flanked by single rolls one step back, and two further rolls each separated by steps (Figs 3 and 5). There follows a broad, unornamented outer order towards the nave framed by a chamfered hood mould. Above and off-centre to the south of the tower arch at the level of the first floor of the tower, is a narrow, round-headed doorway with a plain arch set on chamfered imposts (Fig. 3). Immediately beneath this is a string course ornamented with chip-carved lozenges on the upper upright face and crosses with a horizontal line through them on the chamfered face below.

The two lower stages of the Morcott west tower are Romanesque and are surmounted with a later belfry (Fig. 7). The tower is rubble built, and ashlar is reserved for the quoins, and the window and door frames. The rubble surfaces are rendered. The



Fig. 2. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, W tower, S window.



Fig. 3. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, arch to W tower, from E

original west doorway was reworked in the fourteenth century when a new head was built complete with a two-light traceried window immediately above (Fig. 7). The jambs have two orders of shafts, the outer plain while the inner is ornamented on the left with beaded spirals, and on the right with a lozenge pattern (Figs 8 and 9). They rest on steep, moulded bases that are now very worn. The outer left and inner right capitals are cushions with diminished raised shields as at Tixover, while the inner left capital is carved with simple foliage sprays, and the outer right with loose interlace.

The round west window is richly moulded (Fig. 10). From the inside working out there is the worn frame of the window itself,

a thin soffit roll, an angle fillet, and angle roll, another angle fillet, a roll and thinner roll and a chamfered hood. The mouldings in the head of the tower south window are carved on the face of a single stone.

The tower arch is of two richly moulded orders on shafted jambs (Fig. 11). The bases sit on plinths that are a more complex version of those at Tixover (Fig. 12). The capitals for the outer order to both east and west are cushions with diminished raised shields and incisions on the underside reminiscent of a multi-scalloped capital (Fig. 13). The undersides of the capitals that carry the soffit of the arch are also treated in this manner and like the capitals of the outer orders they have cable necking. On the south capital there are chip-carved motifs to the tops of the sides while on the main flat face are two serpents whose bodies loop once near the tail and they bite each other's tail (Fig. 13). At the angles are two superposed pairs of framed, raised roundels that look like stylized owl's heads. The top of the north capital has an elaborate version of the Tixover cross chip-carved motif with filled interstices; on the flat face there are loosely patterned hollowed lobes and small clustered spheres at the lower angles. The arch has a thick soffit roll and then mouldings to both sides that repeat east and west (Figs 11 and 13). To either side of the soffit roll there is

Fig. 4. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, arch to W tower, N bases.





Fig. 5. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, arch to W tower, N capitals.

a right-angled fillet then a shallow roll and narrow flat section. The second order has a flat underside, two angle rolls to either side of an angle fillet, and a flat face. The hood mould has radial convex flutes on the chamfer and raised lozenges on the front. There is a string course above the tower arch and a triangular-headed doorway – only completely visible from within the tower – which is offset to the north like the doorway above the tower arch at Tixover (Figs 3 and 11).

The use of the towers

The richly articulated tower arches at Tixover and Morcott suggest that the space within the tower had some liturgical significance. For Tixover, an illustration in the *Victoria County History* shows the font located in the tower, although today it is in the west bay of the north nave arcade.² The Romanesque west towers at Market Weighton (Yorks. E.R.) and Great Shefford (Berks.) house contemporary fonts, a placement that probably reflects a tradition established in Carolingian westworks, as at St Riquier at Centula.³

The off-centre placement of the arch between the first floor of the tower and the nave at both Tixover and Morcott is unusual but is paralleled at Hovingham (Yorks. N.R.) and Marr (Yorks. W.R.)

(Figs 3, 11 and 14). It is possible that this was to facilitate the position of an altar against the east wall of the tower at first-floor level. There is an altar niche in the east wall of the first floor of the west tower at Skipwith (Yorks. W.R), although the accompanying door towards the nave there is set centrally.⁴ On the ground floor of the west tower at Sompting (Sussex), the arch from the nave is offset to the south and there is a window towards the eastern angle of the north wall of the tower to light the altar.⁵ However, there is no sign of an altar in either the Tixover or Morcott tower, nor even a neatly rendered wall. An alternative explanation for the offset placement of an upper doorway between the tower and the nave is that a centrally placed king post of a nave roof which would preclude the central placement of the doorway.⁶ The



Fig. 6. Tixover, St Mary Magdalene, W tower, S capitals.



Fig. 7. Morcott, St Mary, W tower, from SW.



theory is an attractive one and may be supported by the juxtaposition of the upper doorway between the tower and the nave at Marr where there is a king-post roof over the nave (Fig. 14). Appealing as this theory might seem, it is not problem-free. At Tixover the sill of the doorway is significantly below the top of the wall, a level at which a king post on a tie beam seems unlikely (Fig. 3). Instead, it seems more plausible to suggest that the arch at Tixover led from the first floor of the tower to a gallery at the west end of the nave on which there was a centrally placed altar. The existence of such a gallery for liturgical use in a parish church is verified Toft Monks (Norfolk) (Fig. 15).⁷ At Toft Monks an arch leads from the western tower as at Tixover and Morcott, although not off-centre, and there is a niche to the north of the doorway and two west windows to the extreme left and right to either side of the doorway. The Toft Monks gallery is also set significantly below the top of the nave north and south walls as would have been the case with the putative galleries at Tixover and Morcott. Parenthetically, it should be observed that at Morcott there is a reduction in the thickness of the nave wall above the present nave arcades. The change occurs well below the

Left: Fig. 8. Morcott, St Mary, W doorway, N jamb.

Above: Fig. 9. Morcott, St Mary, W doorway, S jamb.



Fig. 10. Morcott, St Mary, W tower, W window.

stringcourse at the level of the sill of the upper doorway from the tower. There is no change in the masonry of the upper section of wall, which suggests that either it belongs to the original fabric or that it was rebuilt with the introduction of the Gothic clerestory. At Daglingworth (Glos.) there is evidence for a western gallery with an altar although the gallery there was not entered from a western tower.⁸

Within the tower at Toft Monks there is a ringers' chamber which implies that the ground floor would have served another purpose, possibly a baptistery.⁹ This would have left no room in the ground floor of the tower for a stair to the ringing chamber and therefore access to the latter would have been from the



Fig. 11. Morcott, St Mary, arch to W tower, from E.



Fig. 12. Morcott, St Mary, arch to W tower, N plinth.

gallery. Such an arrangement would also suit the evidence at Tixover and Morcott.

Associations

The stepped external plinth of the Tixover tower may be compared with those at Barrow (Salop), Stow (Lincs.), Lusby and Barholm,¹⁰ while the tall, stepped plinths of the tower arches at Tixover and Morcott recall the crossing piers at Stow (Lincs.) and Hadstock (Essex), and the easternmost piers of the nave at Selby abbey.¹¹

The north bases of the Tixover tower arch with convex flutes share a family resemblance with the capitals of the tower arch at Carlton-in-Lindrick (Notts.), and the capitals of the north and east belfry openings in the west tower at Great Hale (Lincs.).¹²

The heavy soffit rolls of the Tixover and Morcott tower arches recall the chancel arch at Wittering (Northants.). Here Morcott is especially close in that the rolls that flank the soffit are set at right angles to the soffit roll exactly as on the Wittering arch. Furthermore, the same principle is followed on the second order of the arch where the two rolls are placed on the front and the underside of the arch. This contrasts with a Norman tradition in which smaller roll mouldings are generally placed on the angle

rather than on the face or underside of the arch. Be that as it may, the heavy soffit roll remains popular in the Peterborough region at the abbey (now cathedral) itself, in the crossing arches at Castor, the chancel arch at Haddon, Seaton (Rutland), Stibbington (Hunts), in the nave galleries at Thorney abbey, and in the north nave arcades at Allexton and Duddington. Of these, the Thorney nave dates between 1100 and 1108, and Peterborough was commenced in 1118.¹³ Castor belonged to Peterborough abbey and is dated by inscription to 1124.¹⁴ Stibbington was granted to Thorney abbey by Henry de March between 1154 and 1158.¹⁵

The elaboration of the Tixover and Morcott tower arch mouldings is akin to the crossing arches at Stow.¹⁶ The latter may be attributed to the remodeling undertaken by Remigius, Bishop



Fig. 13. Morcott, St Mary, arch to W tower, S capitals..



Fig. 14. Marr, St Helen, nave, interior to W.

of Lincoln, ca 1091.¹⁷ There are also richly moulded tower arches at Carlton-in-Lindrick (Notts.) and Corringham (Lincs.), and a very wide, three-order tower arch at Chedworth (Glos.). At Tixover, the broad, flat face of outer order of tower arch framed by a hood seems to reflect a pre-Conquest tradition as on the west doorway at Earls Barton (Northants.), the north doorway at Hadstock, and the chancel arch at Wittering.¹⁸

The mouldings in the head of the tower south window at Morcott are carved on the face of a single stone in the manner of the belfry openings on the pre-Conquest tower at Earls Barton.

The deflected emphasized keystone on the south window of the tower at Tixover is a bastardized derivative of a Roman motif, as used on triumphal arches. Temporally and geographically closer to Tixover, there are examples on the chancel arch at St Mary-in-Castro at Dover (Kent), and at Wittering.¹⁹ On the west side of the *Porte de Mars* at Reims the keystones project above the extrados of the arch as three-dimensional heads and this seems to be the ultimate inspiration for the head above the south window of the Tixover tower. More immediately, there are the *prokrossoi* inside the north transept terminal wall of Norwich Cathedral, and above the belfry openings of the west tower at Haddiscoe (Norfolk).²⁰

The chevron with angle wedges on the south window of the Tixover tower is an important factor in dating. The introduction of chevron in Norman architecture is traditionally associated with Durham Cathedral between 1110 and 1115.²¹ However, it is now generally accepted that it should be placed earlier than this. The abbey church of Cerisy-la-Forêt (Manche) former apse arch and the east face of the former eastern crossing arch as early as 1080.²² An early example (ca 1090) appears on the west face of the arch from the south nave aisle to the south transept at Great Malvern priory. Chevron is used at Hereford Cathedral, commenced between 1107-15, and in the so-called Dymock (Glos.) school of sculpture.²³ The chevron on the arch of the south doorway at Dymock has angle wedges like those of the Tixover window.²⁴ This is significant for dating because Dymock church may be attributed to Miles of Gloucester after 1126 when he had succeeded his father as royal constable, sheriff of Gloucestershire and as constable of Gloucester castle.²⁵

Decorated string courses as at Tixover occur in Hereford cathedral and Dymock and, geographically closer to Rutland, on the crossing tower at Castor and the west tower at Maxey (Northants.). The crossing tower at Castor also supplies a parallel for the ornamented shafts of Morcott west doorway, as do the south doorway and chancel arch at Egleton (Rutland).²⁶ The lateral chevron of the face of inner order of the arch of the



Fig. 15. Toft Monks, St Margaret, nave, interior to W.

Egleton south doorway also has angle wedges like the south window of the west tower at Tixover. And, although not paralleled at either Tixover or Morcott, it is interesting that the abaci of the south doorway and the chancel arch at Egleton created of huge single stones in a pre-Conquest tradition. Thus, like Tixover and Morcott, Egleton fuses Anglo-Norman motifs with traditional Anglo-Saxon elements.

I do not know of any parallels for the capitals with diminished raised shields at Tixover and Morcott. However, it is possible to read these capitals as a fusion of cushion and scalloped capitals with raised shields, as in the choir aisle dado arcades at Durham Cathedral, and carved cushion capitals as in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral.

The triangular head of the upper arch of the Morcott tower is a motif frequently associated with Anglo-Saxon architecture but, as with many motifs from the pre-Conquest, it continues in use well after the Conquest. Taylor lists 27 examples of upper doorways with gabled heads.²⁷ Of these Clapham (Beds.), Gayton Thorpe (Norfolk), Hales (Norfolk), Jarrow (Co. Durham) are certainly post-Conquest, and the one from the first floor of the tower to the nave at Thurlby (Lincs.) should be associated with the church that was consecrated in 1112.²⁸ At Warkworth (Northumberland) a triangular-headed enclosing arch is used above the north doorway of the nave in a church that depends for certain detail on the 1128-1133 work at Durham Cathedral.

The parallels cited for motifs at Tixover and Morcott range in date from around the year 1000 at Earls Barton to the second and third decades of the twelfth century for the chevron on the Tixover tower window and around 1124 for decorated string courses at Castor. Tixover and Morcott should not be dated before the before the earliest occurrence of the latest motif. In other words, in spite of the many parallels with Anglo-Saxon features, they are unlikely to be before the third decade of the twelfth century. Reference to documentary sources helps to refine these dates.

Documentation

There are no documents that relate directly to the building of the churches at Tixover and Morcott. However, other historical records provide a context in which the churches may be placed. At Domesday Tixover was part of the king's manor of Ketton.²⁹ Between 1104 and 1106 Henry I granted it to Robert, Bishop of Lincoln (d. 1123) probably for life as between 1130 and 1133 he gave it with half the manor of Manton to the abbey of Cluny.³⁰ It remained with Cluny until lands of alien abbeys were seized by Henry V. A date associated with the 1130/1133 gift to Cluny

would accord happily with the form of the chevron on the south window of the tower.

At Domesday Morcott formed part of the King's manor of Barrowden.³¹ Some land at Morcott, eventually the manor to which the advowson of the church belonged, was apparently granted by Henry I to his crossbowman, Ernisius Balistarius, who was pardoned 4s 4d in 1130 by Henry I.³² It is tempting to associate this pardon with expenditure on building the church.

Conclusion

Eric Fernie included the tower of Tixover with buildings with Saxo-Norman 'overlap' features which he grouped ca 1050-ca 1125.³³ Our study of Tixover and Morcott confirms the continuity of Anglo-Saxon motifs in minor church architecture even sixty or seventy years after the Conquest.³⁴

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The Use of the Church: Blisworth, Northamptonshire, on the Eve of the Reformation

P S Barnwell

AS FAR AS CAN BE KNOWN, there was nothing exceptional about Blisworth in the later middle ages. An agricultural parish of nearly 2,000 acres, some five miles south west of Northampton, it was, in 1548, home to 200 houseling folk, people who might receive Communion.¹ As for most such rural parishes, there is little documentary evidence to reveal the religious life of the place: a handful of early sixteenth-century wills and, in 1505, a royal licence to the executors of Roger Wake, late lord of the manor, to found a school and a perpetual chantry in the parish church.² That church, which stands on rising ground across the road from the site of the manor, is as unexceptional as the rest of Blisworth both in terms of its architectural qualities and of the survival of pre-Reformation furnishings, fixtures and fittings. A combination of the evidence of bequests to the church with

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Pic. 1. St John the Baptist, Blisworth, from the north east. © P. S. Barnwell



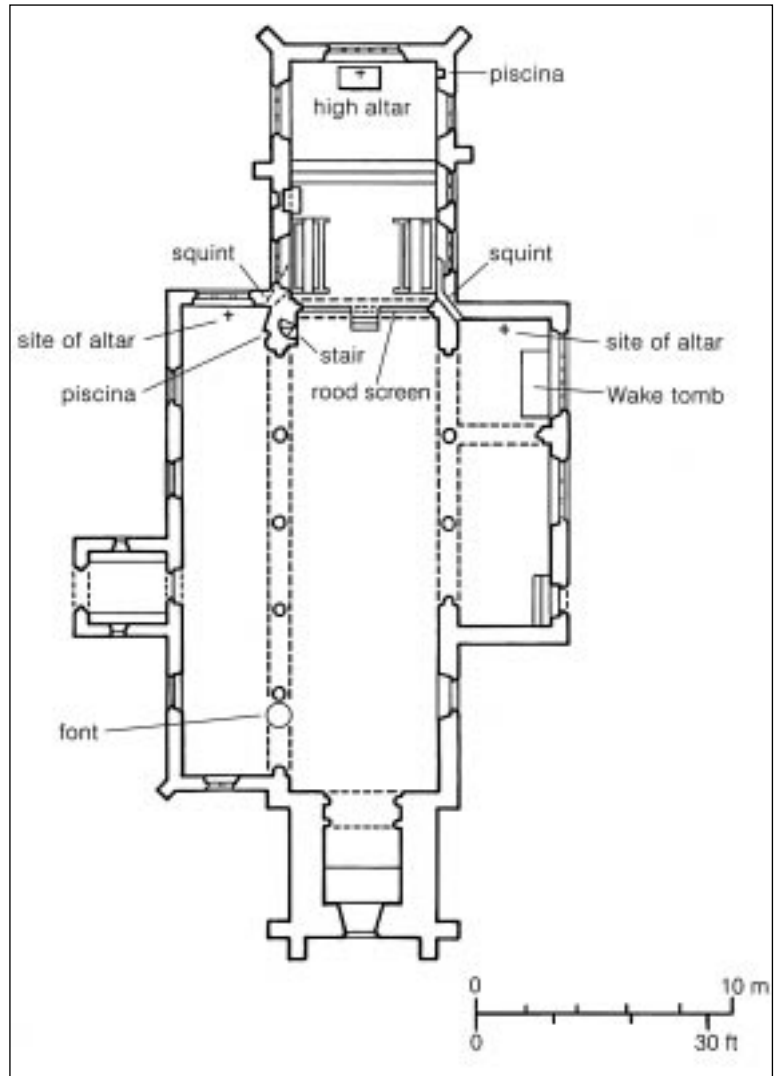


Fig. 1.

physical evidence contained within the building itself does, however, make it possible to create an impression of how the church was arranged shortly before the Reformation and, from that understanding, to pose some questions concerning the way in which it was used, and the kind of religious practice and experience of those who worshipped there.

As it now stands, the church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, is, like almost every parish church in Northamptonshire, which lay in the medieval diocese of Lincoln, almost certainly the product of gradual evolution from a core built in the twelfth century or earlier.³ It is slightly irregular in plan (Fig. 1), for its position to the south of the road means that the main entrance, facing the street, is to the north rather than in the more usual position at the south. In addition, the south aisle does not extend the full length

of the nave, ending two bays short at the west. With the possible exception of the north porch, which is dated 1607 and may or may not have had a predecessor, the basic plan of the building has not changed since the Reformation, though there have been some other alterations to the fabric. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, two sets of works were carried out, leading to the raising of the sanctuary on three steps in line with prevailing ecclesiological fashion, accounting for the uncomfortable lowness of the thirteenth-century piscina to the south of the altar, and to the rebuilding of the nave roof at a steeper pitch than that of the roof erected in the fifteenth century when the clerestory was added; in 1926, the south aisle was restored and re-faced.⁴

Several fixtures have survived both the destruction of the Reformation and what are likely to have been several subsequent re-orderings, including one which saw the creation of a gallery at the west of the nave, and some other fittings can be understood from clues in the fabric. Starting in the chancel, the piscina, already noted, is of thirteenth-century date. The north windows contain stained glass of the early fifteenth century which depicts the twelve apostles,⁵ and the carved mouldings of the rear portions of the choir stalls indicate that they were installed later in the same century, suggesting that, by the end of the middle ages, there may have been a small male choir. The same mouldings are found on the chancel screen, which is an adapted version of the medieval rood screen, from which the loft has been removed, though the elaborate stairs to it are still open at the north side of the nave. Behind the stairs, at the east end of the north aisle, was a chapel, indicated by a piscina and by a blocked squint which enabled the priest to see the high altar. There is a similar squint opposite, at the east end of the south aisle, serving the Lady Chapel, identifiable both because it contains the tomb of Roger Wake, whose will specified that his chantry, and therefore his burial, should be in the chapel of Our Lady,⁶ and because of the iconography of the now-lost medieval glazing of the principal window, of which there is a seventeenth-century description.⁷ The tomb, which is large enough considerably to cramp the space within the chapel, was until recently aligned east-west, placed in front of the recess of an earlier wall monument, but offset to the west to allow sufficient room for a priest to move around the altar. Set into the Purbeck marble top is a brass comprising effigies of Roger Wake, his seven sons and three daughters, and his wife, Elizabeth Catesby, as well as a border inscription asking Jesus to have mercy on his soul.⁸ The chapel may once have been modestly elaborate: there is no east window, suggesting that there may have been a wooden or perhaps alabaster reredos, what appears to be a much restored carved roof boss with symbols of

the four evangelists now hangs on the east wall, and there are some fragments of late-medieval decorated floor tiles. By contrast, the font, which is tucked in behind the west side of the western pier of the north nave arcade, is a plain cylinder.

Almost all medieval wills, which were made shortly before death, contain bequests to the testator's parish church. Not everyone made a written will, poorer folk not finding it worthwhile, and not all those that were made have survived. Nevertheless, the few documents which exist for Blisworth show that there were many images and lights in the church by the start of the sixteenth century, and to them, in this agricultural parish, people typically left a sheep or a measure (a strike) of barley, in one case a pound of beeswax, or occasionally small sums of money ranging from a penny or two to a noble (3s. 4d.). In 1526, for example, William Water requested that after he had been buried the tapers which burned at his funeral should be set before four of the images, those of the Holy Trinity, St Margaret, Our Lady in the Chapel, and Our Lady on a pillar off the north side of the church, and that his wife should, for the rest of her life, ensure that a light burned before the last during services on Sundays and feast days.⁹ Other wills show that there were further images: of Our Lady and St John the Baptist, which would have flanked the high altar in accordance with canon law, of Saints Christopher, Francis, Katherine, Michael the Archangel, Roch, Sith and Sunday (a figure of Christ assailed by the tools of weekday work), as well as of the Father of Heaven. There were, in addition, lights at the foot of the rood, in honour of the reserved Sacrament and, at Easter, for the Easter Sepulchre in which the Sacrament was symbolically buried during Passiontide.¹⁰ The location of most of the images apart from those of Saints Mary and John can only be conjectured: scars in the two eastern piers of the south nave arcade suggest that they once supported images, and two corbels above the western arch of the Lady chapel bear the heads of Roman-looking women, suggesting that they carried figures of the Roman virgin martyrs Katherine and Margaret, who were often venerated together and might, perhaps, have been joint patrons of the altar in the north aisle.

While the evidence does not permit an accurate reconstruction of the interior of the church in the early sixteenth century, a combination of what can be learned from the building itself with the written sources may make it possible to create a notion of the appearance of the interior and to begin to understand its atmosphere (Fig. 2). An initial impression might be of quite a constricted and potentially dark, or shadowy, space in the nave, particularly as all the windows other than those of the clerestory would have had coloured glass, while the presence of



wall paintings, colourful statues and pricks of candle light would have given a feeling of clutter perhaps greater than warranted given that the nave may not have been fully pewed: bequests to other churches in the county indicate that pews were being introduced, sometimes piecemeal, into rural churches in the early sixteenth century, a pattern known from other parts of the country.¹¹ The rood, with its flanking figures of Mary and John, set against a depiction of the Last Judgement, provides a dominating image from which there is no escape: Judgement was both inevitable and terrible, and the only hope lay in the crucified Christ, seen above his actual bodily presence in the reserved Sacrament, which hung in the pyx above the altar and could be seen through the rood screen. More subtle but, at least in this church, visible from wherever one stood, were the four images of Mary — five if the figure at the foot of the rood is counted — who, with Christ, was the most powerful intercessor with God the

Fig. 2.

Father, so that St John's at Blisworth well illustrates the statement in a fourteenth-century text that a church was 'that house [...] for prayer / To Jesu and his mother dear'.¹² That did not mean that the other saints whose images filled it and adorned the panels of the lower section of the rood screen were unimportant: they all had powers of intercession and protection, often against specific eventualities, and it was for that reason, combined with their exhortatory role as examples of virtue, that the church was so full of their presence and that people desired to be buried in close proximity to their images if they did not have the status to command a place near one of the altars.¹³

Trying to move beyond a static and empty image to address questions concerning the way in which the space within the church was used, and how it might have appeared to the parishioners, leads into areas of considerable uncertainty. In strictly liturgical terms, the shape of the calendar is well known, and something of the forms of services can be traced in the service books of the Use of Sarum, the most widely adopted set of liturgical customs in the province of Canterbury, of which the diocese of Lincoln formed a part.¹⁴ Whatever the theory, though, simple country parishes could not support all the ceremonial outlined in customs originally compiled for use in a cathedral, and there is also likely to have been some scope for local variation and tradition.¹⁵ Even taking into account the evidence of the modest number of handbooks for clergy which have survived, most famously that by John Myrk,¹⁶ supplemented by churchwardens' accounts such as those for Morebath which have recently been made to tell a story,¹⁷ by collections of sermons, and by a considerable body of devotional literature, it remains impossible to establish with certainty what actually happened in a parish church, even on Sundays and major feasts.

Although there have been recent essays in the reconstruction of late-medieval parish religion, particularly by Eamon Duffy and Katherine French,¹⁸ none has attempted systematic analysis of the kinds of activity which might have happened in the physical space of a particular parish church on a particular day. What follows is therefore an attempt to do that, acknowledging that it is an essay in imaginative reconstruction. Recognising that parish churches were much more heavily used during the week than their present-day counterparts, and that the service most frequently witnessed by parishioners would have been weekday Mass, a fairly ordinary day, 2 October 1528, a year from which several of the wills survive, may be taken as a peg on which to hang a series of snapshots inside the church. In 1528 that day was a Friday and, as in 2004, it fell in the week after the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity; it was also, as every year, the commemoration of St Leodegarius,

better known in English as St Ledger,¹⁹ a minor saint, whose day was marked with minimal deviation from the ordinary weekday pattern of services. It must be stressed that none of the events to be described is known to have happened on that day, and that there are no records relating to it: while those for whom history should be laden with facts may be unsatisfied, that lack of satisfaction may at least serve to bring into sharp relief the limitations of our knowledge when we ask some very simple questions.

The only actors in the following scenes whose names can be suggested are some of the regular clergy, who probably arrived at the church early, perhaps shortly before six in the morning, to be let in by the parish clerk, responsible for unlocking the building. The rector was Master William Barle, a graduate, who is known to have held the living in 1526 and was still there in 1535.²⁰ For present purposes it is assumed that he was resident, at least on this day, rather than an absentee, though in 1526 he did have a curate, Simon Cowper, suggesting that he may have been away for at least part of the time.²¹ There was also the priest of the Wake chantry and its associated school, required to be a graduate: in 1526, he was Master William Raynald, though how long he stayed is unclear since by 1535 the chantry was in the hands of one John Curtis. There might also have been one or two other clergy, brought in for a few days, weeks or months, by executors to say Masses for the souls of recently departed parishioners, but there is no record of them.

The purpose of this early morning arrival at the church was to begin the Offices for the day, services of thanksgiving and praise derived from the monastic Hours and originally designed so that the entire psalter was recited every week.²² All clergy had long been required to say or chant the Offices, and, even at the end of the middle ages, probably still did so in church as originally demanded, though there were circumstances in which they could do so individually and privately.²³ The first of the daily Offices was Matins,²⁴ a service of psalms and readings, the length and elaboration of which varied according to the importance of the day in the Calendar, major festivals being marked by nine lessons arranged in three groups, or nocturns, and ordinary weekdays and minor feasts by one group of three. For St Ledger's day 1528, the normal service appointed for the Friday of the week following the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity was replaced by one which included a hymn and other material in praise of a martyr, and three readings specific to St Ledger, recounting his life as a seventh-century bishop of Autun and the circumstances of his martyrdom at the hands of the leading courtier and politician, Ebroin, so that this first service provided the context for the rest

of the day. Immediately after Matins, and so much forming a single service with it that the Anglican Matins was drawn from the combined service, came Lauds, the principal Office of praise. It was shorter than Matins, consisting mainly of celebratory psalms, including the Jubilate (Psalm 100) and Psalms 148 to 150,²⁵ a second hymn in praise of martyrs, and the Benedictus (Luke i, 68–79). In turn, Lauds was probably swiftly followed by the third of the Hours, Prime, originally said at dawn, which contained a hymn in praise of the morning, further psalms, a reading of one or two verses of the Bible, a number of prayers and a benediction.

The Offices were chanted quietly and in Latin, so that direct lay participation was greatly limited. Because they were performed openly in the church, however, it is possible that a few parishioners might attend all or part of the services so as to be involved in them by association, to pursue private prayer, meditation and, if they were literate, reading from devotional literature including lives of the saints (Fig. 3). How regularly anyone other than the most devout attended any of the weekday Hours is unclear, but the opportunity was there, especially for those in trouble or particular need of spiritual assistance.

After this group of Offices, the rector or curate chanted Mass, as every day, at the high altar. Before that, some or all of the other clergy may have left, and it is likely that a small congregation came in to the church. For clergy and laity alike, Mass was the most important of the services, as it constituted a re-enactment of the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and had similar power in relation to the forgiveness of sin as the original event; the act of consecration, which changed the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus brought his sacrificial, forgiving and healing presence into the very building itself. The Sacrament was held in such reverence that only at Easter, or on exceptional occasions, were the laity permitted to take communion, though its power was such that they could derive spiritual and physical benefits simply from seeing it. Amongst the latter were reckoned to be that those who saw it were for the rest of the day protected from hunger, blindness, sudden death, and many other troubles, as well as acquiring forgiveness from sins such as the swearing of idle oaths:²⁶ for this reason attendance at Mass was popular, even on weekdays.²⁷

The Mass celebrated on a typical weekday or minor feast such as that of St Ledger was a Low Mass, the form most commonly witnessed by medieval people, which was unique to the western medieval church. The principal elements of Low Masses were the same as those of the High Masses celebrated on Sundays and major feasts: an opening containing the prayers, epistle and gospel;



Fig. 3.

the offertory, in which the bread and wine were prepared; the canon or consecration, including the elevation of the Host; the actual communion of the priest, followed by the dismissal and blessing. There was, however, much less ceremonial than on grander occasions, the priest usually officiating with a single server, and there was some abbreviation of the service, the Creed and Gloria being omitted.²⁸ The Propers, parts of the service, such as the epistle, gospel and certain of the prayers, which varied through the liturgical year, usually remained constant through the week, but festivals, even those as minor as that of St Ledger, had their own.²⁹

As with the Offices, much of the Mass, High or Low, was chanted so quietly by the priest that the congregation could not hear it, and even if they could, few would have understood Latin, so that the service had something of the character of a private priestly devotion. For most of the time, the congregation would

engage in their own prayers, which lent support to the words and actions of the priest. At the gospel, the people were enjoined to listen carefully, even though they did not understand the language, for it was God's word, and they could comprehend it through grace rather than through intellectual activity.³⁰ More direct participation came immediately after the consecration, when the Host was held aloft so that all could see the body of Christ (Fig. 4). At that moment, to which the ringing of the sacring bell drew attention, the lay folk were instructed to kneel in reverence and to pray, as to a king, welcoming the Lord,

... in form of bread,
[Since] for me you suffered a painful death;
As you suffered the crown of thorn,
Grant me grace, Lord, that I be not forlorn,³¹

Fig. 4.



beseeking him that the benefits of actual communion would be conferred on beholders of the Host as much as on the priest who consumed it.³² The elevation was the climax of the Mass, the bell and statement ‘Hoc est enim corpus meum’, (‘For this is my body’), breaking the almost still and silent canon, the long process of consecration, and creating a visual link from the priest to the Host, the body of Christ, and the pyx where the body was reserved; for those near the chancel the line was continued upwards to the top of the east window which, typically, showed God in glory, while for those further back, the elevation led visually to the rood with its depiction of the act of salvation, set against the Doom, the moment at which salvation was necessary. The extent to which members of the congregation felt involved in the rest of the Mass has been debated, but one hint that they did not see at least the last part of the proceedings as of the greatest importance to them is that a second gospel, the opening of that according to St John, ‘In principio erat verbum’ (‘In the beginning was the Word’), was read at the very end of the service and that those who stayed to hear it were accorded an indulgence.³³

After the Mass, the rector or curate might have chanted the three short offices for the middle of the day, Terce, Sext and Nones, each containing a hymn, three psalms, a one- or two-verse Bible reading and a prayer,³⁴ though whether this was done in the church or in private is uncertain. As this was being done, the priest of Roger Wake’s chantry might have begun to chant his daily Mass, also a Low Mass, at the altar in the Lady chapel (Fig. 5). The form of the Mass was the same as that at the high altar, but the variable elements may have been specified by Roger Wake or his executors when the chantry was established, and proximity made the service physically much more accessible to parishioners, particularly if they entered the chapel.³⁵ This kind of votive Mass, paid for and specified by an individual or guild, lay at the heart of the intricately inter-twined relationship between living and departed members of the parish community. For the deceased sponsor, the pains of Purgatory were reduced by the sacrifice of Christ performed in his name, and because, by providing another opportunity for the living to enjoy the benefits of seeing the Host, which was elevated exactly as in the earlier Mass, he was performing a good work even from beyond the grave. That good work was itself a means of salvation, but was also something for which the living witnesses to it would give thanks by praying for the deceased; in turn, such prayers were accounted a good work by living as well as potentially aiding the departed who responded by interceding for them from Purgatory.³⁶



Fig. 5.

There may have been at least one further Mass, at the altar in the north aisle, for it was quite common for the deceased to pay for a number of Masses for their souls to be chanted on a given number of days, weeks or months after their death, but there is no documentary record of such activity in 1520s Blisworth. The stipendiary clergy responsible for such services were not attached to any particular church, but went wherever there was demand, though not necessarily within particularly wide compass, particularly in a place like Blisworth, which was near a major town. The presence of squints from both chapels into the chancel may, however, suggest not only that at some point in the later middle ages were Masses regularly performed in the north chapel, but also that both they and those in the Lady chapel took place at the same time as Mass at the high altar, for one of the purposes of a squint was to enable the elevation to be staggered during concurrent services so that the congregation could see each in turn.

With the end of Mass in the Wake chantry, perhaps by the middle of the morning, came a pause in formal divine service, the only remaining routine service being Vespers. The church was, however, probably used for much of the intervening time in other, less formal, and even secular, ways, and there would have been routine maintenance and cleaning, particularly of the images which would otherwise become grimy from candles,³⁷ such as those which, on 2 October, might remain lit before the image of St Michael (Fig. 6), whose feast, one of the major events of the year with much more elaborate services than those accorded to St Ledger, was celebrated three days earlier, on 29 September. In addition, a certain amount of parish administration might take place in the church. At the beginning of October, for example, the churchwardens might review the Michaelmas income from any fields, houses or other property they held, the writing of the accounts perhaps assisted by the chantry priest.³⁸ Or perhaps the keepers of one of the 'stocks' of sheep left for the maintenance of lights would take their half-year account and decide which animals should be slaughtered or sold before the winter.³⁹

The church could also be used for private religion during the day, and people might come in to pray or, if literate, to read, and to express their devotion to the saints, particularly those of whom the church contained images, especially the Virgin Mary,

Hail, Queen of Heaven and Star of Bliss;
 Since thy son thy father is,
 How should he anything thee deny,
 And thou his mother and he thy child?

Hail, fresh fountain that springs anew,
 The root and crown of all virtue,
 Thou polished gem without blemish,
 Thou bore the lamb of innocence,⁴⁰

who might be asked for intercessions or other aid. Some saints were associated with special attributes and would be the focus for requests for intercession in particular circumstances. One such was St Roch, a fourteenth-century Provençal, who nursed the sick during an outbreak of plague in north Italy, himself fell ill, was succoured by a dog, and died after being imprisoned either in Italy as a spy, or, in a different version of the tale, when his neighbours failed to recognise him on his return home. From this story are derived both his symbol, a dog, and an association with the healing of the sick. In the middle of the imagined 2 October 1528, a parishioner came into the church to light a candle before his image (Fig. 6), and to pray for the recovery of a dying man, to

whom, soon after morning Mass, the rector had been called for the administration of the last rites.

On being summoned, the rector, had hastened to the church to vest himself in surplice and stole, had collected the pyx containing the reserved Host from its place above the altar, and both salt water, which had been blessed the previous Sunday, and holy oil. With his curate and the parish clerk carrying a light or a cross, he had made his way to the dying man's house bearing the Sacrament under a cloth and heralded by the ringing of a bell so that passers-by could venerate the body of Christ.⁴¹ Since the invalid was near the point of death, the priest had, on arrival, administered extreme unction, the most important sacrament after baptism. Despite the need for haste, the procedure was quite elaborate, entailing the saying of some eight psalms, interspersed with the anointing of the sick man's eyes, ears, lips, nostrils, hands, feet and back, or if the last was not possible, navel.⁴² This done,

Fig. 6.



the priest had washed his hands in the blessed water over the vessel containing any unused oil which was kept to be burned and buried in the cemetery. The sick man had then been shriven and given communion, which was followed by an elaborate blessing and a prayer that God release his soul, and the placing of a crucifix where he could see it.⁴³ At that point the party from the church had remained, saying psalms, until the moment of death, which was followed by several more psalms and prayers. The rector, curate and clerk had then left for a time so that the body could be washed and wrapped in a shroud, and the principal bell of the church had been tolled three times, signifying the death of a man (it would have been twice for a woman).⁴⁴ Then, late in the afternoon, they had returned to the house, where the family, friends and neighbours of the deceased had gathered, and, following prayers, the corpse was brought to the church in a procession.

On arrival at the church the corpse was put into a coffin, where it would remain until being removed for burial, in shroud alone, the following day, and set in the middle of the chancel, covered with a pall, a cloth, and surrounded by a metal frame, or hearse, with pricket-mounted candles at the corners (Fig. 7).⁴⁵ In place of the normal Vespers, the last of the daily Offices the priests might perform in the church, there followed the Vespers of the Dead, also known as the Placebo, from the first Latin word of the opening antiphon: 'I shall please the Lord in the country of them that live', which preceded the initial psalm, number 116.⁴⁶ The Placebo was quite a short service consisting of five opening psalms, the Magnificat, Kyrie, Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary, another psalm in praise of God, and, finally, prayers that all souls might enter the kingdom of peace and light; that the souls of those who had died during that day should not fall into the hands of the enemy or be forgotten but, rather, should be taken up by angels and led to the kingdom of life; that all sins be forgiven; and that the deceased might rest in peace.

This service was only the first element of the church-based ritual surrounding burial. The following morning, the order of Matins prescribed for the day would be replaced by the second half of the Office of the Dead, the Dirge, followed by the Mass of Requiem and the burial of the body in the churchyard. All these services would be attended by a large number of parishioners and friends, sometimes encouraged by the leaving of money for a 'breakfast', so that as many prayers as possible might be said for the soul of the departed at this, the most dangerous moment of its existence, the journey from life to Judgement. There would, in addition, be a number of official mourners, often paid, clad in black hooded robes and carrying tapers. Although the services



Fig. 7.

were all performed in Latin and in the same almost inaudible way as those earlier in the day, the congregation would have been so instructed in them, and have witnessed them so often, that they would have followed them with more readiness than the normal Offices, sometimes, by the second quarter of the sixteenth century, aided by English versions printed in Primers, private devotional books.

After Vespers of the Dead, which brings this imagined October Friday in 1528 to its close, the body remained in the chancel over night, the candles on the hearse left burning to light the soul on its journey towards Judgement and to fend off the demons who might try to waylay it and bundle it down to Hell.⁴⁷ Corpses of people of high rank might be accompanied through the night by watchers, so that the Placebo and Dirge are sometimes collectively described as the Vigils of the Dead, but this Blisworth parishioner was, like most ordinary folk, left alone with the flickering candles,

the images of the Doom and saving crucifixion, in the presence of the redeeming Sacrament, the church locked, as almost every night, by the parish clerk, and the people gone home; gone home to bed with a prayer for protection that night:

Upon my right side I lay me down,
 Blessed Lady, to thee I pray;
 For the tears that you shed
 Upon your sweet son's feet,
 Send me grace for to sleep
 And good dreams for to dream,
 Sleeping, waking, till tomorrow be day.
 Our Lord is the fruit, our Lady is the tree —
 Blessed be the blossom that sprang of thee!

In the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.⁴⁸

Note on the illustrations

I am grateful to Allan Adams for assistance with the reconstruction of the interior of the church, and for drawing the illustrations. The latter are reproduced by permission of English Heritage and are © English Heritage. NMR.

Notes

- 1 A. H. Thompson, 'The Chantry Certificates for Northamptonshire', *Associated Architectural and Archaeological Societies' Reports and Papers*, 31 (1911–12), Certificates of 1548 no. 31, p. 158.
- 2 Bequests to Northamptonshire churches are excerpted in R. M. Serjeantson and H. I. Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights', *Archaeological Journal*, 70 (1913), pp. 217–452; those relating to Blisworth are at pp. 277–9. The chantry licence is in *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VII part 2* (1491–1509) (London, 1916), p. 461.
- 3 There is a short report on the development of the church, made by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in 1984, in English Heritage, National Monuments Record, NBR No. 44004.
- 4 M. Fletcher, 'Blisworth', in L. F. Salzman (editor), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Northamptonshire, IV* (London, 1937), p. 225. See also the notes made on the church by Sir Stephen Glynne: Hawarden, St Deniol's College Library, *Church Notes of Sir Stephen Glynne*, xl, ff. 1–3 (copy in the Northamptonshire Record Office, ZB, 176/1, 2).
- 5 R. Marks, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Northamptonshire* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 22–3.
- 6 Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', pp. 277–8.
- 7 Marks, *Medieval Stained Glass*, p. 22.
- 8 'Here lyeth Roger Wake Esquyer Lorde of Blysworthe in the countie of Northampton and Elizabeth his wyffe [...] which Roger decessyd the xvi day

- of March the yere of our Lord God M^occcccij on whose soule Ihu have mrcy'. 16 March 1503 is 1504 in the modern calendar.
- 9 Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', p. 278'.
 - 10 Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', pp. 277–9.
 - 11 See the wills of Henry German of Geddington (1486), Thomas and Isabel Loddington and Thomas Chapman of Wold (or Old; all 1528), W. Fallance of Staverton (1531), and Robert May of Cosgrove (1540), Serjeantson and Longden, 'Parish Churches', pp. 327, 436, 409 and 301, respectively. For a similar pattern in the diocese of Bath and Wells, see K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 167.
 - 12 'That house was mad for preyere / To Iesu and to his Modor dere': 'A Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass', in T. F. Simmons (editor), *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, Early English Text Society Original Series 71 (London, 1879), pp. 128–47, at lines 374–5.
 - 13 French, *People of the Parish*, p. 194. For detailed discussion of images, see R. Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004).
 - 14 For forms of service, see J. Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century. A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford, 1991).
 - 15 French, *People of the Parish*, p. 182.
 - 16 J. Myrk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, Early English Text Society Original Series 31, 2nd edn (London, 1902).
 - 17 E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven and London, 2001).
 - 18 E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1570* (New Haven and London, 1992); idem, *Voices of Morebath*; French, *People of the Parish*.
 - 19 In the diocese of Hereford it was also the feast of St Thomas of Hereford, but that was not observed in the Sarum calendar.
 - 20 Details of the clergy in 1526 are known from H. Salter (editor), *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526*, Oxford Historical Society 63 (Oxford and London, 1909), p. 162, and in 1535 from J. Caley (editor), *Válor Ecclesiasticus tempore Henrici VIII auctoritate regia institutus*, 6 vols (London, 1810–34), vol. 4, p. 332.
 - 21 For absenteeism, see M. Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495–1520* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 85–109; cf. T. Cooper, *The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 15 (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 62–72.
 - 22 A. Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology*, 2nd edn (Toronto, 1995), pp. 50–2.
 - 23 See P. Salmon, 'La Prière des Heures', in A. G. Martimort (editor), *L'Église en prière: introduction à la liturgie* (Paris, 1971), pp. 841–3.
 - 24 Details of the Offices, both in general and for St Ledger's day, are derived from the Sarum Breviary: *Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Sarum*, edited by

- F. Proctor and C. Wordsworth, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1879–86). The principal sections of relevance are as follows: vol. 1, cols v–li and mcccxi–mcccxx; vol. 2, cols 386–95; vol. 3, cols 886–90.
- 25 For convenience of reference, psalms are numbered as in the Book of Common Prayer rather than according to the Vulgate version of the Bible, which was followed by the Sarum Breviary.
- 26 E.g., ‘Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass’, ll. 103–33; Myrk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ll. 312–29.
- 27 See, for example, *A Relation, or Rather a True Account, of the Island of England*, edited by C. A. Sneyd, Camden Society 37 (London, 1847), p. 23, written c. 1500.
- 28 Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 93–5.
- 29 *Missale ad Usus Insignis et Prælaræ Ecclesiæ Sarum*, edited by F. H. Dickinson, 2 vols (Burntisland, 1861–83). The main parts of relevance are those on cols 1–17, 577–644, 924–6 and 669*–83*.
- 30 ‘Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass’, ll. 425–48.
- 31 *Welcome, lord, in fourme of brede,
For me thu tholest a pyneful dede;
As thu suffredest the coroune of thorne,
Graunt me grace, lorde, I be nought lorne.*
‘Lay Folks Mass Book’, edited by Simmons, text F (15th century), ll. 196–218 at 213–16.
- 32 Lydgate, ‘*Merita Missæ*’, in Simmons, *Lay Folks Mass Book*, ll. 69–77, and ‘Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass’, 581–92.
- 33 ‘Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass’, ll. 641–52; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 123–4.
- 34 See Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts*, p. 80; *Breviarium ad Usus Sarum*.
- 35 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 114.
- 36 For a case-study of services for the dead in a particular parish church, and especially of the way in which they affected the evolution and use of the building, see P. S. Barnwell, ‘“Four Hundred Masses on the Four Fridays Next After My Decease”. The Care of Souls in Fifteenth-Century All Saints, North Street, York’, in P. S. Barnwell, C. Cross and A. Rycraft (editors), *Mass and Parish in Late-Medieval England: The Use of York* (Reading, 2005), pp. 57–87.
- 37 Marks, *Image and Devotion*, p. 247; French, *People of the Parish*, p. 195.
- 38 J. G. Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (London, 1968), pp. 61–3.
- 39 Blisworth wills, in common with many of those for Northamptonshire, refer to such stocks, though nothing further is known of them; for their administration in contemporary Morebath, see Duffy, *Voices of Morebath*, pp. 24–32, 41–5.
- 40 *Hail quene of hevin and steren of blis;
Sen that the sone thi fader is,
How suld he ony thing the warn,
And thou his mothir and he thi bairn?*

*Hail fresche fontane that springis neu,
The rute and crope of all virtù,
Thou polist gem without offence,
Thou bair the lambe of innocence.*

Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols 1400–1530, edited by T. G. Duncan (Harmondsworth, 2000), p. 50.

- 41 The rules for the procession had been established since at least the early thirteenth century. See, for example, ‘Statutes of Archbishop Stephen Langton for the Diocese of Canterbury, 1213 x 1214’, in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Part II*, edited by F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 23–36 at cap. 17, and ‘Synodal Institutes of Bishop Roger Poore for the Diocese of Salisbury, with additions, 1219 x 1238’, in the same volume, pp. 57–96 at cap. 64.
- 42 The form of administration is in *Manuale ad Usam Percelebris Ecclesie Sarisburiensis*, edited by A. J. Collins, Henry Bradshaw Society 91 (1960), pp. 107–14, followed, at pp. 114–32, by the commendations of the soul.
- 43 See *Speculum Sacerdotale*, edited by E. H. Weatherly, Old English Text Society Original Series 200 (London, 1936), pp. 232–3.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- 45 C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1540* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 47–8.
- 46 The form of the Placebo is given in *Manuale Sarisburiensis*, pp. 132–5, as well as in *Breviarium*, vol. 2, pp. 271–4. There is an early sixteenth-century English version in the Primer printed in W. Maskell (editor), *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicana*, 2nd edn, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1882), vol. 3, pp. 115–28.
- 47 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 361–2.
- 48 *Upon my ryght syde y me leye,
Blesed Lady, to the y pray;
For the teres that ye lete
Upone youre swetë sonnës feete,
Send me gracē for to slepe
And good dremës for to mete,
Slepyng, wakyng, til morowe day bee.
Oure Lorde is the frute, oure Lady is the tree —
Blessed be the blossome that sprange of the!*

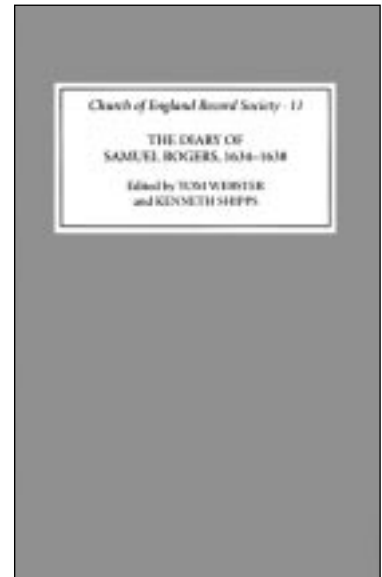
In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Amen.
Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols, p. 106.

Book Review

**Tom Webster & Kenneth Shipps,
The Diary of Samuel Rogers 1634-1638,
 Church of England Record Society Volume 11,
 Woodbridge, Suffolk & Rochester, NY: The Boydell
 Press, 2004, pp.lxxx1 + 186 ISBN 1 84383 043 4**

In 1969, the Library of Queen's University, Belfast, acquired the papers of an 18th Century Bishop of Dromore, Thomas Percy, who had died in 1811. The collection included the manuscript of the diary of Samuel Rogers. Rogers, born in 1613, was a minor member of a distinguished East Anglian Puritan family. He embarked on his diary while at Emmanuel College, Cambridge in November 1634, two weeks before his 21st birthday. The diary ends four years later on 31 December 1638. He was by then serving as a domestic chaplain to Lady Vere in Hackney, having previously held a similar post in the household of Lady Margaret Denny at Bishop's Stortford. He hoped to be ordained, but his attempt to receive a licence from Bishop Williams of Lincoln (who was regarded as sympathetic to Puritans) failed, and it is not clear that he ever was ordained. We know next to nothing about his life outside the diary. He seems to have died in his 30th year, circa 1642.

Rogers was no Pepys, but one of the few quotidian events of his life which he records concerns a domestic fire, fortunately put out before it did any damage. Rogers' journal was primarily, almost exclusively, concerned with a careful audit of his relationship with his God and his strivings for godliness. The historical importance of the diary lies in the insight it gives into Puritan spirituality at a time when their loyalty to the Church of England was in doubt. Percy entitled his acquired manuscript 'the Journal of a Fanatic', but that is far too prejudicial an epithet for what is in fact a sober and careful balance sheet of a young man still unsure of his place in life. His employers complained of the excessive length of his prayers, and one imagines that the less religious members of the household found him rather dull and 'precise', a Malvolio without the malice. But he was no fanatic. The preached word of God was crucial for Rogers. His 21st birthday was a Sabbath 'wherein I have heard 4. sermons and then 5. repeated', though even he acknowledged that this was excessive: 'surely multitude of thinges doe take away edge' (p.7). He is rarely satisfied with the sermons he hears, even from godly preachers, and of those which he heard at Gt St Mary's in Cambridge he was decidedly underwhelmed: 'Maryes sermons move mee not I



thinke; they stand there all the yeare long, and there auditors goe away as wise they came, in the things of god.' (p.23) The sacrament was also central for Rogers. He records regular attendance – on my rough calculation, more than once a month over the 4 years. Rogers moved widely around Essex and East Anglia in search of opportunities to take communion, part of his search for a 'sweet communion of saints' which involved a complex networking of Puritan fellowships. The Christian festivals play no discernible part in his devotions. Neither Easter nor Christmas is ever mentioned. Of one communion service he says that he was 'broken in peices with joy; drunk with comfort' (p. 154) – a time when he was grieving the recent death of his sister. He can be sensual in his language about Christ: 'when shall I lye in the embraces of Jesus Xt; when will he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth[?]' (p.98).

Rogers is scathing of Bishop Matthew Wren's harassment of Puritans in the Norwich diocese. He notes the fears aroused by Archbishop Laud's visitation of the Essex parishes in the London diocese. Rogers visited Westminster Abbey; but he refused to take his hat off before the altar and was rebuked by an official. Crossing the river he looked around Lambeth Palace – Caiaphas Hall as he called it, 'where sat those two traitors of Christ' [Laud and Wren]. 'Lord regard thy church sinking, the enemyes tread it down; the hedge is broken... Deare god yet dwell with sinfull, rebellious, idolatrous, oppressing, profane England' (p. 64). At the end of the journal Rogers expresses hope that the crisis in Scotland may impact favourably on the Church of England. Rogers calls himself 'piscis in arido' (a fish out of water) His great desire is to escape altogether, by emigration to New England. But he is inhibited by his father, who does not approve of such a flight.

The editors are to be congratulated for their careful and scrupulous editing of the manuscript and for the informative introduction. A map of Eastern England, showing diocesan boundaries and places associated with Rogers, would have been useful. Roger's journal, happily preserved, gives valuable insights into the springs of Puritanism within (more or less) the Church of England in the years before the civil war.

Dr Kevin Ward
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CD Review

Panorama: the Digital Atlas of England

CDs are currently available for the following counties: Cambridgeshire: City and East, £30; Cambridgeshire: West, £30; Huntingdonshire, £35; Rutland £20; The Soke of Peterborough, £15. To view the images on the CDs, the Panorama CD is required (£10). For details, and to purchase, see <http://www.digiatlas.net>

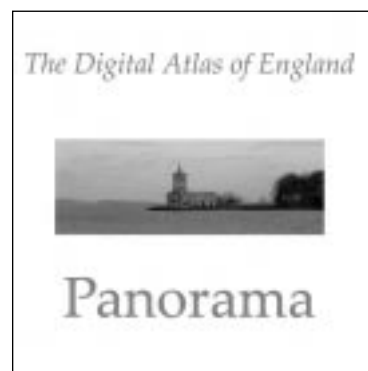
The Digital Atlas of England is the brainchild of David Digi (a pseudonym). His aim is ambitious - to build a comprehensive database of images of buildings, currently focusing on churches, just as Pevsner provided a comprehensive verbal description of important buildings in his *Buildings of England* series. In the past eight years David Digi has taken some 170,000 digital photographs, nearly 19,000 of which are now available on these initial county CDs. This is an extraordinary achievement, accomplished in his own time with no grant aid or other funding.

The Atlas aims to include images of all pre-1900 Anglican churches, and, broadly speaking, the pre-1900 contents of these churches. Thus there are images of all brasses and indents before 1800, all hatchments, all old communion rails and pulpits, nearly all medieval screens, pews, benches and bench ends, most carved coffin lids, nearly all monuments prior to 1800 (in fact most monuments prior to 1850 and notable and/or signed ones prior to 1900), nearly all medieval stained glass, all pre-Victorian fonts, some church chests, some decalogue and benefaction boards, any other contents or stained glass recorded by Pevsner, and any other unusual or notable items. Roof angels have usually been recorded individually, bosses rarely. Bells are not normally included.

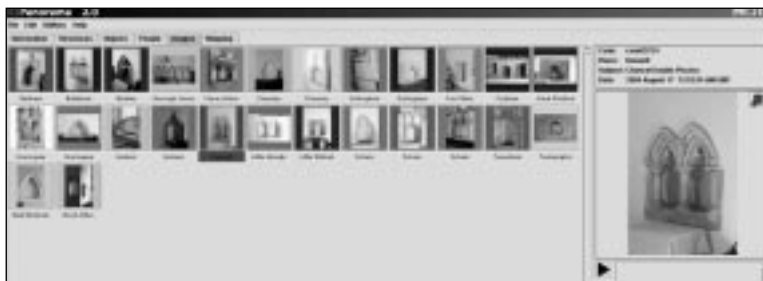
The set of images is almost complete within these constraints. Any significant gaps are listed for each county, for example where it was not possible to photograph inside a particular church. There are not many of these.

Thus each county CD has thousands of images, almost entirely of churches and their contents. For example, the two CDs which cover Cambridgeshire have about 9,000 images between them. The photographs are of good quality, and a fair proportion of them are very fine. Each photograph can be viewed as a thumbnail or a 1000 x 700 pixel image (roughly full screen).

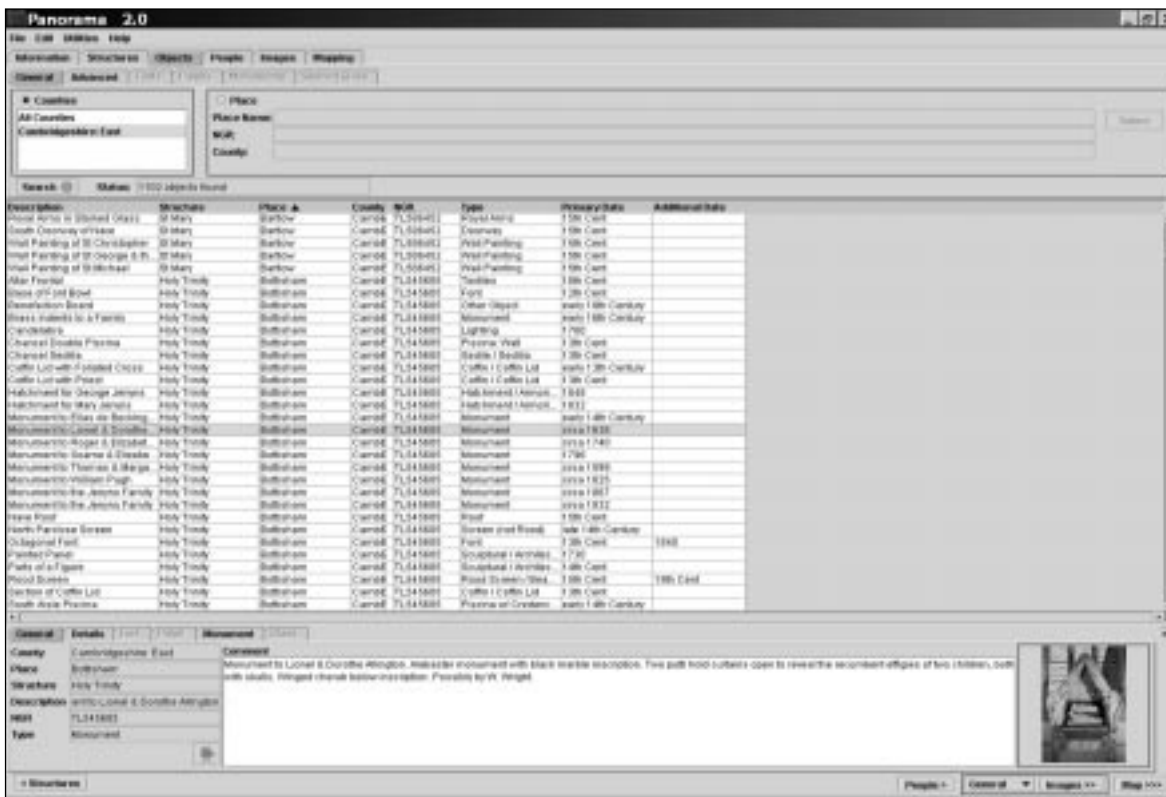
But this is far, far more than a slide show. Images can be located and compared through Panorama, a flexible database and search tool. The results of a search - for example, a search on 'pulpits with tester' or



The images and information on these CDs are also available at the View Buildings website (address below). The images are half screen-size and the search facilities are less sophisticated, but internet access is undoubtedly convenient and can be cheaper than the CDs. Data and images for the Soke of Peterborough can be viewed free of charge; a subscription gains access to the other counties. Web address: www.viewbuildings.com



A search was made on object-type 'piscina' of pre-sixteenth century date within East Cambridgeshire. The screen shows a collection of thumbnail images, and one has been selected (right hand side) as potentially of interest. This and any other thumbnails can then be viewed full screen (not shown here).



A search has been made on objects at Bottisham. From the list of objects, the Allington monument has been selected. There is a brief description of the monument, with a thumbnail picture. The selected image, and as many others as are required, can then be viewed full screen (not shown here).

place-name ‘Bottisham’ – can be viewed as a series of thumbnail images, any of which can be expanded to full size. Each image has a set of relevant descriptors (such as location and type of object, its date, its material, and the National Grid reference) and a short text description, brief for some counties, but usefully longer – a line or two – in more recently covered counties, such as Cambridgeshire. Selected churches are highlighted on the zoomable map, and the map itself can be used to choose buildings of interest. If the CDs are copied to hard disk, then multiple counties can be searched simultaneously.

Panorama can search for images in numerous ways, for example by features of the church building (such as type of spire); by type of object shown in the image (such as lectern or misericord); and by role of person (for example, sculptor or restorer). More than one search requirement can be imposed; all searches can be filtered by date; and the results can be sorted and selected from. This is a powerful tool.

It is straightforward to use Panorama to explore a particular church and its contents. But other questions soon suggest themselves. How do piscinas compare across different churches? Seventeenth-century altar rails? Georgian coats of arms? What types of central towers are there on churches without transepts? What style of wall plaques were erected for those who died between 1790 and 1800? Having such a huge set of images, and the ability to find, organise and compare them in the comfort of one’s own home, is heady stuff indeed. It is going to be hard to wait for the other counties of this important project.

Trevor Cooper.

Church Crawler was prepared for the press in early summer, so stories after that date will appear in the next issue



Figure at Buncton, Sussex, now destroyed. Photograph courtesy of Digital Atlas of England.

Vandal destroys thousand-year old carving

Always an object of controversy at **Buncton** in West Sussex, the small figure on the underside of the chancel arch north impost was considered by some to be pagan and, given its erotic nature, inappropriate for a Christian structure. All Saints church is mid-C12 (although traces its history back to the C8), but the figure was probably earlier than the current building and thought to be reset in this position. It was possibly a sheela-na-gig, and if so a victim of vandalism in medieval times by the removal of genitalia identifying the sex. Now it is gone: the sculpture was completely chiselled away in November 2004 to leave the stone panel without any recognisable features and a pile of a hundred or so stone chippings on the floor. Police are treating this as criminal damage rather than random vandalism as nothing else in the church was damaged. At the time of writing, the congregation were under suspicion along with the 200 inhabitants of nearby Wiston. One worshipper, who declined to be named, said: "It should have been removed long ago and put in a museum. It's not the sort of thing you want to have in your face in a place of worship."



Demolition of fire-damaged former church ignites controversy

Converted into two nightclubs, the former Elgin Place Congregational Church in the centre of **Glasgow** suffered a serious fire on 26 November 2004. Opened in 1856, the church was designed by John Burnet. It had closed for worship in 1962 and following complete internal rebuilding reopened in 1982 as a nightclub, the work preserving the



Elgin Place Congregational Church, Glasgow, now demolished.

Greek Temple appearance of the exterior. Following the fire, demolition swiftly followed, on 29 December, as experts declared the building unsafe; initial planning permission was also granted at the same time for a £10m 'superclub' to be built on the site. This caused dismay among preservation groups in the city who believed part of the building, notably the portico, could have been saved. Audrey Gardner, of Architecture Heritage of Scotland in Strathclyde, protested at the lack of preservation efforts. "It's very sad," she said. "I know there was some doubt that it could be saved, but we were hopeful that something would survive, depending on the way it was taken down. It seems it is always too expensive to save buildings. It's cheaper to knock them down, but we are losing our heritage." Terry Levinthal, head of the Scottish Civic Trust, speaking as demolition crews tore down almost the entire former complex within hours of the decision being taken, questioned why sections of the building, such as pillars or the facade, were not removed and used in other projects. Neil Baxter, director of the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust and a consultant architect, also questioned the demolition decision. "I find it very odd because these types of buildings can normally endure throughout the centuries, withstanding all sorts of problems," he said. "I hope every other option was looked at. It would be interesting to know exactly why they decided it had to be knocked down."

Wasps save altar

The C16 Cranach altar in Germany's **Erfurt** cathedral has been saved by introducing a swarm of wasps into the building. Woodworm had been destroying the masterpiece for many years as specialists advised that the application of chemicals could damage the eleven painted panels. So in a move which may now be repeated throughout Europe, 3000 parasitic wasps which feed on woodworm larvae were imported. The altarpiece was wrapped in a blue plastic tent, the air inside heated to 20C to mimic the wasps' mediterranean habitat and ensure they did not fly off, and the wasps, less than one-tenth of an inch long and harmless to humans, were left for five weeks to prey on the destructive larvae, a period which scientists estimated would mean no woodworm larvae would be left. The wasps, *Lariophagus distinguendus*, sting the woodworm larvae before the females deposit their eggs inside them. When the eggs hatch, the wasp larvae feed on the body of the host.



Villagers hope to buy church



Thwaite church, Suffolk. Photograph from www.suffolkchurches.co.uk, courtesy of Simon Knott.

Villagers hope to purchase St George's church in **Thwaite**, Suffolk, for £1 and convert it into a community centre. It is in

the early stages of redundancy as the costs of maintaining it for worship are too high, and the villagers want to stop it being turned into a luxury house.



Oldest Anglican Church in Japan destroyed again

Yokohama's Christ Church was severely damaged by an arson attack on 4 January 2005. It was set on fire by one of the parishioners, 23-year old American Douglas Miller, who handed himself over to the police 90 minutes after the fire alarm was raised. First built in 1864, the church was rebuilt in 1901, and destroyed by the 1923 earthquake. Rebuilt

again in 1930 to the designs of J.H.Morgan it was destroyed in the US air raids of 1945. Services resumed in 1947 but it was 1990 before the church was completely rebuilt as before. The congregation have vowed to restore the building again following this latest catastrophe.



Arson at medieval Cornish church

The parish church of **Lansallos** near Polperro was badly damaged by a fire in February which police described as 'serious and suspicious'. "Over forty fire-fighters tackled the blaze and managed to save about 60% of the roof of the Grade I listed C14



Lansallos church, after the fire. Copyright R. J. Tarr, www.polperro.org, 2005, by kind permission.

St Ildierna's church, as well as many of the pews of c1490-1510 with their carved bench-ends. The fire started in the north aisle behind the organ and spread to the roof. The Archdeacon of Bodmin, the Venerable Clive Cohen, inspected the damage to the church, and commented: "The damage to the church roof is extensive. The Lady Chapel (north aisle) roof is very severely damaged and the eastern two thirds of the nave roof badly damaged. A number of windows have had to be knocked through to admit hoses but these windows do not include important stained glass. Most of the medieval pews are undamaged, but a few have suffered scorching. The organ has been destroyed. The tower and bells appear unaffected. There is extensive smoke and some water damage throughout the building."

War of words in Halifax

Concerns about spending public money to prevent possible collapse of the landmark 235ft steeple of the former **Square Church** in the centre of **Halifax** raged in the local press in February 2005 after council officials asked for £66,000 to be made available immediately. Action Halifax, a local conservation group, has already pledged £10,000. The Congregational church was built in 1857, closed in 1969 and destroyed by fire two years later and the steeple is the only significant survival. When built it sparked local rivalry and All Souls, Haley Hill, built a spire which is one foot higher and placed on higher ground! The council spokesman stated that the spire is a magnificent part of Halifax's skyline but Councillor Geoffrey Wainwright said the money would be better spent on



The steeple of the Square Church, Halifax.

pulling it down. “There are plenty of spires in Halifax and I don't think we should be asking council taxpayers to meet the cost of repairs to this one.” Cllr. Allen Clegg added, “I am in favour of protecting the environment but we have spires at King Cross and Lightcliffe – perhaps we could take the top off as a compromise.” Cllr. Tim Swift said if the town was to benefit from having historic buildings it had to be willing to meet the sizeable cost of maintaining them and Cllr. Grenville Horsfall added, “It is an historic landmark which is probably as familiar as the parish church tower.” In the end the money was found and the conservationists on the council won the day. Cllr. Wainwright however warned: “I expect it will be end up three times that amount. There's only so much ratepayers can stand. The spire may reach to heaven but pennies don't come from it. I have had several abusive phone calls from people saying it was a disgrace what I was advocating and a lot of people have strong feelings about it. But the problem is that we have dozens of these Victorian piles in Calderdale.”



Other news in brief

Manchester's magnificent St Benedict, Ardwick, has stood empty for four years but is being revitalised as an indoor climbing centre. English Heritage has provided money for repairs and conservation of the J.S.Crowther church of 1880. The lofty interior has accommodated a seventy-foot high artificial rock face, and the new lighting has enabled people to marvel at the superb roof. A similar facility has existed at St Werburgh in Bristol for over ten years.

The catholic cathedral of St Raphael in **Madison**, Wisconsin was left a burnt-out shell in March. The church was built 1853–62, with a tower of 1885. The latter received



St Benedict, Ardwick, Manchester.



St Raphael Cathedral, Madison, USA, after the fire.

a new stainless steel and copper spire in 2004. It became a cathedral in 1945. A man with a history of mental illness admitted arson. There is no decision on the future of the cathedral as this column went to press.

The three-year battle to stop the church at **Quarriers Village**, Renfrewshire, being turned into flats (see previous mention in this column) came to an end in April when councillors in Inverclyde rejected the proposals. However the campaign group and the owners still have to meet to discuss the future of the building which has not been used for services since February 2004.



The church at Quarriers Village.

Meanwhile in **Glasgow's** west end, Kelvinside-Hillhead Parish church on Saltoun Street received a £50,000 historic building grant from the city council to repair the stained glass windows designed by Cottier & Co. Installed in 1893 they were in imminent danger of collapse. The church was built 1875-76 to the designs of James Sellars in a 'Sainte-Chapelle' (Paris) style and also includes windows by Burne-Jones.

An important new **website** has gone live. The View Buildings website provides access to the unique photographic archive of

a project that is documenting the corpus of architecturally interesting & historically important buildings and their contents in England. As of April 2005 there are over 14,000 images on the site (from a current archive of over 170,000 pictures covering a quarter of the country). The URL is www.viewbuildings.com and features Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire as the first counties to be uploaded. Meanwhile a vicar has installed wireless broadband into his city centre church. Reverend Keith Kimber had a wireless node installed in the north aisle after discovering the church's 4ft-thick walls blocked a city-wide signal. He hopes the connection will encourage more people to join his flock at St John's Church in **Cardiff**.

A bell-ringer had a lucky escape after a bell weighing more than 300lbs hurtled towards his head. Huw Binding, 46, was at the foot of the steeple when the bell plunged more than 60ft. But it hit a stone block just above his head - and bounced to safety. Rev Leigh Richardson, vicar at St David's Church at **Abergwili**, near Carmarthen, said: "He was very lucky to escape." Mr Binding added: "I didn't even realise what was happening until it was all over. It was quite a noise." The bell, dating back to 1892, will now cost £4,500 to put back up.



And finally...

This column welcomes contributions from its readers. I can be contacted at churchcrawler@blueyonder.co.uk or by conventional means: Phil Draper, 10 Lambley Rd, St George, BRISTOL BS5 8JQ. Any views expressed in this column are my own and not those of the Society.

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